

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/sri-lanka-eight-journalists-and-an-office-29-06-2012,42925.html>

Asia - Sri Lanka

Website crackdown

Eight journalists and an office assistant arrested in police raid on two news websites

29 June 2012

Reporters Without Borders firmly condemns today's police raids on the offices of two Colombo-based news websites, the [SriLankaMirror](#) and [SriLankaXNews](#), in which eight of their journalists and an office assistant were arrested.

"We call for the immediate release of all those detained," Reporters Without Borders said. "The exact reasons for the raids on these two news websites, which the authorities have had in their sights for some time, must be clarified without delay. However, given the government's past violations of freedom of information, we regard it as an attempt to censor and intimidate critical journalists."

The raids were carried out at around 11:45 a.m. by about 25 police officers from the Colombo Crime Division (CCD) and the Crime Investigation Department (CID), who had a search warrant issued by Judge Prasanna Alwis of Colombo court No. 4.

Both websites are located in the same building – 71 Thotupolar Road in the Colombo suburb of Athulkotte. One of them, *SriLankaXNews*, is operated by the United National Party (UNP), an opposition party.

The nine detainees were taken to CID headquarters in Colombo for questioning. They consisted of six *SriLankaMirror* journalists and an office helper:

1. **Kleum Shivantha Rodrigo** - editor
2. **Ajith Senevirathne** - photographer
3. **Tharindu Rajapaksa** - feature writer
4. **Himashi Karunaratne** - sports editor
5. **Shiranthini Manawadu** - reporter
6. **Asanka Nivantha** - marketing manager
7. **R.M. Preamawathi** - office helper

And two *SriLankaXNews* journalists:

8. **Siddik Kariyappar** - Tamil-language editor
9. **Subhash Jayawardane** - features editor

The police confiscated computers from both offices, which they sealed. They also searched the home of **Ruwan Fernandez**, who used to work for *SriLankaMirror* and is now editor in chief of *SriLankaXNews*.

The raids were carried out one day after access to five Tamil-language news websites – [TamilWin](#), [Athirvu](#), [Sarithan](#), [Ponguthamil](#) and [Pathivu](#) – were blocked.

This not the first time the government has targeted the *SriLankaMirror* site, which was one of [four leading independent news sites critical of the government that were blocked on the information ministry's orders](#) in November 2011. The other three were *SriLankaGuardian*, *Paparacigossip9*, and *LankaWayNews*.

Access to the *SriLankaMirror* site was unblocked after it appealed to the supreme court. [The](#)

[Lankaenews and Lankanewsweb sites have also been hounded](#) by the authorities, especially in connection with their coverage of corruption.

[Sri Lanka](#) was classified as one of the countries “under surveillance” in the latest Reporters Without Borders report on “Enemies of the Internet.”

You can download those documents on our website :

- , (JPEG - 48 kb)
-