



Centre for Policy Alternatives,
Colombo, Sri Lanka



International Federation of
Journalists



European Union

Public Appeal for Public Service Media

We, the undersigned, support the development of a strong democratic and professional media culture that serves the plurality of interests in the community, and which is not solely determined by commercial, party political, or government interests.

Fair, balanced and independent media is essential to good governance, effective public administration and the achievement of a durable and democratic peace in Sri Lanka.

A professional media with a responsibility to the public interest is the crucial focus of the series of checks and balances central to a healthy democracy.

As Sri Lankan citizens groups have been campaigning for public service media, we now call on politicians, public authorities, civil society and all media groups to unite around a program to enhance public service values in Sri Lanka's media.

We note that as a consequence of partisan politicization of institutions over the last four decades what is referred to as state media in Sri Lanka is essentially government controlled media. We strongly urge that the media institutions so defined be transformed into genuinely public service media institutions as a matter of priority.

We appeal for support for the following objectives:

- Creation of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, as proposed by the RKW Goonesekere Committee on Media reforms in 1994, the

Colombo Declaration on Media Freedom and Responsibility 1998, and the *Public Broadcasting For All* Colombo Declaration 2003.

- Implementation of the recommendations of the Sidath Nandalochana Committee (1994) in respect of broad-casting the ownership of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited (ANCL).
- Creation of a legal framework that transforms SLRC, SLBC, ITN and ACNL into truly public service media institutions through enshrining editorial independence and other public service media values.
- Enhancing editorial independence and protecting citizen's rights by establishing a credible complaints and independent monitoring mechanism for these media institutions not dominated by government.
- These institutions must meet International Labour Organization standards.
- Promotion of models for financing state media that guarantee funding without compromising their independence.
- Establishment, promotion and the securing of funding of community radio stations to strengthen community voices and stakeholdership in media initiatives run by and for local communities.
- Self-regulation by journalists and media professionals through a comprehensive code of ethics and high standards of accuracy, reliability, balance, and quality.
- Adequate efforts to train journalists and media workers in order to reach high standards of quality for news, education and entertainment programmes.
- Accountability of the media by enhancing transparent structures of management, appointment policies and complaints mechanism free of political and commercial interference.

We pledge our unequivocal support for this campaign.