

Urgent Appeal by the Observatory

The Human Rights Commission's (HRC) headquarters in Colombo attacked

Friday 21 October 2005, by [FIDH](#), [OMCT](#) (Date first published: 20 October 2005).

LKA 001 / 1005 / OBS 095*

Assault / Search

Sri Lanka

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint program of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in Sri Lanka.

Brief description of the facts :

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources of the attack against the **Human Rights Commission's (HRC) headquarters in Colombo**.

According to the information received, on October 12, 2005, at daybreak, HRC's office was assaulted and searched by unknown persons. The assaulters destructed files and set fire on documents concerning the investigations conducted by the organisation. They also poured out some petrol throughout the office.

Immediately after their arrival in the office, the members of HRC went to the police station and lodged a complaint. The Criminal Investigations Department (CID) was charged of investigating into this attack.

The Human Rights Commission, a national human rights institution, was established by law in 1997. The HRC investigates into complaints on alleged violations of human rights caused by executive and administrative services, and notably those perpetrated by the police all around the country. It is also in charge of reviewing legal procedures to ensure compliance with the Constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights and of advising the government in formulating legislation and administrative procedures for the protection of fundamental rights.

The Observatory would like to express its high concern over this attack as it believes it constitutes an attempt to intimidate the Human Rights Commission's members, in order to incite them to stop their investigations into human rights violations in Sri Lanka.

Actions requested:

Please write to the authorities of Sri Lanka urging them to:

- i. Guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of all members of the Human Rights Commission, so that the organisation can carry out its activities without being subjected to outside hindrance;

- ii. Conduct a fair, impartial and independent inquiry into this attack, in order to identify the authors, bring them to justice and pronounce sentences proportional to the gravity of their crimes;
- iii. Comply with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, in particular article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually or in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”, and article 12(2), which provides that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually or in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, /de facto/ or /de jure/, adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”;
- iv. More generally, guarantee the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other international or regional instruments ratified by the Sri Lanka.

Addresses:

Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse, Prime Minister, Cambridge Place, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka, Fax: +94 11 2 682905 / 575454, E-mail: secpm sltnet.lk / bradmanw slt.lklk

Dr. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Chairperson, Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, No. 36, Kynsey Road Colombo 8, Sri Lanka, Fax: +94 11 2 694 924 / 696 470, E-mail: sechrc sltnet.lk

Mr. Chandra Fernando, Inspector General of Police (IGP), New Secretariat, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka, Fax: +94 11 2 440440 / 327877

Mr. Ranjith Abeysuriya PC, Chairperson, National Police Commission, 69-1 Ward Place, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka, Fax: +94 11 2 669 528, Fax HOME: +94 11 2 674148, E-mail: polcom sltnet.lk

Mr. Desmand Fernando, President, Bar Association of Sri Lanka, No. 129 Hulftosdorp Street, Colombo 12 Sri Lanka, Fax: +94 11 2 448 090

Ambassador Mrs. Sarala M. Fernando, Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in Geneva, rue de Moillebeau 56, Case postale 436, 1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland, Fax: + 41 22 734 90 84, Email: mission.srilanka ties.itu.int

Please also write to the diplomatic representations of Sri Lanka in your respective countries.

Geneva - Paris, October 20, 2005

Kindly inform the Observatory of any action undertaken quoting the code number of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory, an FIDH and OMCT venture, is dedicated to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need.

The Observatory was the winner of the 1998 Human Rights Prize of the French Republic.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

Tel and fax: FIDH : +33 (0) 1 43 55 20 11 / 33 (0) 1 43 55 18 80

Tel and fax OMCT : + 41 (0) 22 809 49 39 / + 41 (0) 22 809 49 29

Email : observatoire iprolink.ch

Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme
International

Federation for Human Rights - FIDH

17, passage de la Main d'Or

75011 Paris - France

tel : ++ 33 1 43 55 25 18 / fax : ++ 33 1 43 55 18 80

www.fidh.org