LAWASIA
THE LAW ASSOCIATION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
FOUNDED IN 1966

11 March 2026

LAWASIA STATEMENT OF CONCERN REGARDING THE INTIMIDATION OF LAWYERS

LAWASIA expresses its concern about recent events in the Asian region involving the intimidation or assault of legal practitioners.

LAWASIA is deeply concerned by reports regarding the arrest in Pakistan in January 2026 of two lawyers, Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha, on charges related to their involvement in protests outside the Islamabad High Court, and the shooting in February 2026 of criminal lawyer Buddhika Mallawarachchi and his wife Nisansala Mallawarachchi, in Akuregoda, Sri Lanka.

LAWASIA is concerned at the apparent ongoing cycle of reprisals against lawyers, whether initiated by government or otherwise, who are targeted simply for fulfilling their duties as legal practitioners.

Relevantly, at its Council meeting in October 2025, LAWASIA passed a resolution reaffirming its commitment to the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers and commending the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyers 2025 to its member organisations.

The Basic Principles affirm the rights of lawyers to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly, and to take part in public discussion on matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights

The Convention obliges the parties to take measures in order to ensure the right to practise with independence and without discrimination, to avoid improper hindrance and interference and to ensure protection from attacks, threats, harassment and intimidation.

LAWASIA again urges its member organisations to remain alert to the abuse of lawyers which is related to the performance of their professional duties, and to register a protest in a strong and responsible manner in the event that they become aware of any such abuse within their jurisdiction.

Respect for the rule of law is fundamental to stable governance and, indeed, world order. Integral to respect for the rule of law is the right to legal representation. Any intimidation of lawyers which has the potential to disrupt or compromise their ability to practise their profession threatens this fundamental tenet and poses an unacceptable risk to society.

TL Yap
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