



**LAW SOCIETY**  
OF SOUTH AFRICA

**PRESS RELEASE**

***17 January 2013: For immediate release***

**LAW SOCIETY EXPRESSES GRAVE CONCERN AT IMPEACHMENT OF CHIEF JUSTICE OF SRI LANKA; CALLS ON SA GOVERNMENT TO TAKE A STAND**

The Law Society of South Africa (LSSA) expresses grave concern at what appears to be the politically motivated impeachment of the Chief Justice of Sri Lanka, Madam Justice Shirani Bandaranayake.

'It is a matter of grave concern when a country – and particularly a member of the Commonwealth – claims to respect the rule of law, the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary and legal profession on the one hand, but appears to violate these on the other,' say LSSA Co-Chairpersons Krish Govender and Jan Stemmet.

The impeachment of the Chief Justice comes after the Secretary of the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) of Sri Lanka, Manjula Tilakarante, was attacked in October last year at a time of heightened tension between the JSC and the Government of Sri Lanka. 'These incidents are indicative of the erosion of the Rule of Law and the fact that the Sri Lankan government appears to be intimidating the judiciary and the legal profession,' say Mr Govender and Mr Stemmet.

They add that the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers noted with concern at the end of last year that attacks and threats against members of the judiciary and lawyers, as well as interference in their work, have dramatically increased in Sri Lanka over the past few months.

The LSSA calls on the South African Government to condemn these developments in Sri Lanka and to urge the Sri Lankan Government to reinstate Judge Bandaranayake as Chief Justice. The South African Government must not be seen to remain silent in the face of these violations of the Rule of Law, while at the same time increasing its bilateral and trade relations with Sri Lanka.

The LSSA plans to take this matter up at the 18<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Law Conference being hosted by the Commonwealth Lawyers Association and the LSSA in Cape Town from 14 to 18 April 2013.

**ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE CO-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA, KRISH GOVENDER AND JAN STEMMETT**

by Barbara Whittle  
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**Editor's note:**

The Law Society of South Africa brings together its six constituent members – the Cape Law Society, the KwaZulu-Natal Law Society, the Law Society of the Free State, the Law Society of the Northern Provinces, the Black Lawyers Association and the National Association of Democratic Lawyers – in representing South Africa's 21 200 attorneys and 5 000 candidate attorneys.