



March 7, 2011

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
United Nations Headquarters
New York, NY 10017
Via facsimile: +1 212 963-2155

Dear Secretary-General Ban:

We are writing to you out of concern for Prageeth Eknelygoda, a Sri Lankan columnist and cartoonist for the *Lanka eNews* website, who disappeared on January 24, 2010. Since then, his wife, Sandhya Eknelygoda, has been asking the Sri Lankan government for any information about his fate. She has been given no information from any person in the government. Eknelygoda's disappearance and his wife's efforts on his behalf have been widely reported in Sri Lankan and international media.

As a coalition of press freedom and human rights organizations, several of whom enjoy Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) consultative status with the U.N., we are well aware that Eknelygoda's disappearance is symptomatic of a broader malaise in Sri Lanka in which media workers are often victims of repression and violence. Our concerns for his safety are well founded.

On January 24, the anniversary of Eknelygoda's disappearance, his wife personally handed over a letter addressed to you requesting assistance from the United Nations to U.N. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sri Lanka Neil Buhne. The letter called on Buhne and you to encourage the government of Sri Lanka to expedite investigations into Eknelygoda's disappearance. We also note that Buhne is no longer posted to the Colombo office, and to the best of our knowledge, his successor has not been named.

Sandhya Eknelygoda feels, as we do, that given the Sri Lankan government's failure to provide any redress to her family, her only recourse is to urge the U.N. to persuade the government to provide details of her husband's whereabouts and conduct a credible inquiry into his disappearance. She feels, as we do, that the U.N. has an obligation to act given its mandate of promoting and defending human rights. She has asked us to say that she hopes the United Nations does not forsake her and her sons in this moment of need.

On February 18, only after public pressure, did your office say it had received her letter. U.N. spokesman Martin Nesirky told a press conference in New York that "letter is now being reviewed. We've asked for an update on this, and will let you know when we have it. The disappearance of any journalist anywhere is, of course, a matter of concern, and not just to the secretary-general."

For the last 13 months Eknelygoda and her two sons, Sanjaya, 16, and Harith, 13, have sought in vain for information about their husband and father. They have been met with Kafkaesque silence from the Sri Lankan government, the president's office, the attorney general's office, members of President Mahinda Rajapaksa's cabinet, members of parliament, the country's Human Rights Commission, the inspector general of police, and down to the lowest neighborhood-level police station. Not one government official at any level has given Eknelygoda's family one word of information about what has happened to him. The family is convinced there is no longer an active investigation being carried out.

Eknelygoda's disappearance and the failure of the government to conduct a credible investigation underscore the degree of impunity in crimes against journalists that is all too common in Sri Lanka. We feel the U.N. should intervene considering its human rights mandate and the government of Sri Lanka's glaring failure to take action on this issue.

We note that in his remarks to the press on February 18, Nesirky said that Eknelygoda's letter had also been forwarded to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We have copied High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay on this message.

The letter Eknelygoda delivered to Buhne contained all her contact information. We hope that a representative of the United Nations will contact her as soon as possible.

We, the undersigned organizations, are prepared to assist the United Nations in pursuing this case.

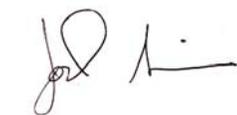
Sincerely,

Dr. Robert Russell



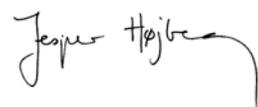
Executive Director
Cartoonists Rights Network International

Joel Simon



Executive Director
Committee to Protect Journalists

Jesper Hojberg



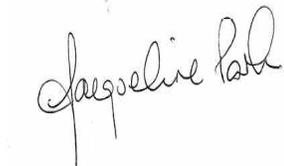
Executive Director
International Media Support

Jean-Francois-Julliard



Secretary General
Reporters Without Borders

Jacqueline Park



Asia-Pacific Director
International Federation of Journalists

CC:

High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay

Jung Hwan Lee, Sri Lanka desk officer, U.N. Department of Political Affairs United Nations

U.N. Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances

Frank LaRue, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

President Mahinda Rajapaksa

Ambassador Palitha T.B. Kohona, Permanent Representative to the United Nations