

PRAGEETH EKNELIGODA - Letter Writing instructions below



Prageeth Ekneligoda is a Sri Lankan journalist and cartoonist who disappeared January 24th 2010 while returning home from work. At that time white vans were implicated in government abductions of journalists. A white van without plates was seen by neighbors the day of his disappearance. When he did not come home his wife Sandya reported him missing but when she later checked the police station for news they claimed to have lost the original report. Her now over 10 year long efforts to find out what became of her husband have stalled in the courts without a conclusion. Witnesses in the military have been located and a few testified but there has been no action to prosecute by the court.

Prageeth is a journalist and cartoonist from the majority Sinhalese ethnic group. Two days before he was abducted, he had published an article critical of the President. Amnesty International believes that Prageeth was made a target for his outspoken criticism of the government and they report that “state agents” and paramilitary groups had abducted several journalists prior to Prageeth.

During these years, Prageeth’s wife Sandya Ekneligoda has become a leader to others seeking investigation of many disappeared in Sri Lanka. In 2020 some witnesses from the military were called to testify at a “Trial at Bar” (3 judge panel without jury) but this process was not completed. The CID (Civilian Court Criminal Investigation Division) has been unable to get information from the government or military that would help the investigation. Throughout the process both the CID and Sandya have received threats.

Sri Lanka must guarantee truth, justice and reparations to the family of Prageeth and all families whose loved ones have been forcibly disappeared. Amnesty International calls upon Sri Lanka to respect and fulfil their obligations under international law.

WRITING THE LETTERS: When writing your letter please request that the witnesses all testify, testimony is made public and if anyone is found legally responsible that they receive an impartial trial. Police investigations have not clarified Prageeth’s status or whereabouts. Call on the Sri Lankan government to effectively investigate his enforced disappearance and inform his family of his fate. Your letter will help protect Sandya by keeping a spotlight on the case. It will protect other journalists in Sri Lanka who need to report on abuses without fear. Please write to one or all of the officials below:

Ambassador Ravintha P. Aryasinha

Embassy of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

3025 Whitehaven Street N W

Washington DC 20008

(Salutation Dear Ambassador)

His Excellency The President

Hon Gotabaya Rajapaksa

Presidential Secretariat

Galle Face,

Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

(Salutation Your Excellency)

Hon Ali Sabry P.C.

Ministry of Justice - Sri Lanka

Superior Courts Complex

Colombo 12, Sri Lanka

Salutation: Dear Minister

Sample language:

I write to you regarding the enforced disappearance of cartoonist and journalist Prageeth Eknaligoda in 2010. We note with disappointment that very little information has been made available to the family or to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Sri Lanka must guarantee truth, justice and reparations to the family of Prageeth and all families whose loved ones have been forcibly disappeared. I call upon Sri Lanka to respect and fulfil their obligations under international law. Those responsible must be identified and fairly tried for their role. Families must be told the location of the missing family member.

I also ask for guaranteed protection for Prageeth's wife Sandya Eknaligoda as she advocates for all families who have had a forced disappearance tear their family apart.

(please fill in your own words or emphasis if desired, while staying with a respectful tone).

More background

Sri Lanka has been the scene of ethnic conflict for a long time. It is an island a short distance south of India. The majority is the Sinhalese ethnicity. Most in this group practice a form of Buddhism. The largest minority ethnicity is Tamil. Most Sri Lankan Tamils practice some form of Hinduism. There are also smaller Muslim and Christian minorities speaking Tamil and Sinhalese.

Prageeth is a journalist and cartoonist from the majority Sinhalese ethnic group who had criticized the president at the time of his disappearance. Efforts to investigate his disappearance have been opposed by forces in the government leading to long delay. For instance, in 2011 former attorney general Mohan Pieris on video told the UN Committee Against Torture that he heard from reliable sources Prageeth left his wife to travel abroad. When later subpoenaed and forced to testify in Sri Lanka court under oath, he claimed to have no knowledge of Prageeth's whereabouts.

The following year he was appointed Chief Justice of the Sri Lankan Supreme Court by then President Mahinda Rajapaksa the brother of the current president Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Sandya Eknaligoda, Prageeth's wife, would like attention to the case to pressure the government to act and also to protect her from possible attack by those who don't want her case or others investigated. She is a high profile campaigner for investigation of disappearances and her actions make her a target. Sandya received the International Women of Courage Award in 2017 from the US Department of State.