

**TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN SRI LANKA: PRESS FREEDOM
THROUGH THE EYES OF JOURNALISTS**



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ABSTRACT

Transitional justice is a pressing issue in post-war Sri Lanka. The country's new national unity government co-sponsored the 2015 UNHRC Resolution 30/1 'Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka' which advocated a national process of reconciliation. Since then, however, the Government has been slow to implement transitional justice measures, bringing to question the political will, and putting the entire process at risk of losing political momentum and the window of opportunity. The role of the media in any transitional justice process is pivotal. However, their involvement is largely ignored in Sri Lanka. The role of a journalist is vague and undefined when it comes to reporting on transitional justice processes. This thesis studies the lack of press freedom during the period of transitional justice in Sri Lanka from the point of view of Tamil journalists as actors affected by transitional justice and responsible for communicating it to Tamil communities. The thesis attempts to understand the oppression faced by Tamil journalists and examine their inclusion and representation within the transitional justice process. To achieve this, 15 Tamil journalists were interviewed with qualitative methods being paired with hermeneutic methods to carry out the study. The results of this study show that press freedom in Sri Lanka still does not meet international standards, and this inadequate state of expression and press freedom directly impacts the country's efforts on transitional justice. Tamil journalists in particular are unable to report freely on the issue in varying ways depending on their positions and locations. The thesis concludes that Sri Lanka has to take seriously the two year extension given on Resolution 30/1 in improving freedom of expression and ensuring proper inclusion and representation of Tamil journalists.

**KEY WORDS: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION / PRESS FREEDOM /
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