



Tamil Information Centre

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Committed to Human Rights and Community Development

TIC Statement 10 November 2006

Nadarajah Raviraj: Killing of Tamil Politician in the capital indicates chaotic law and order situation and the lack of human protection in Sri Lanka

The Tamil Information Centre (TIC) condemns the assassination of Jaffna District Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentarian Nadarajah Raviraj today. The assassination is another in a series of cold-blooded murders targeting prominent members of the Tamil community who publicize human rights violations against the Tamil people. The assassins wore police uniforms and emptied the entire magazine of a T-56 rifle into the car which he was driving, to make sure that he would not survive. Raviraj's security officer Lokkuwala Murage Luxman, 36, who is a Sinhalese from Gampaha was also killed in the attack.

The death of Raviraj is a blow to the cause of human rights, a great loss for Sri Lanka and an ill omen for democracy. Two other parliamentarians were similarly assassinated, but no investigation has been carried out.

The killing was carried out in Colombo where many Tamils have been abducted or killed in recent months by persons who are suspected to be linked to the government. The fact that gruesome events are taking place in the capital, where there seems to be no law and order, is shameful for a country which claims to be a democratic nation and has a place in the UN Human Rights Council. Sri Lanka also has a separate Ministry for Human Rights, a Human Rights Minister, a Permanent Standing Committee on Human Rights, an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights and a Human Rights Commission. Many representations have been made regarding the Colombo abductions and killings to the Sri Lankan authorities, including the President, but these violations continue unabated, deepening the suspicion against the government and exposing its inability to carry out independent and impartial investigations.

An Attorney-at-Law and a defender of human rights, Raviraj was elected to the Sri Lankan Parliament in 2001 and again in 2004. The former mayor of Jaffna was a leading campaigner for the rights and aspirations of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka. Only a day earlier, Raviraj participated in a demonstration before the UN offices in Colombo, in protest for the Sri Lankan security force attack on Tamil refugees at Kathiraveli in Batticaloa District, killing over 40 people including children, and wounding some 125 others.

Raviraj also participated in the Civil Monitoring Committee (CMC) which monitors extra-judicial killings, abductions and disappearances. He had received a number of threats for his part in the CMC. According to information received by the TIC, when he left his home in Jaffna for Colombo, Raviraj had told his wife that if he was killed his last rites should take place in Jaffna.

It is clear that the MP did not have adequate protection. The TIC understands that Tamil MPs face discrimination in the provision of protection. Some MPs, although eligible under current practice, have not been provided the full number of security officers they had requested. The applications of some of the Tamil MPs for more security officers have been rejected, and the reason provided is that there is a shortage of security officers.

TIC's sources in Sri Lanka expressed shock over the killing and frustration over the disappointing and disinterested manner in which the people of the island react to the problem of lawlessness. They pose the question how many more gruesome killings are needed to wake the people of Sri Lanka and the international community.

The TIC calls upon the Sri Lankan government to launch an immediate investigation into the killing of Raviraj with international participation. We welcome the President's announcement that the assistance of Scotland Yard would be sought, but recalls that many investigations announced by Sri Lankan governments have either not begun, not been conducted properly or recommendations have not been implemented. The TIC urges the government to conduct the investigation thoroughly and transparently and with the intention of bringing the perpetrators to book. Any cover-up would indicate the hand of the government behind the killing.

The TIC also urges the Sri Lankan government to provide adequate security to all the high-risk MPs with prior consultation with such MPs about their needs.

The TIC extends its deepest sympathies to the families of Raviraj and Luxman.

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