



# Where is Prageeth?



*Wife and sons of missing Sri Lankan Journalist Prageeth Eknaligoda*

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**We hope you will feel inspired to take action on all of our campaigns but remind you that all actions are optional.**

This mailing is also available to download at

[www.amnesty.org.uk/youth](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/youth)

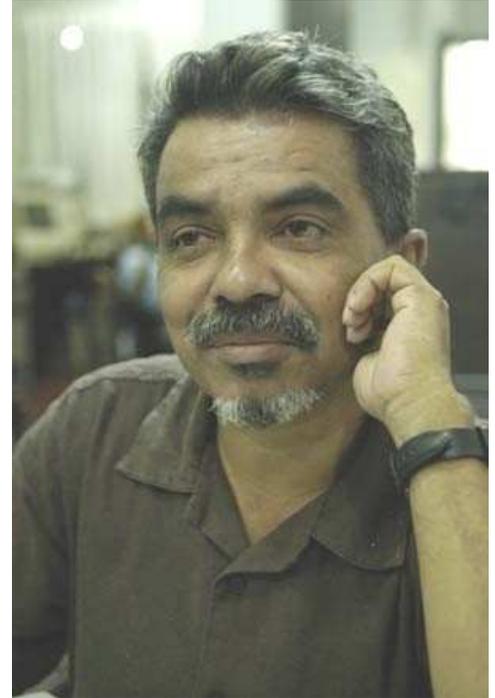
## YOUTH GROUP ACTION

### In Brief

On January 24<sup>th</sup> 2010 Sri Lankan journalist and cartoonist Prageeth Eknaligoda went missing after leaving work. Shortly before his 'disappearance', just three days before the country's presidential elections, Prageeth had written a comparison of the two candidates, coming out in favour of the opposition. In the days leading up to his 'disappearance' he told a close friend he believed he was being followed. Amnesty International is concerned that he may have been taken because he criticised the government.

In this mailing we are asking you to:

1. Sign an appeal card to the President of Sri Lanka and/or take part in our creative cartoon action.
2. Send a message of solidarity to Prageeth's wife Sandya.



### Background information

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The day after Prageeth went missing his wife reported it to the police. Instead of responding to her complaint, the police detained her for several hours at the police station before releasing her. She believes her husband was taken on orders of the Sri Lankan government because he criticised them. In the three years since he has been missing, two government officials have claimed that he has fled overseas but neither has been able to provide any evidence for this. Prageeth had previously been abducted in 2009, by a group who forced him into a white van.

#### **Sri Lanka: human rights abuses and white van disappearances**

Between 1983 and 2009 Sri Lanka was caught in a civil war between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority. An estimated 70,000 people died in this ethnic conflict and human rights abuses were committed by both sides. Concerns about human rights have continued since the army defeated the Tamil rebels in 2009. For example, no-one has been held to account for alleged war crimes, torture remains common, human rights defenders and journalists have been threatened and harassed for criticising the government and enforced disappearances are frequent. At the time that Prageeth disappeared, local residents reported seeing a white van without a number plate close to his house. White vans have been used in many abductions in Sri Lanka. In fact, the presence of a white van at the scene of disappearances has become so common that they are often referred to as "white van abductions".

# YOUTH GROUP ACTION

## Human Rights: a closer look

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When people are punished for drawing and writing they are denied their right to **freedom of expression**. However, this is not the only human rights issue highlighted in this case.



**Enforced Disappearances:** imagine being arrested, detained or abducted by the state. Nobody knows where you are and the state keeps your whereabouts secret; that way, you cannot be protected by the law. Enforced disappearances violate numerous human rights including, the right to safety, the right to family life and the right to a fair trial. It is not only cruel to the disappeared person, but it also tortures their loved ones.



**Impunity:** imagine your next door neighbour has detained and tortured a member of your family. Everybody on your street knows the truth, but nothing can be done about it because your neighbour works for the government. Your neighbour is protected by his position and free from punishment. Impunity refers to the failure of states to bring human rights violators to justice. Amnesty believes all people suspected of abusing human rights should be investigated and brought to justice in a court of law.

## The Campaign

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**Amnesty International is concerned that Prageeth may have been subjected to enforced disappearance** due to his professional activities as a journalist. Since 2006, fifteen journalists have been killed and 25 forced to flee Sri Lanka in fear of their lives. We have four main aims:

1. We want to know where Prageeth is and what happened to him.	2. We would like the Inspector General of Police to carry out an impartial (unbiased) investigation into the disappearance of Prageeth.
3. We would also like the Inspector General to make the findings of the investigation public and bring those responsible to justice.	4. We would like that all journalists in Sri Lanka to be able to express themselves freely and to be free from abuse, threats and the climate of fear.

## YOUTH GROUP ACTION

### Discussion exercise

Prageeth is a cartoonist and frequently illustrates issues such as media freedom, political power and social disadvantage. Before taking action for Prageeth you may like to discuss some of his cartoons. Hand out the four examples at the end of this mailing and have a discussion based on the following questions:

1. For each of the cartoons, what is the main message that Prageeth wants to get across?
2. What specific human rights issues is he depicting?
3. Which cartoon is your favourite and why?

