

# URGENT ACTION

## DEFENDERS THREATENED IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN

**Human rights defenders Brito Fernando, Phillip Dissanayake and Prasanga Fernando have received death threats against themselves and their families.**

On 4 January severed dogs' heads were left in front of the homes of **Brito Fernando** and **Prasanga Fernando**, two human rights defenders working with the human rights organizations Right to Life and Families of the Disappeared. On 7 January both of them received threatening phone calls, which also referred to a third colleague, **Phillip Dissanayake**. All three men are well-known human rights defenders who were also politically active in support of the common opposition candidate in Sri Lanka's presidential election, held on 8 January.

The anonymous calls referred to the three men's efforts to challenge police in Anuradhapura, capital of the north central province, an apparent reference to their participation in monthly rallies by families of the disappeared which maintain that police in Anuradhapura are responsible for the enforced disappearance of a man in 2013.

The callers made threats against the three men, saying they knew where they lived and how they travelled. One caller stated that he knew where Phillip Dissanayake's children went to school. Prasanga Fernando was told to "make your funeral arrangements". His caller implied links to the authorities, saying, "You challenge the police in Anuradhapura, don't think that you can challenge us in the same way."

### **Please write immediately in English or your own language:**

- Calling on the Sri Lankan authorities to investigate the threats made against Brito Fernando, Phillip Dissanayake and Prasanga Fernando and their families as a matter of urgency, identify those responsible, and ensure that they are brought to justice;
- Urging them to ensure effective protection for all human rights defenders and their families against violence, threats and intimidation;
- Urging them to ensure that all activists are able to exercise their right to freedom of expression without fear of harassment, threats, intimidation, arbitrary arrest or enforced disappearance.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 FEBRUARY 2015 TO:**

#### Inspector General of Police

N K Illangakoon  
New Secretariat  
Colombo 1, Sri Lanka  
Fax: +94 11 244 0440 (keep trying)  
Email: igp@police.lk

**Salutation: Dear Inspector General**

#### **And copies to:**

#### Attorney General

Hon. Sarath Palitha Fernando  
P. O. BOX 502, Hulftsdorp,  
Colombo 12,  
Sri Lanka  
Fax: +94 (11) 243 6421  
Email:  
administration@attorneygeneral.gov.lk

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Human rights defenders in Sri Lanka demanding accountability for human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, have over the years been the target of smear campaigns, anonymous threats and physical assaults. The threats against these three activists come against the backdrop of a violent election campaign, in which opposition activists have overwhelmingly borne the brunt of attacks. As of 6 January, the independent Centre for Monitoring Election Violence had recorded at least 237 “major incidents” during the campaigning period, including one death, dozens of cases of assaults, intimidation or damage to property.

Madushka Haris De Silva and two of his friends were abducted from Anuradhapura by a group of men claiming to be police on 2 September 2013. All three were reportedly tortured. The following day, his friends were released by their captors, but Madushka Haris De Silva’s whereabouts remain unknown. Human rights defenders have launched a campaign to protest the failure of authorities to investigate his disappearance effectively. His wife has received threats for campaigning on his case and in November 2014 was reportedly abducted at gunpoint and threatened with death unless she stopped her activism.

Name: Brito Fernando, Phillip Dissanayake and Prasanga Fernando  
Gender m/f: all m

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