



## **Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative**

*working for the practical realisation of human rights in the countries of the Commonwealth*

**27th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council – 24 September 2014**

### **Item 2 and 10 General Debate**

Speaker: Aabha Chandran

Mr. President, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative thanks the High Commissioner for his update on the OHCHR investigation on Sri Lanka. CHRI welcomes all efforts made by the OHCHR to facilitate this important process, in particular the efforts taken to protect those that provide information to the investigation. It is paramount that this Council be conscious of the very real danger posed to people in Sri Lanka who cooperate with this investigation.

Many Sri Lankans who have previously cooperated with this Council have allegedly faced reprisals as a result of that work. Notably, following her August 2013 official visit to Sri Lanka, the former High Commissioner for Human Rights reported on incidences of reprisals against individuals she had met during her visit. Moreover, on various occasions, the names and occupational details of human rights defenders accused of being traitors have been broadcasted using State media, endangering their security. As noted by the High Commissioner, even while this session of the Council was underway, two prominent human rights lawyers, Namal Rajapakshe and Manjula Pathiraja, received death threats, allegedly in connection with their work.

CHRI is therefore deeply concerned for the safety of all individuals who intend to cooperate with this investigation, particularly in light of the open threats made by Keheliya Rambukwella, Sri Lankan government spokesperson and Minister for Mass Media and Information. Minister Rambukwella has publicly stated that all people who provide information to the investigation will face consequences proportionate to the kind of evidence they provide.

CHRI calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to live up to our shared Commonwealth values and immediately halt all attempts to restrict the flow of information to the investigation team. CHRI further calls on the OHCHR to continue to take all possible precautions to minimise the risks faced by individuals who cooperate with this investigation.

Finally, CHRI assures the High Commissioner of our continued support for his work towards accountability and reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

Thank you