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## Civil society calls for probe into Asma threat

### ICG urges govt to take action for human rights activist's safety

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ISLAMABAD: Civil society representatives and human rights activists organised a press conference Monday to condemn the alleged assassination threats to respected lawyer and human rights activist Asma Jahangir. They also demanded that the government set up an impartial judicial commission — with extensive powers, mandate and authority — to investigate the matter in a transparent manner and make its findings public.

“We express our strongest apprehensions, and we sternly warn that if any harm were to befall (sic) Asma Jahangir — or

indeed, any member of her family — we will hold the government responsible, no matter who might actually be behind it, as in a democratic dispensation it is the primary role of the civilian LEAs to take the lead responsibility,” said the statement issued at the press conference.

Representatives of civil society organisations including Sungi Development Foundation, Rozan, Aurat Foundation, as well as Tahira Abdullah and Kishwar Naheed addressed the press conference. Tahira Abdullah read out the press statement for the media in which the civil society expressed its shock and horror at the revelations made

public by Asma Jahangir at a press conference in Lahore.

**Our diplomatic correspondent adds:** Support for Asma Jahangir continued to pour in Monday, and this time it was the International Crisis Group which strongly condemned the alleged plot to assassinate human rights activist Ms Jahangir, a member of the Crisis Group Board of Trustees and former President of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

The Crisis Group called on the government of Pakistan to take prompt action to pre-empt any such plot and immediately investigate the source of these threats, to be followed by prose-

cutions as appropriate. “With this foreknowledge and warning, it would be unconscionable for Pakistan’s governing authorities not to take every possible precaution to protect Asma and her family,” said Louise Arbour, President and CEO of the International Crisis Group. “This most recent threat against Asma is not only reprehensible and unacceptable, it is a challenge to the rule of law in Pakistan and a clear statement of disrespect for international human rights norms, which Asma has defended and advanced throughout her career,” said Tom Pickering, Chairman of the Board of the International Crisis Group.