

TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

His Excellency Mahinda Rajapakse
President of the Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka
President's House
Colombo, Sri Lanka

9th March 2006

Your Excellency

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 have recently received death threats and been subject to other forms of threat and intimidation merely for seeking justice following the murder of his son, one of the five students who was murdered on the 2nd January 2006 near the Mahatma Gandhi statue between the Dockyard Road and the seaside, in Trincomalee.

Their lives have been made insufferable by a sinister campaign undertaken by accomplices of the perpetrators of the murders, to harass and intimidate this traumatised family 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 innocent family cry out for your intervention. If Sri Lanka is to redeem its reputation in the eyes of the world, as the President, you have the foresworn duty to guarantee the security of its innocent citizens and the sanctity of their lives, even where they may be at risk at the hands of rogue elements of the security services.

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. 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."

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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 are surely sully your name.

We, therefore, would appeal to you to kindly take the necessary steps to have this matter investigated and to direct 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