



**CLA**

COMMONWEALTH LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

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## **Statement on Conviction of Mr. J. S. Tissainayagam in Sri Lanka**

The Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA) is a pan – Commonwealth professional association of lawyers and exists to maintain and promote the rule of law throughout the Commonwealth.

The CLA is extremely concerned about the arrest and recent imprisonment of Mr. J. S. Tissainayagam, a journalist in Sri Lanka. His subsequent trial and conviction under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) was based upon a statement he made under duress and immediate threats of torture and death.

The CLA recalls the recent IBA Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) report titled *Justice in Retreat: A Report on the independence of the legal profession and the rule of law in Sri Lanka* which raised serious concerns regarding the status of the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary and freedom of expression in Sri Lanka following various reports of murders and harassment of journalists. Mr. Tissainayagam's conviction is further evidence of these difficulties and raises additional concerns as to the wider respect of the government of Sri Lanka for freedom of expression and the rule of law. By virtue of its membership of the Commonwealth Sri Lanka agrees to abide by Commonwealth fundamental values such as human rights, including freedom of expression, and the rule of law.

The CLA reiterates previous calls by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Reporters without Borders, to immediately suspend Mr. Tissainayagam's prison sentence.

The CLA will continue to monitor proceedings in Mr. Tissainayagam's case and will support other organisations in their efforts to obtain justice for Mr. Tissainayagam.

Commonwealth Lawyers Association  
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