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கிலங்கை மனித உரிமைகள் ஆணைக்குழு
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

Hon. Ananda Wijepala,
Minister,
Ministry of Public Security and Parliamentary Affairs,
18th Floor, 'Suhurupaya',
Battaramulla.

Dear Hon. Minister,

Resource Allocation for Sri Lanka Police and Necessary Institutional Reform

We write to you in terms of section 10(d) of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka Act, No. 21 of 1996, which mandates the Commission 'to make recommendations to the Government regarding measures which should be taken to ensure that administrative practices...are in accordance with international human rights norms and standards'.

The Commission recognises that Sri Lanka Police is a crucial state institution mandated to effectively maintain law and order and ensure public security in the territory of Sri Lanka. The Commission has continuously engaged Sri Lanka Police and has recently held constructive dialogues with the present Inspector General of Police (IGP). It is noted with appreciation that such constructive dialogue has led to several key internal circulars being issued by the IGP based on recent guidelines and recommendations of the Commission, including guidelines and recommendations on the prevention of custodial and encounter deaths, the protection of human rights defenders, and the protection of transgender persons.

The Commission has also recently conducted several district-level education and capacity building programmes for senior police officers on key human rights themes, such as the prevention of torture and custodial deaths, and the rights of human rights defenders. The officers' response to these programmes has been positive, and the Commission is pleased to observe a genuine institutional appetite for reform. These programmes also provided an opportunity for these officers to share their experiences, thereby ensuring that the Commission gains a deeper understanding of the practical challenges and pressures they face.

The Commission, through its National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), has also been conducting monitoring visits to police stations in all districts with a view to identifying systemic challenges faced in police stations. The main function of the NPM is to provide recommendations with respect to the prevention of torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of persons held in custody.

In this overarching context, the Commission wishes to present several key observations and recommendations with respect to supporting the work of Sri Lanka Police and enhancing its capacity to fulfil its duties under the law.

A. Resource Allocation

The Commission is of the view that Sri Lanka Police being adequately resourced remains a crucial element of its ability to fulfil its duties while respecting, protecting, and promoting human rights of all

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persons. It is, however, observed that police stations in Sri Lanka are generally under resourced and require a significant increase in resource allocation to fulfil their functions effectively. While acknowledging the need to ensure fiscal discipline in the context of the economic crisis in Sri Lanka, the Commission believes that increasing resource allocation to Sri Lanka Police, if carried out in a strategic manner, will be a crucial and justifiable investment of public funds.

Accordingly, the Commission presents the following recommendations:

1. Prepare a comprehensive **needs assessment** of the human, physical, and technological resources required at all levels of Sri Lanka Police, including police divisions and police stations, for the effective discharge of their duties under the law. Special attention should be paid to the following factors:
 - a. **Improving working conditions** at police stations, including necessary infrastructure, equipment (including computers and other necessary devices) and facilities;
 - b. **Upgrading health and safety standards** applicable to persons held in custody at police stations, including improving ventilation in holding cells, and installing CCTV cameras to record all places in which suspects are kept in custody and interrogated;
 - c. Filling cadre vacancies, and recruiting a higher number of **women police officers**, and personnel with **Tamil language competence**; and
 - d. **Training and capacity building**, including on compliance with human rights standards, gender responsiveness, the use of new investigative techniques and technology, core skills development, and community engagement.
2. In consultation with the Treasury, submit necessary budget proposals to secure additional resource allocations for Sri Lanka Police in the next Annual Budget to be approved by Parliament.

B. Targets and Incentive Structure

The Commission wishes to bring to your attention our recent letter to the IGP dated 18 August 2025. In the said letter, the Commission informed the IGP that senior officers in several districts appraised the Commission about the current expectations imposed on officers-in-charge of police stations and police divisions. The Commission is concerned that one of the primary indicators currently used in practice to measure the maintenance of law and order in police divisions is the **number of arrests** made by each police station. This practice appears to have been introduced some years ago and may still be in place. If such practice continues, it is likely to create a perverse incentive for police officers to arrest persons to meet informally communicated '**arrest targets**'. While official communications do not specify such targets, the Commission is informed that performance with respect to arrests may be considered in determining the promotion of officers.

The Commission reiterates Clause 1.2 of its General Guidelines and Recommendations No. 1 of 2025 to Sri Lanka Police on Preventing Custodial and Encounter Deaths: 'Arrests should not be carried out in an arbitrary manner. Every police officer who makes an arrest of a person must be able to justify its necessity on the basis of **reasonable suspicion** that the person has committed an offence following a preliminary police investigation' (emphasis added).

In this context, the Commission presented the following recommendations to the IGP:

1. Comprehensively review all practices of Sri Lanka Police with respect to **how targets are established both formally and informally** to measure the effectiveness of police stations and police divisions. Police officers should not be placed under pressure to meet informally imposed 'arrest targets'.
2. The performance evaluation, recognition, and promotion of police officers should be linked to **objective metrics** such as: (1) operational effectiveness; (2) community engagement and trust; (3) professional conduct and ethics; (4) skills and competency development; and (5) administrative efficiency. With respect to operational effectiveness, for instance, international best practices offer

useful guidance on how performance evaluations, recognition, and promotion of police officers should be determined. It is recommended that 'arrest targets' be avoided, and instead, metrics such as the following be considered:

- a. **Case resolution rate**, i.e., the number of cases solved as a percentage of complaints received;
- b. **Response time**, i.e., the time taken to respond to complaints, particularly from or with respect to vulnerable groups such as women, children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and persons from the LGBTIQ community;
- c. **Arrest-to-conviction ratio**, i.e., the ratio of arrests that lead to successful prosecutions; and
- d. **Crime reduction** in police areas.

The Commission thanks your Ministry in advance for its cooperation. It will also continue to constructively engage the IGP and the National Police Academy on these issues. Please be assured that the Commission is prepared to offer its continued advice and assistance with respect to administrative practices that impact the protection and promotion of human rights in Sri Lanka.

Sincerely,



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

Justice L.T.B. Dehideniya
Judge of the Supreme Court (Retired)
Chairman
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

Cc: H.E. Anura Kumara Dissanayake
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