

TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

Urgent

Mr. Philip Alston
Special Rapporteur on Extra-judicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions
Atten: Lydie Ventre
Room 3-016
c/o OHCHR-UNOG
1211 Geneva 10
SWITZERLAND

9th March 2006

Dear Sir

SRI LANKA: The father whose son was extra-judicially killed in Trincomalee is threatened with death for pursuing justice

We write to voice our concerns over the welfare and safety of a Dr. Manoharan and his family from Trincomalee, who are continuing to receive death threats and have been subject to other forms of threat and intimidation merely for seeking justice following the murder of his son. This innocent young man was one of the five students shot and killed, allegedly by the government's special police commando forces on the 2nd January 2006, while relaxing on the beach near the Mahatma Gandhi statue between the Dockyard Road and the seaside, in Trincomalee.

The lives of this doctor and his family have been made insufferable by a sinister campaign undertaken by accomplices of the perpetrators of the murders, to harass and intimidate them physically in their home, causing them to suspend their medical practice, bullying their friends from visiting or helping them, terrifying their children from going to school and making them virtual prisoners in their own home with threats of death to silence them. The sufferings of this helpless and traumatised family cry out for your intervention. We appeal to you to use your good office to request the President and the Government of Sri Lanka to immediately take the necessary steps to guarantee the security of this terrorised family and the sanctity of their lives, where they are at risk at the hands of rogue elements of the government's security services and their accomplices.

This situation is extraordinarily tragic and intolerably cruel. Not only has this family suffered the agony of losing a loved one, but they now face threats against their own lives in trying to pursue justice for their son's death. The government, it appears, has so far failed to provide protection to those who have suffered gross human rights abuses through no fault of their own.

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The United Nations Committee against Torture, in their sessions on Sri Lanka in November 2005, made the following recommendation on witness protection:

"In accordance with article 13, the State party should take effective steps to ensure that all persons reporting acts of torture or ill-treatment are protected from intimidation and reprisals in making such a report. The State party should inquire into all reported cases of intimidation of witnesses and set up programmes for witness and victim protection."

Despite this UNCAT recommendation, to our knowledge there is no such protection afforded to witnesses in Sri Lanka. While the Government of Sri Lanka continues to avoid taking the necessary action, intimidation of the victims and witnesses of crimes still continue unabated. Those who act with impunity in this regard do so, in many instances with the connivance of some elements of the police and security services

One of the journalists who reported on this case has already been murdered in Trincomalee and Dr Manoharan and his family are in dire danger. You can no longer stand aside and think that it is not your business. These are innocent lives at stake. Please use your influence and take a moral stance to save them and to give them strength and relief.

We appeal to you to kindly take up this case with the President and the Government of Sri Lanka and to request that immediate protection is provided to Dr. Manoharan and his family and to remove this abomination from their innocent lives.

Thank you.

Yours truly

Ivan Pedropillai

Ivan Pedropillai
Chairman
Tamil Writers Guild