

Statement following the killing of Attorney Buddhika Mallawa Arachchi and his wife on 13th February 2026

The CLA notes the Statement of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (“BASL”) concerning the killing in broad daylight of Advocate Arachchi and his wife. The Bar Association of Sri Lanka has responded emphatically to these brutal killings.

The CLA wishes to express condolences to the families of Advocate Arachchi and his wife and sympathises with the legal profession in Sri Lanka for this appalling tragedy that undermines the rule of law and administration of justice in Sri Lanka.

Although investigations continue and the CLA does not intend to speculate on the motivation of those responsible for the brutal killing, this is another worrying example of lawyers throughout the Commonwealth being increasingly exposed to great personal risk. The risk can be palpably enhanced if lawyers are associated with their clients.

The legal profession requires lawyers to act independently, without fear or favour. The current climate of threats, intimidation, harassment and harm erodes the independence of the legal profession and diminishes the rule of law, human rights and meaningful access to justice.

It is apposite for the CLA to reiterate international standards, Declarations and Conventions regarding the role of lawyers in the context of the independence of the Bar.

[The Goa Declaration*](#) was adopted by Bar Leaders at the Commonwealth Law Conference in Goa in 2023. Clause 6 of this Declaration states:

Lawyers must be free to perform all their professional duties without threats, intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference or influence.

And Clause 8 states:

Lawyers must not be identified with their clients and/ their clients’ causes or interests, as a result of performing their professional duties and functions.

On 19 January 2026, the CLA issued a Declaration endorsing the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer (the Luxembourg Convention). By Article 6 (5) of the Luxembourg Convention, Governments who adopt the Convention:

“...shall ensure that lawyers do not suffer adverse consequences as a result of being identified with their clients or their clients’ cause.”

These statements reflect what was stated in the UN Basic Principles on Role of Lawyers 1990:

“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.

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

Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.”

Noting these international standards and commitments, the CLA:

- **urges** the authorities in Sri Lanka to take all necessary steps to rigorously investigate the killing of Advocate Arachchi and his wife, and to swiftly bring to due process of justice those responsible.
- **calls upon** those in authority in Sri Lanka to make a public statement acknowledging that lawyers in Sri Lanka are entitled to represent clients without becoming associated with the cause or the alleged offence of the client.
- **further calls upon** those in authority in Sri Lanka to ensure that lawyers in Sri Lanka are protected from personal risk or harm in the discharge of their professional duties, without fear or favour.

27th February 2026

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