



# Tamil Information Centre

Tharnil House  
720 Romford Road  
London E12 6BT,(UK)  
Telephone: + 44 (0) 20 8514 6390  
Fax: + 44 (0)20 8514 0164  
E-Mail: [tamilinfo@compuserve.com](mailto:tamilinfo@compuserve.com)

Committed to Human Rights and Community Development

## PRESS RELEASE

27 October 2000

TIC INDEX: PR/October 00

### **The Cost of Freedom: The Killing of Nirmalarajan**

The Tamil Information Centre condemns the killing of Journalist Mylvaganam Nirmalarajan at his Jaffna home on 19 October and calls for swift action by the government to investigate the killing, publicise its findings, bring to justice those responsible for the killing, curb the powers of armed groups and refrain from interference with the media's right to inform the public.

The horrific killing of Nirmalarajan indicate the dangerous conditions under which journalists and human rights activists continue to operate in Sri Lanka.

The armed gang which entered Nirmalarajan's house is reported to have cut his father's throat and then shot Mr Nirmalarajan dead. They had also thrown a grenade, seriously wounding his mother and 11 year-old nephew.

It is believed that the gang could not have carried out the carnage in a high-security zone during curfew hours in Jaffna without the connivance of the security forces. The suspicion has fallen on the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) whose leader Douglas Devananda was appointed Minister of Northern Rehabilitation, only hours before the killing.

Mr Nirmalarajan, who never wished to use a pseudonym or resort to self-censorship to survive came from a very poor family. He was a reporter for many news agencies and newspapers including the BBC, the Tamil International Broadcasting Corporation (IBC), Colombo Tamil newspaper *Virakesari* and Colombo Sinhala newspaper *Ravaya*. He regularly reported on the war and the plight of thousands of Tamil people displaced as a result of the ongoing war. He had also boldly exposed the vote rigging and other irregularities during the recent general elections.

A number of journalists have been attacked or killed for criticising the Sri Lankan government by armed groups aligned to the government in the past. The fact that no enquiry has been conducted into the incidents, such as the killing of MP and journalist Ramesh Nadarajah, in November 1999, is an indication that the armed groups are given a free hand to silence political opponents and that state elements are behind the killings. Further, the state encouragement of impunity does not auger well for the freedom of expression in the northeast Tamil homeland where information about severe and large scale violations by the security forces are being suppressed under Emergency regulations and by high handed action. The killing also illustrates clearly that the government's security measures in the government-controlled areas of the Tamil homeland are not an attempt to deal with the causes of the violence, but a means of censorship and suppression of the freedom of expression. In the south, journalists and media critics are caught up in the vicious cycle of politics with the government showing increasing tendency to target them through the use of lawsuits, intimidation, assault and threats.

The international community has the responsibility to ensure that the government of Sri Lanka meets its obligations under international law to promote and protect the right of freedom of expression and journalists are allowed to continue their work freely without interference. The international community must also bring pressure on the government to allow reporters and independent observers into the Tamil areas so that the violations are reported around the world.

The TIC extends its condolences to the family of Mr Nirmalarajan

END//

Tamil Information Centre

720 Romford Road

London

E12 6BT

Telephone: + 44(0) 208 514 6390

Fax: + 44(0) 208 514 0164

E:mail: [tamilinfo@compuserve.com](mailto:tamilinfo@compuserve.com)