

ISHR Board deplores reprisals against its member

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Statement by the Board of ISHR

23 March 2012

The Board of the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) deplores the attacks and reprisals currently being committed against its member, Ms Sunila Abeysekera, and other well-known Sri Lankan human rights defenders for promoting human rights in that country.

In the context of ongoing discussions at the United Nations Human Rights Council, on reconciliation and accountability for reported war crimes in Sri Lanka, Ms Abeysekera and other human rights defenders have become the subjects of a violent smear campaign by private and state-controlled media in Sri Lanka.

This campaign of misinformation, slander and indirect threats, which began in January this year, has named Ms Abeysekera amongst a small group of well-known human rights defenders, portraying them as traitors to their country.

There have also been cases of threats and intimidation against Ms Abeysekera and others at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. The situation has prompted the Council's president to denounce such actions and call for an investigation into these events.

As Ms Abeysekera's long-term professional colleagues and fellow Board members at ISHR, we condemn such attacks against her and her work in the strongest terms.

Sunila Abeysekera is an internationally recognised human rights expert with a long and honourable career behind her. We stand in solidarity with her and will continue to strongly support her efforts to bring light to important human rights issues in the region.

The Board of the International Service for Human Rights

Mehr Khan Williams, Rosemary McCreery, Jean-Marie Fakhouri, Reine Alapini-Gansou, Gustavo Gallón, Walter Kälin, Chris Sidoti.