



THE *peter* MACKLER AWARD
FOR COURAGEOUS & ETHICAL journalism.



J. S. Tissainayagam Named First Winner of Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism

NEW YORK, Aug. 31, 2009/- Global Media Forum and the US branch of Reporters Without Borders are pleased to announce that respected Sri Lankan journalist and editor J. S. Tissainayagam has been selected as the first winner of the Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism. Tissainayagam will be formally awarded the prize at a ceremony at the National Press Club in Washington, DC on October 2, 2009. The key note speaker for the ceremony will be Marcus Brauchli, executive editor of the Washington Post.

J. S. Tissainayagam is a respected Tamil journalist and editor who wrote for the North Eastern Monthly Magazine and the Sunday Times in Sri Lanka. And is the founder of the website Outreachsl.com. He was arrested March 7, 2008 by the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) of the Sri Lanka police. He has been charged under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) amid allegations of physical and emotional abuse by TID forces and got a 20 year sentence on terrorism charges today. "The imposition of this extremely severe sentence on Tissainayagam suggests that some Sri Lanka judges confuse justice with revenge," Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said. "With the help of confessions extracted by force and information that was false or distorted, the court has used an anti-terrorism law that was intended for terrorists, not for journalists and human rights activists."

According to, Tissainayagam's case is the first known instance in the democratic world of a journalist being charged under the provisions of an anti-terror law. Jean-Francois Julliard, Secretary General of RSF, stated that "We are happy to reward J. S. Tissainayagam in 2009, a terrible year for Sri Lanka. This country needs journalists who are determined and concerned with finding the truth. J. S. Tissainayagam is one of those and should never have been imprisoned. Sri Lanka will never know peace if the press is not free to play its role of fourth power. Sri Lankans have the right to be informed about what is happening on their island. They have the right to read words written by men like J. S. Tissainayagam."

About the Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism

The Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism was founded in June, 2008 to honor the memory of Peter Mackler, a Brooklyn-born thirty-five year veteran journalist who championed ethical journalism, freedom of expression, and who helped transform the news agency Agence France Press (AFP) into the international competitor it is today. Mackler also founded Global Media Forum, which has helped train journalists and non-profit organizations to use the media as a tool for social change, and Project Plato, which teaches journalism as a life skill to teenagers.

The Peter Mackler award rewards journalists who fight courageously and ethically to report the news in countries where freedom of the press is either not guaranteed or not recognized. The Award ceremony will take place on October 2, 2009 at 6PM at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, 529 14th St. N.W, 13th Fl.; Washington, DC 20045. The ceremony will be followed by a networking hour. There will be a silent auction.

Contacts:

Camille J. Mackler
Project Director, Peter Mackler Award
Global Media Forum
Tel: +1-917-655-3548
Email: cmackler@globalmediaforum.com

Clothilde Le Coz
Washington Director
Reporters Without Borders
T : +1-202-256-5613
Email : clc@rsf.org