If anyone gets stuck, here are the titles of the cartoons:

1. The lunacy of history is hostile to the freedom of the media
2. If we lose our voice
3. Providing your eyesight is the media's sacred duty
4. War is a self-destructive way to barbarity

It might also be useful to give people a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for question 2 (see Resources section for how to order UDHR passports).

To see more of Prageeth's cartoons go to:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12239382>

## TAKE ACTION 1: Postcard Action

We are calling on the President of Sri Lanka to ensure that the investigation into the disappearance of Prageeth Eknaligoda is impartial, thorough, and immediate! We've sent sample postcards for you to sign but you can order more (see *Resources/Further info* section). The more people who show their concern about Prageeth the less easy it will be for President Mahina Rakapaksa to ignore this case!

## CREATIVE VERSION: Be a cartoonist!

Instead of signing the enclosed postcard create your own version. On a piece of paper (nothing bigger than A4 please!) draw your own cartoon illustrating something to do with Prageeth's case.

Here are a few suggestions for themes:

*White vans*

***Freedom of Expression***

*Disappearances*

***Images illustrating freedom***

*Impunity*

**An image on the theme**

***or truth***

**'Where is Prageeth'?**

Below the cartoon or on the other side of the piece of paper write your message to the Sri Lankan authorities. Send them to us (address below).

## **YOUTH GROUP ACTION**

### **TAKE ACTION 2: Solidarity message**

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Send a solidarity message to Prageeth's wife and sons. His wife Sandya Eknaligoda has tirelessly campaigned for justice for her husband. She says "I think he was abducted by people who did not like the truth".

Send a card with a supportive personal message such as 'We support your struggle for truth and justice. Stay strong!'. Feel free to accompany your message with a drawing inspired by Prageeth's work.

Please send **all** your actions for Prageeth to us at the address below. We will forward them onto the Sri Lankan authorities or to Prageeth's wife.

*Anne Montague - Youth Coordinator  
The Human Rights Action Centre  
17-25 New Inn Yard  
London, EC2A 3EA*

**Deadline: by the end of the autumn term please!**

### **Resources & More information**

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#### **Need more postcards or UDHR passports?**

Email me directly at: [anne.montague@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:anne.montague@amnesty.org.uk) or call 0207 0331590.

#### **For more information on human rights in Sri Lanka go to:**

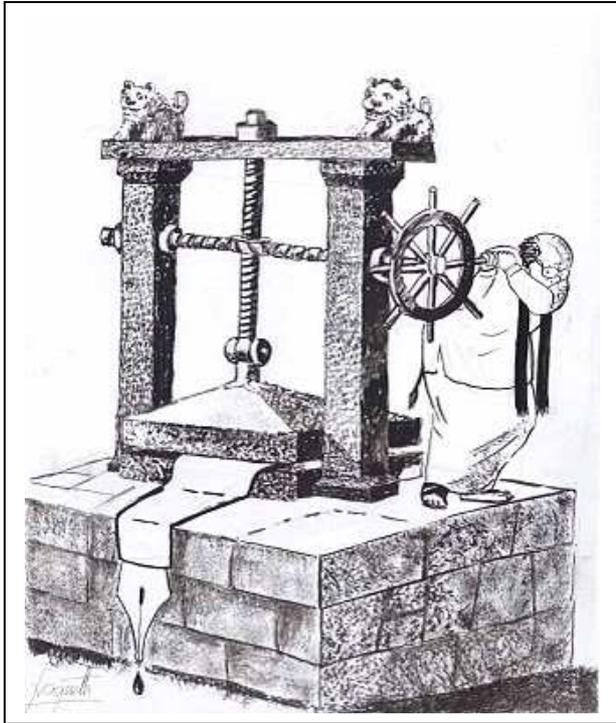
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/sri-lanka/report-2013>

#### **For the BBC's country profile on Sri Lanka:**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-11999611>

# YOUTH GROUP ACTION

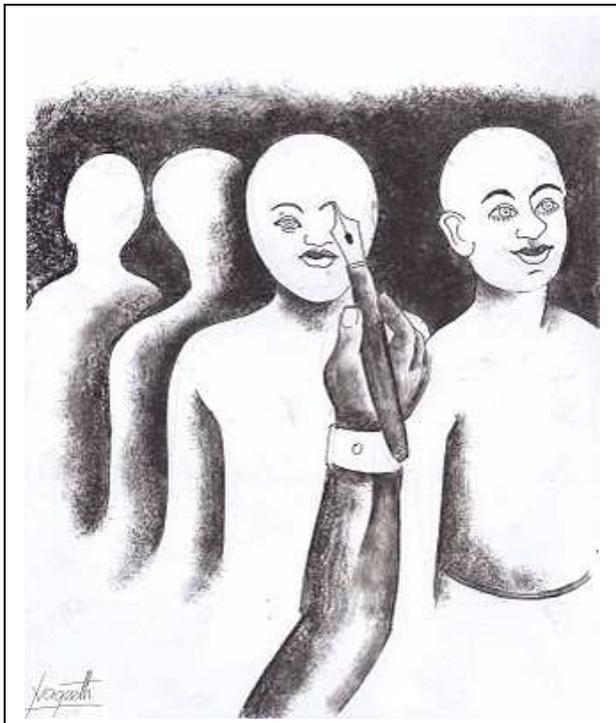
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