

**Inspector General of Police
N K Illangakoon
New Secretariat, Colombo 1
Sri-Lanka**

Brussels, 13th of March 2013

Re: Concerns regarding the situation of lawyer, Mr Lakshan Dias

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it has also observer representatives from a further eleven European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE writes to express its serious concern over the situation of a lawyer, Mr Lakshan Dias, who has been subject to repeated acts of surveillance and intimidation.

Mr Dias is a prominent human rights lawyer, strongly involved in the defence of the independence of the judiciary and in legal assistance to victims of alleged human rights violations. In the past he provided legal representation in a number of high profile cases involving issues such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act, alleged torture, deportation and immigration.

The CCBE has been informed that, on 26 February 2013, Mr Lakshan Dias received a number of anonymous threatening phone calls, while before then, from 22 February, men on motorcycles and in a white van have been watching the lawyer's residence and have questioned his neighbours and family members about him, creating a climate of fear and intimidation.

According to the information we have received, Mr Lakshan Dias lodged a formal complaint with the Moratuwa Police; nevertheless it is not known whether the police gave any follow up to it.

The CCBE believes that these acts constitute an attempt to silence Mr Dias and restrict his peaceful and legitimate activity in defence of human rights.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Furthermore, Article 17 states that:

Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to investigate the reported surveillance and intimidation in order to guarantee the security and psychological integrity of human rights lawyer Lakshan Dias. The CCBE also urges you to take all necessary measures to guarantee that lawyers in Sri Lanka are able to perform their professional duties without fear of reprisal, hindrance, intimidation and harassment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. Tsouroulis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Evangelos TSOUROULIS
CCBE President