

URGENT ACTION

STUDENT FEARS FOR SAFETY AFTER DEATH THREATS

A Sri Lankan student who complained that his law school's final exams were being managed unfairly was abducted, interrogated and threatened with death before being released.

On the morning of 4 March law student **D.M. Thushara Jayaratne** was waiting at a bus stop in the Colombo suburb of Kohuwala when two men approached him, saying they wanted to record a statement. Thushara was afraid and tried to escape by boarding a bus leaving town. The two men followed him onto the bus and left it with him in the suburb of Pillawa. The men forced him into a waiting van and took him to an unknown location where he was held for nearly 12 hours; he was released in another suburb, Nugegoda. He was questioned about complaints he had made against the Law College Registrar and his statements to international organisations.

On 7 March, Thushara filed a complaint about his abduction and threats with the Inspector General of police and the Human Rights Commission (HRC), but the HRC refused to pursue the case.

A final-year law student, Thushara had filed a police report in December 2010 regarding a leaked test paper for the Commercial Law II exam, after having complaints rejected by the Law College and Sri Lanka's Bribery and Corruption Commission. He has also complained that Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa's eldest son, also a student at the state-run Sri Lanka Law College and Member of Parliament, had received preferential treatment during final exams.

After filing the report, Thushara told the police that he had received threatening calls to his mobile phone from the Office Manager of the Law College, who threatened him repeatedly with death or abduction if he did not withdraw his complaint. As a result of the threats, Thushara went into hiding and did not complete his last two exam papers. On 15 December he lodged complaints with the Chief Justice; the Ombudsman and National Human Rights Commission expressing fears for his safety. Thushara's complaints and subsequent threats he received were featured in numerous press reports, after which the number of threats decreased.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or your own language:

- Expressing concern for law student Thushara Jayaratne, and calling on the authorities to provide him with effective protection immediately;
- Calling on the authorities to put an immediate stop to all harassment and intimidation of Thushara Jayaratne for alleging irregularities in Sri Lanka Law College examination procedures;
- Calling for a full and impartial investigation into the harassment and death threats against Thushara Jayaratne, with the results to be published and all those responsible brought to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 MAY 2011 TO:

His Excellency the President

Mahinda Rajapaksa

Presidential Secretariat

Colombo 1

Sri Lanka

Fax: +94 11 2446657

Email: priu@presidentsoffice.lk or

lalith@icta.lk

Salutation: Your Excellency

Inspector General of Police

Mahinda Balasuriya

New Secretariat

Colombo 1

Sri Lanka

Fax: +94 11 2 440440 / 327877

Email: igp@police.lk

Salutation: Dear Inspector General

Secretary,

Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission

No. 108 Barnes Place

Colombo 07

Sri Lanka

Fax: +9411 2694924

Email: sechrc@sltnet.lk

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Thushara complained publicly in November 2010 that Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa's eldest son, also a student at the state-run Sri Lanka Law College and Member of Parliament, had received preferential treatment during final exams. This included being seated in an air conditioned room with access to a computer. On 3 December, Thushara alerted officials at the Law College that the question paper for the Commercial Law II exam had been leaked, and was being discussed by students before the examination. When the Law College officials rejected his complaint, Thushara attempted to report this to Sri Lanka's Bribery and Corruption Commission. Here too he was rejected, and was warned by an official that "the nature of the world is that big creatures will swallow small creatures." Thushara then filed a police report regarding the leaked test paper, and officials at the Law College were questioned by police about his allegations.

In January 2011, Thushara was ordered to testify before an internal inquiry at the Law College or face disciplinary action for making a false complaint against Law College officials. He appeared and repeated his allegations, but questioned the independence of the inquiry, which was supervised by officials he had accused of misconduct.

Harassment, intimidation and attacks against human rights defenders, journalists and other peaceful critics who expose past or present abuses in Sri Lanka continues. The Sri Lankan authorities have failed to take measures to stop these reprisals which has the chilling effect of silencing dissent.

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