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MEDIA RELEASE

Despite much serious and reasoned criticism locally as well as internationally, the Sri Lankan government has gone ahead and impeached the Chief Justice Dr. Shirani Bandaranayake. During the lead up to the impeachment there was a virulent campaign against those who opposed the impeachment that labelled them traitors and described their opposition to the impeachment as part of an international conspiracy. The aftermath of the impeachment has witnessed the latest twist to this campaign. Several prominent lawyers, who questioned the legality of the impeachment process and protested against it, have been issued with death threats by an organization calling itself the *Patriotic Force that Liberated the Country*.

This is not the first time individuals who opposed the assault on democratic institutions in Sri Lanka were threatened. As several individuals who have been at the forefront of the campaign against eroding Human Rights in Sri Lanka have been murdered or abducted already, we cannot but take such threats and intimidation seriously. No one has yet been brought to account regarding these offences which makes us also question the Sri Lankan government's commitment to freedom of expression in Sri Lanka.

People for Human Rights and Equality calls upon the Sri Lankan government to act immediately to ensure the safety of the lawyers concerned and to carry out investigations into the threats issued. We also call upon all friends of Sri Lanka to exert their utmost influence on the Sri Lankan government to persuade it to carry out its responsibilities towards its citizens.

26 January 2013