**Sri Lanka: Analysis of Constitutional Right to Information Guarantee**

In the few months since it was elected, the new government of Sri Lanka has put in place a process to prepare a right to information (RTI) law and proposed a set of constitutional amendments which would provide fundamental rights protection for access to information. The Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) very much welcomes these moves, which will address a long-standing need in the country. At the same time, an analysis by CLD, released today, suggests that the proposed constitutional guarantee needs to be strengthened.

“Although it is a late-comer to RTI, the fact that the Sri Lankan government is moving forward simultaneously with both a constitutional guarantee and legislation is very encouraging”, said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. “It would be a great shame if this clear demonstration of democratic political will were undermined by rules that failed to conform to international standards.”

Key problems with the proposed constitutional guarantees for RTI, identified in CLD’s analysis, including the following:

- It contains an excessively long and broad list of grounds which may justify secrecy, including contempt of court, Parliamentary privilege and “preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence”.
- Amendments proposed by the Attorney General seek to limit the scope of the guarantee to whatever happens to be set out in law.
- The scope of the right is limited to an unduly narrow range of public authorities.


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