

Press release / 27th June 2008

State media level dangerous allegation against Sri Lanka Press Institute

Free Media Movement expresses its serious concern that State controlled media has levelled dangerous allegations against Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI) without verifying the story from SLPI.

State controlled Sinhala language newspaper 'Dinamina' considered as one of the mouth pieces of the government said in a lead story that *"the police intelligence has received information saying that a group of members connected to LTTE were sent to Norway through Denmark under the Journalist label by the Sri Lanka Press Institute. This foreign tour has taken place in the year 2007 ."*

In a press release issued on 26th SLPI said: "Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI) strongly refutes the prominently displayed front page story of today's (June 26, 2008) Dinamina newspaper titled: "Eight Tigers sent to Norway under journalist label" as baseless, misleading and factually incorrect."

According to SLPI there was no training program carried out by the SLPI in Denmark in the year 2007 as reported by the said newspaper. Applications were called on 05th September 2007 for a training program in the capital of Denmark, Copenhagen titled 'Media and Democracy.'

Approximately 100 journalists from television, radio and print media had applied, out of which 20 had been selected. The 20 journalists have attended the six-week training course from the 01st of April to May 03rd 2008. All of them have returned to the country on May 04, 2008 on board the same flight.

SLPI plays an important role in bringing member of media organization together in press freedom advocacy in Sri Lanka today and in this context FMM views this cooked up story as another attempt to intimidate media and media organizations.

Further this story implies the Tamil journalists who took part in the training programme as LTTE supporters. This allegation coming from a state media today is equal to unofficial death sentence passed on those journalists. FMM holds government and the news paper responsible for the dangerous situation that has been created for these journalists by this story who ever planted it.

FMM request Media Minister to make a formal apology to the SLPI and those journalists mentioned without delay.

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