

TOT Programme for Sri Lanka Army Training Instructors

As part of its ongoing efforts to foster a culture of human rights within State institutions, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) successfully conducted a three-day Training of Trainers (TOT) programme for 25 Army training instructors from 29th to 31st July 2025 at the Sri Lanka Army Security Forces Headquarters (West). The TOT was initiated to strengthen the capacities of military instructors who play a pivotal role in developing skills and knowledge of Armed forces personnel. By enhancing their understanding of human rights principles, international standards, and constitutional guarantees, the HRCSL aims to promote a right -based approach within Sri Lanka Army and support broader institutional reforms. This initiative is also in alignment with the Commission's statutory mandate under the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka Act, No. 21 of 1996.



The first day of the TOT commenced with a foundational session on “Human Rights and Human Values” and “History and Recent Developments,” conducted by Mr. D.M. Dissanayake, a renowned democracy, governance



and human rights expert and strategy developer. This session not only introduced the participants to the historical context of human rights but also explored how human values underpin the principles of human rights. The lesson was enriched with various interactive and engaging activities that enabled participants to relate abstract principles to their own professional contexts.

Following this, the next session of the day was delivered by Mr. Kapilan Villavarajan, Director (International Affairs) of the HRCSL, who provided an in-depth understanding of international human rights mechanisms. His lecture offered insight into how UN institutions and frameworks operate to protect human rights and highlighted the importance of cooperation between state sovereignty and international law.





The evening session turned the focus towards the national context, with a detailed lecture on constitutional provisions related to fundamental rights conducted by Ms. Menaka Herath, Director (Education and Special Programmes Division) of the HRCSL. This session was followed by an engaging case study analysis that allowed the participants to explore how these constitutional guarantees apply in real life situations, particularly in the context of military operations and law enforcement. The first day concluded with a comprehensive session on the functions, mandate, and operational role of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka. This session reinforced the significance of HRCSL.



The second day began with a short activity based recap of the previous day's learning, allowing participants to consolidate their understanding and share reflections. The first formal lecture of the day focused on arrest, detention, and the legal guarantees of freedom against torture. This vital topic was covered with legal precision and practical relevance. It was followed by a session on human rights in counter terrorism and national security, conducted by Mr. Nimal Punchihewa, Commissioner of HRCS. Both sessions were supported by detailed case study analyses that encouraged critical thinking and emphasized lawful and rights respecting conduct during national security operations.

Mr. Prabodha Rathnayaka, AAL, conducted the next session on the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. He delivered a focused lecture on the constitutional and legal guarantees of these rights, providing a legal framework for understanding freedom of expression and peaceful assembly within the Sri Lankan context, in order to raise participants' awareness on how to overcome the challenges faced in balancing public order with civil liberties.



The final session of the second day was consisted with a panel discussion on group rights. This comprehensive session featured several distinguished panelists: Prof. Anusha Edirisinghe spoke on women's rights and the various forms of discrimination and violations women continue to face; Ms. Rasanjali Pathirage addressed the rights of persons with disabilities (PWD) and the importance of accessibility and inclusion; Ms. Bhoomi Harendran offered insight into the challenges experienced



by the LGBTQI community; and Mr. Nihal Chandrasiri shared perspectives on the rights of refugees. The discussion was followed by an engaging Q&A session where participants raised questions and clarified their doubts, leading to a deeper understanding of the relevance of group rights in military contexts. The day concluded with a summary reflection on the learnings.

The final day of the TOT focused on enhancing communication and instructional skills, essential competencies for trainers in the military. The morning sessions centered around programme development and effective communication techniques. Through a variety of participatory activities, instructors explored how to structure and deliver impactful human rights training.

A particularly engaging part of the day involved participants preparing and delivering group presentations. Each group was tasked with presenting what they had learned over the course of the TOT, with emphasis on how they intended to integrate this knowledge into their ongoing training responsibilities. This exercise provided a platform to



showcase creativity, analytical thinking,

and a commitment to rights based education within the Army.

TOT programme concluded with a certificate award ceremony, which was graced by HRCSL Commissioners Mr. Nimal G. Punchihewa and Professor T. Thanaraj, along with Colonel K.A.P.

Kuruppu, USP, Director of the Directorate of Legal Services, Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, who participated on behalf of the Sri Lanka Army.



