

In Memoriam: Basil Fernando (1944–2026)



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Sri Lanka Advocacy (SLA), the German network on human rights in Sri Lanka, deeply regrets to know that Basil Fernando died in Hong Kong on 30 September in the age of 81. Since its beginning in 2010, SLA benefitted from Basil Fernando's immense knowledge of human rights, and of Sri Lanka's embedding into international law. He had also deeply impressed us by his extraordinary commitment to the human dignity of all people in Sri Lanka regardless of their ethnic or religious background.

I first met Basil Fernando in person at the United Nations in Geneva starting in 2013 through his work as Executive Director of the *Asian Human Rights Commission* (Hong Kong) and his special commitment to the families of the disappeared. I once had the pleasure of welcoming him as a panelist at one of our side events at the UN Human Rights Council—at a time when direct attempts by Sri Lankan diplomats to intimidate opponents on UN grounds were commonplace. In later years, I had the chance to learn from his expertise on striving for a strong institutional framework for an independent judiciary in Sri Lanka and to protest against the instrumental abuse of the law by the then Rajapaksa regime.

We were happy to congratulate him in 2014 when he received the *Right Livelihood Award*, known as the “Alternative Nobel Prize” – as a staunch advocate for human dignity, who himself was endowed with warmth and a profound understanding of human life.

We, at Sri Lanka Advocacy, extend our deepest condolences to his wife and daughter, as well as to our colleagues at the *Asian Human Rights Commission* and the *Asian Legal Resource Centre*. Basil Fernando was our mentor and inspiration.

Be sure, Basil, we will keep you in mind by carrying your work forward. Farewell.

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