

## Media Release by Women's Organisations and Networks

### Breakdown of Law and Order

A number of concerned women's groups and networks join other organisations and individuals who have condemned the recent grenade attack on the residence of Mr. J.C Weliamuna the well known and respected human rights lawyer.

Women's organisations have in the past, drawn the attention of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Development and the National Committee on Women to acts of violence against women and children committed with impunity by armed persons in various parts of the country, including the North and East. We have in particular highlighted the failure to monitor and implement the Presidential Guidelines that seek to prevent abuse of authority.

The grenade attack on the Weliamuna residence took place at night, traumatizing his two infant children. The attack followed Mr. Weliamuna's professional involvement in two cases on police torture and bribery, and the gunning down of his client in the presence of the client's 11 year old child. Despite the public outcry on the attack against Mr. Weliamuna, unidentified persons later attempted to force their way into his office, and escaped on a motor bicycle.

In the last few days the press has also reported an assault by army personnel on a doctor at the Ragama Hospital who made a police complaint regarding a drug crime. A woman doctor who had also filed a case of criminal intimidation was gunned down by the accused, a soldier alleged to be from the Embilipitya army camp. These incidents are all symptomatic of a dangerous breakdown of law and order, and the incapacity of the government and law enforcement authorities to protect men, women and children in all parts of the country from criminal acts of violence, perpetrated through a perceived sense of power and impunity.

It is time for the President and the Ministers specifically entrusted with law enforcement and the protection of human rights to inform the public of the specific measures that they have taken as well as put in place. It is their responsibility to ensure that there is no impunity for criminal acts committed by members of the police and armed forces, and gunmen who move around easily with their weapons. Mere condemnation of these acts and promises of investigation are no longer acceptable. It is in times of conflict and military offensives that specific measures are vital to prevent impunity, enforce discipline and ensure public confidence in the rule of law. Everyone in the police and the army must be held accountable for protecting the life, liberty and property of civilians, men, women and children in the community.

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### Endorsing Organisations

1. Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR)
2. Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum (MWRAF)
3. Women's Education and Research Centre (WERC)
4. Academy of Adult Education for Women
5. Women and Media Collective (WMC)
6. Women in Need (WIN)
7. Agromart
8. Kantha Handa/Voice of Women
9. Kantha Shakthi
10. Women's Centre, Ja-Ela
11. Siyath
12. Wilpotha Kantha Ithurum Parishramaya
13. Sri Lanka Muslim Women's Conference (SLMWC)
14. Sri Lanka Women's NGO Forum
15. Action Network for Migrant Workers (ACTFORM)
16. Suriya Women's Development Centre (SWDC)
17. Women's Development Centre, Kandy
18. Uva Wellassa Farmer Women's Organization
19. Mothers and Daughters of Lanka (MDL)
20. Community Encouragement Foundation, Puttlum
21. Women's Resource Centre, Kurunegala
22. Women's Support Group
23. Women's Development Centre, Kurunegala
24. Dabindu Collective, Katunayake
25. Women's Development Centre, Badulla
26. Association of War Affected Women
27. Devasarana Independent Women's Action Committee, Kurunegala
28. Binthenna Women's Front
29. Community Education Centre, Malabe
30. Sunile Women's Centre, Welikanda

