



Canadian Tamil Congress
கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவை
Congrès Tamoul Canadien
"The unified voice of Canadian Tamils"

Head Office:
Toronto
216-31 Progress Ave.
Toronto, On. M1P 4S6 Canada
Tel: **416 240 0078**
Fax: 416 240 1601

Branch Office:
Montreal
378-6830, Parc Ave.
Montreal, Qc H3N 1W3
Tel: **514 394 7727**
Fax: 514 227 5477

www.canadiantamilcongress.ca info@canadiantamilcongress.ca

For Immediate Release

August 31, 2009

Tamil Canadians Condemn 20-Year Sentence for Journalist

Tamil Canadians denounce the 20-year prison sentence given to a Tamil journalist, who was named a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International.

A Sri Lankan high court sentenced Jayaprakash Sittampalam (J.S.) Tissainayagam today under Sri Lanka's anti-terrorism law for writing critical articles about the government's war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

"As a pillar of democracy, press freedom should be respected and encouraged not brutally shut down," said Harini Sivalingam, policy director for the Canadian Tamil Congress. "Misusing the legal system to punish a reporter who was simply doing his job puts the entire justice system into disrepute."

This past World Press Freedom Day, President Barack Obama singled out Mr. Tissainayagam and two other Chinese journalists as examples of journalists jailed or harassed for doing their jobs. Mr. Obama said: "In every corner of the globe, there are journalists in jail or being actively harassed ... Emblematic examples of this distressing reality are figures like J.S. Tissainayagam in Sri Lanka, or Shi Tao and Hu Jia in China."

Mr. Tissainayagam, who was arrested in March 2008, wrote for the Sunday Times, North Eastern Monthly, and the website, www.outreachsl.com. On the day of his sentencing, Mr. Tissainayagam was named the first winner of the Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Global Media Forum.

As RSF secretary-general Jean-Francois Julliard said, Mr. Tissainayagam is a journalist concerned with finding the truth and should never have been imprisoned.

Chapters:

• **Ottawa**

613 789 9371

• **Vancouver**

778 231 0074

• **Edmonton**

780 660 1211

• **Winnipeg**

204 219 2018

• **Halifax**

902 229 5482

• **Waterloo**

519 404 6707



Canadian Tamil Congress
கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவை
Congrès Tamoul Canadien
"The unified voice of Canadian Tamils"

Head Office:
Toronto
216-31 Progress Ave.
Toronto, On. M1P 4S6 Canada
Tel: **416 240 0078**
Fax: 416 240 1601

Branch Office:
Montreal
378-6830, Parc Ave.
Montreal, Qc H3N 1W3
Tel: **514 394 7727**
Fax: 514 227 5477

www.canadiantamilcongress.ca info@canadiantamilcongress.ca

Mr. Tissainayagam's case is part of a wider crackdown on free media and dissent in Sri Lanka. RSF ranked Sri Lanka 165 out of 173 countries in the world for press freedom in 2008. Reporters were barred from the affected zones during the latter stages of the conflict. Amnesty International has said attacks on journalists, relentless intimidation, and government-imposed restrictions on reporting are threatening freedom of expression in Sri Lanka. At least 14 media workers have been killed over the past three years, including Lasantha Wickrematunga. He posthumously won the 2009 UNESCO World Press Freedom Prize.

"Sri Lanka is going to incredible lengths to ensure that only the state-approved version of the truth comes out," said Ms. Sivalingam.

Currently, media and human rights organizations do not have free and independent access to the camps. Human Rights Watch (HRW) has further reported that humanitarian organizations with access have been forced to sign a statement that they will not disclose information about the conditions in the camps without government permission. On several occasions, HRW said the government expelled foreign journalists and aid workers who had collected and publicized information about camp conditions, or did not renew their visas.

For more information, contact 416.240.0078.

Chapters:

• **Ottawa**

613 789 9371

• **Vancouver**

778 231 0074

• **Edmonton**

780 660 1211

• **Winnipeg**

204 219 2018

• **Halifax**

902 229 5482

• **Waterloo**

519 404 6707