



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TAMIL JOURNALISTS

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PRESS RELEASE

Release immediate Journalist Vithyatharan

JOURNALIST VITHY ABDUCTED BY ARMED FORCES IN COLOMBO



Armed persons and men in police uniform who arrived in three white vans Thursday morning abducted Nadesapillai Vithyatharan, 58, the prominent editor of Jaffna-based Uthayan daily and Colombo-based Chudaroli. The abduction comes six days after Mr. Vithyatharan was grilled by the Sri Lankan Terrorist Investigation Department (TID). The TID had questioned him Sunday for six hours on news and views that appeared in his papers on Sri Lanka Army (SLA) attacks on civilians in Vanni and about his interactions with the officials of the Tigers in the past. Police spokesman Gunasekara, who first said that the editor was abducted by unidentified men, hours later claimed that he had been arrested.

The 'abduction' has taken place around 9:45 a.m. at Mahinda Parlour in Galkissa (Mount Lavinia) on Galle Road while Mr. Vithyatharan was attending a funeral of a close relative.

Three of the armed men were in Police uniform and two in civil. "When relations tried to prevent him from being taken away the armed men intimidated them, pushed them and took Vithyatharan away," according to a note from the Chief Editor of Uthayan. Eyewitnesses said one of the white van was bearing registration number HX-0640.

The Deputy Chief of US Embassy in Colombo, James R. Moore, who visited Jaffna two weeks ago, had a meeting with the editorial staff of Uthayan, which is functioning under trying conditions for more than two years.

Mr. Vithyatharan is the Editor-in-Chief of Colombo based Chudaroli and editor of Uthayan, published in Jaffna. Both the papers have faced threats and attacks in recent years.

In May 2006, armed paramilitary gunmen who entered the office of the Jaffna daily Uthayan, opened fire killing two staff, including the daily's marketing manager, and causing injuries to two staffers.

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