

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/sri-lanka-opposition-newspaper-editor-badly-30-07-2011,40720.html>

Asia - Sri Lanka

Brutal attack

Opposition newspaper editor badly beaten in Jaffna, left for dead

30 July 2011

Reporters Without Borders is shocked to learn of yesterday evening's savage attack on **Gnanasundaram Kuhanathan**, 59, the editor of the Tamil-language daily [Uthayan](#), who was beaten by unidentified men with iron bars in the northern city of Jaffna. He was rushed to hospital, where he was in a critical condition with serious head injuries and still unconscious.

"We demand a rapid and thorough investigation into this appalling crime," Reporters Without Borders said. "The violence used by his attackers clearly shows they did not intend him to survive. Combating impunity is the first step towards creating the conditions for independent and pluralist journalism.

"This attack must not be the prelude to a new wave of violence against journalists, which has been on the wane during the past year, in part because so many journalists are in exile. We remind the authorities that impunity continues to encourage wrongdoers."

Kuhanathan was attacked near his home at around 6:30 p.m. by several men with iron bars who were waiting for him. After being rushed to a Jaffna hospital, he was put on a respirator in an intensive care unit. His doctors may decide he should be transferred to a hospital in the capital, Colombo.

An opposition newspaper that defends the interests of Sri Lanka's Tamil minority, *Uthayan* tends to support the Tamil National Alliance, which won most of the local councils in Tamil areas in the local elections held on 23 June.

Physical attacks against journalists have fallen overall since 2010 but threats and acts of intimidation continue to be common in Sri Lanka without the judicial authorities necessarily taking much interest.

Yesterday's attack on Kuhanathan was nonetheless the second attack on an *Uthayan* journalist in the past two months. The reporter **S. Kavitharan** was attacked by armed men as he was going to work on 28 May.

There have been four murders of journalists in Sri Lanka since 2008 in which a link with the victim's work was clearly established, and a well-known cartoonist, [Prageeth Eknaligoda](#), has been missing since January 2010. None of these cases has been solved. More than 50 journalists and press freedom activists have fled abroad in recent years because their lives were in danger.
