



Networking for Rights
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உரிமைகளுக்கான வலையமைப்பு

Exile network for media and human rights in Sri Lanka

Press release/ 10 February 2011

Sri Lanka: "Vaara Uraikal" Editor assaulted

For a third time in less than two years, the "Vaara Ureikal", the only provincial newspaper in the Eastern region has come under attack. In the latest instance, on February 8, 2011 the Editor of the newspaper, M.I Rahumathulla has had chilly powder thrown at his face and has been assaulted with iron rods.

Networking for Rights views this assault, yet another attempt to silence the media, as a violation of human rights and strongly condemns the attack.

This newspaper which has been fighting corruption in the Muslim dominated Kathankudi and Batticaloa areas has been subjected to many threats over the years. Unidentified men, armed with swords and clubs broke into the newspaper office which is located at Mr. Rahumathulla's residence on April 1, 2009 and assaulted him severely. Though a complaint was made to the Kathankudi police, no arrests have been made as of today. On September 13, 2010, the newspaper was attacked by a gang believed to have political patronage. At the time, Mr. Rahumathulla told the media that he held a deputy minister of the ruling political party in the area responsible, as the newspaper was allegedly attacked for its coverage on corruption in the Co-operative sector.

The continued attacks on "Varra Ureikal" is an extension of the prevailing violent environment in Sri Lanka. Media personalities, human rights activists and opposing political party members are constantly harassed and assaulted for daring to dissent and expose wrong-doings. Networking for Rights calls on the government to launch an immediate and genuine investigation into the attack and bring the culprits to book. It also reiterates its stand that this culture of violence and impunity should end immediately, and freedom of expression restored as a pre-condition for a successful post-war reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

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