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இலங்கை மனித உரிமைகள் ஆணைக்குழு
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

TORTURE CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE. ALL STAKEHOLDERS MUST PROACTIVELY WORK TOWARDS ERADICATING ALL FORMS OF TORTURE.

Message by Justice (Rtd) Rohini Marasinghe, Chairperson, HRCSL on International Day in Support of victims of Torture - 2022

In December 1997, The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 26th June as the International Day in support of victims of torture, to mark the historic day in history in which, The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment came into effect. Today as we mark 25 years since then, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) whilst expressing its solidarity with all victims of torture and their families, firmly reiterates the need for the state, law enforcement officials and all relevant parties to take active measures to give effect to the Convention and proactively work towards eradicating all forms of torture.

The right to be free from torture or inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment is guaranteed to all persons in Sri Lanka by virtue of Article 11 of the Constitution of Sri Lanka. Furthermore, through the enactment of the Convention against Torture Act No. 22 of 1994, Sri Lanka expressly recognized torture and ill-treatment as a cognizable and non-bailable offence punishable with imprisonment. However, given the heightened prevalence of incidents of torture across the island, the HRCSL among its lawfully mandated functions, has listed eradicating torture and ensuring rights of the victims of torture as one of its top priorities.

The HRCSL having launched its zero-tolerance policy on torture maintains a 24 hour hotline to report incidents of torture and also closely monitors the status and the rights of the detainees, persons in custody, and prisoners to ensure such persons are free from torture, cruelty, and inhumane degrading treatment. Moreover, with the objective of providing the required knowledge and training on promotion and protection of human rights, workshops and training programmes with a special focus on cases of torture and support for victims of torture are being organized for law enforcement officials including Police Officers and Prison Officers.

In pursuance of ensuring that no persons, particularly detainees, prisoners and other persons in custody are subjected to torture cruel and inhumane degrading treatment by the law enforcement officials, the Commission recently had discussions with the Inspector General of Police and reiterated the need to take effective measures to that end with immediate effect.

The HRCSL has also implemented a “National Preventive Mechanism” (NPM) according to the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture, to monitor detainees in detention centers. The major fortitude of this establishment is to assign powers to a specialised division under the HRCSL to

evaluate the conditions of detention centers and to accelerate the working progress of the HRCSL in preventing torture. Moreover, this division is able to take action against torture or brutality, welfare and living conditions of detainees.

Thus, on this significant day, the Commission, within its mandate reassures all persons on the Commission's commitment to ensure the right of all persons to be free from torture. It also calls on the government, law enforcement authorities, civil societies, individuals and all other parties to proactively work towards eradication of all forms of torture and render their fullest support within their capacities to victims of torture and their families.