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இலங்கை மனித உரிமைகள் ஆணைக்குழு
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

Chairperson's Message on World Refugee Day 2025

Today, on World Refugee Day 2025, we take a moment to show solidarity with refugees and asylum seekers, honoring their stories and offering unwavering support for their struggles. This year's theme, "Solidarity with Refugees", reminds us that when people work together in our towns, our countries, and across the world, we can achieve great things. True solidarity begins with action: welcoming refugees into our communities and advocating for policies that protect and support those who have been forced to flee. A refugee or asylum seeker is not just someone who left their home; a refugee is a person who was forced to leave because of war, violence, or danger. They are compelled to leave everything behind to find safety and the hope of a better life. Even after facing many hardships, refugees and asylum seekers still hold on to hope for the future. That future depends on all of us. The most important message today is this: every human life is valuable. No matter where someone comes from, what they believe, or how they look, everyone has the right to live in peace, with respect and freedom.

Refugees and asylum seekers are not merely statistics. They are teachers, doctors, artists, students, parents, and children. They have dreams and talents. And often, when refugees and asylum seekers become part of our communities, they help make them stronger. The theme "Solidarity with Refugees" urges all of us in Sri Lanka to take real steps. It means doing more than feeling sympathy; it means standing together to create fair laws and policies that treat everyone with dignity. It means supporting refugees and asylum seekers to access basic healthcare, education and housing.

Sri Lanka has a long history of engagement with various categories of displaced persons, including refugees, asylum seekers, returnees, and stateless individuals. During the three decades of civil

war and the periods of civil unrest in the southern part of the country, thousands of Sri Lankans sought refuge abroad to ensure their safety. At the same time, the country has dealt with issues related to statelessness, particularly among the Malaiyaha Tamil community.

Currently, with Sri Lanka enjoying greater stability, it has become a destination for individuals fleeing civil unrest or conflict in other parts of the world. As a result, 394 refugees/ asylum seekers and 118 stateless persons have arrived in Sri Lanka, expressing concerns about their safety in their countries of origin. Some reside within local communities, while others are housed in three designated detention facilities.

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, through its National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), is committed to safeguarding the rights of all persons, regardless of their nationality or legal status. As part of its mandate, the Commission conducts regular visits to these locations and facilitates dialogue to ensure the protection and dignity of all individuals.

So today, let us promise to protect the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, just as we protect the rights of everyone else. Let us speak out against injustice and hate. Let us choose compassion and cooperation over fear and division. Together, we can make a difference. Together, we can show the world that community is more powerful than war, hate, or fear. To all refugees, asylum seekers, returnees, and stateless individuals around the world: we see you. We hear you. We stand with you.

Justice L T B Dehideniya
Chairman
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

20th June 2025