



Message of the Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka International Day in Support of Victims of Torture – 2025

Each year on June 26th, the world observes the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. This day commemorates the entry into force of the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1987. This year, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) marks this significant day under the powerful theme, "It could be me." This theme underscores the universal vulnerability to torture, emphasizing that any person could be subjected to it, and reiterates the absolute principle that no individual should be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, regardless of their reputation or alleged crimes.

On this day, it is emphasized that the constitutionally guaranteed fundamental freedom from torture is not limited to physical pain. It also encompasses severe mental pain inflicted by a public officer or other person acting in an official capacity, specifically:

- i) to obtain a confession or information from a victim or third person
- ii) to punish for any act that has been committed or is suspected of having been committed,
- iii) to intimidate or coerce a third person to do or refrain from doing something, or
- iv) for any reason based on discrimination.

Thus, no form of torture or other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment should be tolerated. All survivors of torture, regardless of the severity of their ordeal, deserve justice, support, and the right to live with dignity.

The fight against all forms of torture demands more than just legislative and institutional mechanisms. It requires an active and vigilant society, comprised of citizens who have internalized the core values of human rights and understand the inalienable nature of these rights. While acknowledging the sensitivity and difficulties associated with incidents of torture, the Commission humbly calls upon all citizens to be proactive in fulfilling the collective responsibility of eradicating torture from our society. When incidents of torture are witnessed, inform the relevant authorities. When victims seek justice, support them with compassion and dignity. And when the

relevant justice sector institutions execute their functions to prevent torture and hold perpetrators accountable, cooperate fully and honestly.

The Commission remains committed in promoting and protecting human rights of all persons without any discrimination. In addition to its investigative functions to render justice to victims of torture and its monitoring functions to prevent torture, it intends to amplify its awareness-raising initiatives on torture prevention in the future. To that end, special programs and activities will be organized for communities from diverse sectors and age groups. We believe that together, we can and must ensure that torture is a relic of the past and not a reality of our present or future.

Justice L.T.B Dehideniya

Chairman

Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

26th June 2025