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Media release

Free Media Movement condemns AG's order to release Lasantha Wickrematunga murder suspects

Calls it an attempt to legalize impunity

As Black January a month of remembrance and a rallying cry for justice for the brutal murder of journalist Lasantha Wickrematunge and the wave of attacks on media professionals comes to a close, a deeply alarming development has emerged with the Attorney General, Parinda Ranasinghe, issuing a letter to the effects that legal proceedings against three suspects in Lasantha's murder will be halted, paving the way for their release. This shocking move raises serious concerns about accountability and the rule of law.

One of the core promises made by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and the National People's Power (NPP) government was to uphold the rule of law and deliver justice for these heinous crimes. Yet, this commitment now stands in question. On January 8, the 16th anniversary of Lasantha Wickrematunge's killing, Minister of Mass Media Nalinda Jayatissa, speaking at a discussion with the Free Media Movement, solemnly vowed that justice would be served. Allowing the release of suspects in this case would be a blatant betrayal of the President's pledge and the minister's assurance.

In this context, it is indefensible for the government to evade accountability by citing that Attorney General Parinda Ranasinghe was appointed by former President Ranil Wickremesinghe. Such justifications are nothing more than an attempt to sidestep responsibility and do not absolve the government of its obligation to deliver justice.

While judicial amnesty does not legally extend to criminals in Sri Lanka, decisions like this create a dangerous precedent, emboldening impunity and undermining the rule of law.

We demand that President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and his government act immediately and decisively to rectify this injustice. Failure to do so will galvanize all those who seek justice into unified resistance against the government's actions. The President and his administration must remember that the people entrusted them with power to uphold integrity, not to betray it.

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