



# Assassination of Prominent journalist Sends Chill in the Newsrooms of Sri Lanka

By: CTC Press Release

## Sivaram's Murder, Loss to Free Speech

Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) is shocked and deeply saddened by the abduction and murder of Mr. Sivaram Dharmaratnam (alias Taraki), a widely read and internationally recognized Tamil journalist. Mr. Sivaram was a political affairs columnist for English and Tamil newspapers published from Colombo and a member of the TamilNet editorial board.

Mr. Dharmaratnam was abducted on Thursday, April 28, 2005 in front of a police station in Colombo. His body was found near the Sri Lankan parliament in the high security zone. He is survived by his wife and three children aged 10 to 16 years.

"The brutal assassination of Mr. Sivaram is yet another attempt to silence the voices of plurality and democracy in Sri Lanka. Mr. Sivaram was a potent symbol of freedom, whose voice has now been muted. While this assassination itself is an irreplaceable loss for a free media, it has no doubt sent a chilling message to others who have given voice to the voiceless in Sri Lanka", stated Ms. Thani, spokesperson, Canadian Tamil Congress.

It is important to note that in March 2005, the Free Media Movement (FMM) expressed its concerns over the restrictions that were placed on Canada's Global TV by the Sri Lankan High Commission in Ottawa.

Mr. Sivaram was also a guest speaker at the Ottawa International Conference on "The Tamil Nationhood and the Search for Peace in Sri Lanka", organized by The Academic Society of Tamil Students (ACTS) of Carleton University and the University of Ottawa, on May 21 and 22, 1999.

During the past few years in Sri Lanka, killing of prominent Tamil journalists in the government controlled areas have become such a common practice. Mr. Mylvaganam Nimalarajan, a British Broadcasting Corporation journalist, was shot to death in his home in October 2000. Mr. Aiyathurai Nadesan was killed by the paramilitary forces working with Sri Lankan army on May 31, 2004. Assassinations of respected Tamil journalists like Sivaram, Nimalarajan and Nadesan are forcing the Tamil populous to once again realize the futility of relying on the Sri Lankan government for their safety and security.

It is a sad day for human rights, democracy and pluralism in Sri Lanka. The Tamil community in Canada has alerted the Canadian government of the imminent threat to Mr.Sivaram's safety in Sri Lanka last year.

Canadian Tamil congress urgently calls upon the Canadian government to condemn this act of savagery and to exert pressure on the government of Sri Lanka to bring the perpetrators to justice and to ensure the safety of the journalists.

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