

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/sri-lanka-lankaenews-editor-freed-on-bail-07-04-2011,39982.html>

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Asia - Sri Lanka

Conditional release

## LankaNews editor freed on bail, authorities still have him in their sights

8 April 2011

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**Bennet Rupesinghe**, one of the editors of the Colombo-based online newspaper *LankaNews*, was released on bail today after a week in pre-trial detention for allegedly making threats.

Arrested when he reported to police in the Colombo suburb of Wellampitiya on 31 March, Rupesinghe was freed on payment of 310,000 rupees (2,000 euros) in bail at Colombo's Kaduwela court. A peaceful demonstration in support of Rupesinghe was held outside the court this morning.

Another hearing has been set for 7 July. In an open letter to Sri Lanka's justice minister, Reporters Without Borders has urged the judicial authorities to give Rupesinghe a fair trial and to stop hounding *LankaNews* and its staff.

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Hon. Rauff Hakeem  
Minister of Justice  
Colombo  
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

7 April 2011

Dear Minister,

Reporters Without Borders, an organization that defends media freedom, would like to draw your attention to the serious judicial problems that Bennet Rupesinghe, an editor and reporter for the online newspaper LankaNews, is currently facing.

Mr. Rupesinghe has been accused of threatening the family of the leading suspects in the 31 January arson attack on the LankaNews office. The charge sheet also accuses him of withholding essential information from the police who are investigating the attack. Although aged 68 and diabetic, Mr. Rupesinghe already spent a week in prison as a result of these charges, from 31 March until today, where he was released on payment of 310,000 rupees in bail.

While we welcome the decision not to prolong Mr. Rupesinghe's detention, we are worried about the conduct of the hearing scheduled for 7 July, at which the allegations that have been made against him are to be examined.

We would like to express our concern about the lack of rigour and credibility in the way the police have investigated both the fire at the LankaNews office and the phone calls and death threats Mr. Rupesinghe is alleged to have made.

We fear that, as with the investigation into the disappearance of Prageeth Eknaligoda, the LankaNews cartoonist and political analyst who went missing in Colombo on 24 January 2010,

the authorities have no desire to solve the case. Mr. Rupesinghe's right to be presumed innocent has not been respected.

Meanwhile, according to the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders and various other organizations, Mr. Rupesinghe and the rest of the LankaeNews staff have been the victims of a smear campaign waged by the newspaper Dinamina and others. The attacks on LankaeNews have intensified since January 2010 and we fear for its security and the security of its employees.

We therefore urge you, as Minister of Justice, to ensure Mr. Rupesinghe's safety until the 7 July hearing and to ensure that the judicial system functions in an entirely transparent and even-handed manner.

We are confident that you will appreciate the importance of our appeal.

Sincerely,

Jean-François Julliard  
Secretary-General  
Reporters sans frontières

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**Other images**



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499 x 275 pixels



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500 x 343 pixels

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