



**CHRI** Commonwealth  
Human Rights  
Initiative



**SRI  
LANKA  
CAMPAIGN**  
FOR PEACE & JUSTICE

**Joint Statement by Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and Sri Lanka  
Campaign for Peace and Justice**  
**18 01 2013**

In Sri Lanka, following the controversial impeachment of the Chief Justice the government has now announced that its former senior legal advisor will be the new Chief Justice. The impeachment process in Sri Lanka went ahead at a fast pace with the support of the country's ruling party, ignoring decisions from the judiciary which determined the process to be unconstitutional. The government's move for impeachment is allegedly linked to a court decision during the tenure of the former Chief Justice, which struck down a controversial Bill before the Parliament – that sought to vest sweeping powers with the Finance Minister.

The choice of a close government aide, with a record of protecting the government from grave allegations of human rights violations, as the new Chief Justice, puts into question the ability of the judiciary to be independent.

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and the Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice reiterate that the actions of the government of Sri Lanka violate the Commonwealth (Latimer House) Principles on the Three Branches of Government, which are one of the fundamental values of the Commonwealth. We continue to be deeply concerned that member states are still committed to holding the Commonwealth's iconic summit in Sri Lanka, after which the country will also chair the association till the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 2015.

Recalling the Commonwealth Secretary-General's statement dated 13 January 2013 on the situation of the separation of powers in Sri Lanka, we call upon the Secretary-General to go beyond the mere expression of "deep disappointment" and recognise the continuing deterioration of democracy, human rights and rule of law in its totality. We urge the Secretary-General to initiate the process by which Sri Lanka would be brought on to the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)'s formal agenda for its serious and persistent violation of the Commonwealth's fundamental values. We further call upon CMAG member states [Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu<sup>1</sup>] to urgently consider the situation in the country before Commonwealth Day (11 March 2013), when formal announcements are expected on preparations for CHOGM.

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<sup>1</sup> Maldives is currently suspended from CMAG.