

His Excellency Mahinda Rajapakse
President of Sri Lanka
'Temple Trees'
Colombo 3
Sri Lanka

10 March 2010

His Excellency President Mahinda Rajapakse:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD), an international human rights NGO that promotes foundational rights for democracy, to express concern about a report in *Lanka News Web* (http://www.lankanewsweb.com/news/EN_2010_03_02_012.html) claiming that "State intelligence units" has been compiling a list of names of journalists and NGO activists, allocating ratings to them according to their work. The report suggests that the list contains the names of journalists who support the opposition.

CLD has not been able to verify the truth or otherwise of these reports independently. If true, however, they are a matter of grave concern. State security and intelligence bodies have no business monitoring the activities of citizens on the basis of their presumed or claimed political affiliations or beliefs, or their civil society affiliations. This is a breach of both the right of these individuals to freedom of opinion, as well as to privacy.

Those named by the *Lanka News Web* as topping the list – Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, Executive Director, Center for Policy Alternatives, J.C. Weliamuna, Executive Director, Transparency International, Sri Lanka (TISL), Sunil Jayasekera, Convener of the Free Media Movement and Deputy Editor, *Irudina*, and Sandaruwan Senadhira, Lankaenews Editor – are all well-known for their independence and willingness to criticise the government in power, including the current government. While you may not always find such criticism welcome, democracy demands that your government not only accept but also protect it.

In the Sri Lankan context – which has been characterised by almost total impunity in the face of frequent threats, as well

**CENTRE FOR LAW AND
DEMOCRACY**

**39 Chartwell Lane
Halifax, N.S.
B3M 3S7
Canada
Tel: +1 902 431-3688
Fax: +1 902 431-3689
Email: [info@law-
democracy.org](mailto:info@law-democracy.org)**

Centre for Law and Democracy
(A company limited by
guarantee)

The Centre for Law and Democracy is a non-profit human rights organisation working internationally to provide legal expertise on foundational rights for democracy

as actual violent attacks and even murders of independent journalists and others who dare criticise the government – lists such as this are particularly disturbing. The very fact of being named publicly as being on such a list creates a very real risk to the safety of those involved. Saravanamuttu, for example, has received death threats and Weliamuna has had a grenade thrown at his home.

CLD urges you to make it clear that you recognise the legitimacy, indeed importance in a democracy, of independent and critical voices. We also urge you to investigate these claims and, should they prove to be true, to take steps to ensure that such practices cease immediately.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Toby Mendel', with a stylized, sweeping flourish at the end.

Toby Mendel
Executive Director