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Human Rights Council: ARTICLE 19 Calls on UN to investigate Press Freedom Violations in Sri Lanka

ARTICLE 19, the International Federation of Journalists, the International Press Institute and the World Association of Newspapers yesterday asked the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) to investigate cases of serious violations of journalists' rights in Sri Lanka under the cloak of countering terrorism.

In an oral statement to the tenth session of the UN human rights body in Geneva, the organisations singled out Sri Lanka as one of the countries where counter-terrorism measures are used as a disguise to deny journalists their rights “through arbitrary arrest and detention for exercising their right to freedom of expression”.

The statement was delivered by Dr Sejal Parmar, Senior Legal Officer at ARTICLE 19, on behalf of the organisations at the Council's interactive dialogue “on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism”.

The organisations requested the Council to initiate a formal investigation into the application of anti-terror legislation in the case of senior Tamil journalist J.S. Tissainyagam, who has been in detention in Sri Lanka for just over a year, accused of terrorism for the content of his writing.

“All States, including Sri Lanka, must ensure that counter-terrorism legislation does not give cover to the practice of repression against media and journalists,” the statement said.

The statement further called on the HRC to support effective implementation of international humanitarian provisions and UN Security Council Resolution 1738 which provide for protection of journalists who are working in areas of armed conflict.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information: please contact Dr Sejal Parmar, Senior Legal Officer at sejal@article19.org.
- To read the full text of the statement: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/press/submission-by-the-international-federation-of-journalists-ifj-to-the-human-r.pdf>
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.