

Attorney General Mr. Dappula de Livera
Attorney General's Department
Hulftsdorp Street,
Colombo 12
Sri Lanka
Fax: +94 112 436421
Email: administration@attorneygeneral.gov.lk

Dear Mr de Livera,

I am deeply concerned about the arbitrary arrest of award winning Sri Lankan writer Shakthika Sathkumara, on 1 April 2019 for simply writing, and sharing, a short story. Without committing any crime, he remains detained in Kegalle prison for almost 4 months now.

Shakthika Sathkumara's literary contributions have been recognized for awards by various institutions including the Department of Cultural Affairs and Cultural Affairs Division of the Chief Ministry of North Western Province. Mr. Sathkumara's family, including his wife Yanusha Lakmali and their two children age 4 and 1 ½ years, are deeply disturbed by the turn of events, having Shakthika remanded for nearly four months. Yanusha has lodged a complaint with the Human Rights Commission and a Fundamental Rights petition has been filed with the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka on behalf of Shakthika as well.

The use of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Act to detain and prosecute writers for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression is a clear violation of international law in general, and specifically the ICCPR, as well as infringement of the right to freedom of thought and expression guaranteed by the constitution of Sri Lanka. The very law that is meant to protect people's fundamental rights in Sri Lanka, including freedom of expression, is now being misused to violate them.

I, therefore, urge you to drop all charges against Shakthika Sathkumara and call for his immediate and unconditional release. Also, I appeal the Sri Lankan authorities to stop using ICCPR Act to threaten, harass and prosecute writers and activists for peacefully expressing their opinions.

Yours sincerely,