



People for Human Rights and Equality Inc. (PHRE)

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MEDIA RELEASE

People for Human Rights and Equality (PHRE) is deeply concerned about the continuing attempt to silence human rights activists and voices of dissent in Sri Lanka. The latest victim of this campaign is Mr Lakshan Dias, a prominent human rights lawyer and a forthright advocate of the rights of asylum seekers. He has provided legal representation in a number of cases involving deportation and immigration, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and allegations of torture. Recently he actively opposed the impeachment of the Chief Justice of Sri Lanka. Several other lawyers have received death threats for engaging in protests advocating the independence of the judiciary.

It is reported that Mr Dias is being followed by unidentified persons, who are monitoring his movements. Men on motorcycles and in a white van have been watching his residence since 22 February, and have questioned his neighbours and family members about him, creating a climate of fear and intimidation.

On numerous previous occasions human rights activists and journalists had been harassed in this manner as a prelude to assaults and murder. A well-known example is Mr Lasantha Wickremetunge who was similarly followed by 'unidentified people' before he was attacked and killed. The perpetrators have not been brought to justice yet. For this reason we fear for Mr Dias if urgent action is not taken.

PHRE calls upon all friends of Sri Lanka and human rights activists to take every action possible to demand and ensure the safety of Mr Dias. Any delay may result in another addition to the lengthening list of assaulted and murdered human rights activists in Sri Lanka.

15 March 2013