



ශ්‍රී ලංකා මානව හිමිකම් කොමිෂන් කොටස
இலங்கை மனித உரிமைகள் ஆணைக்குழு
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

Chairman's Message – International Human Rights Day 2025

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) joins the global community in commemorating Human Rights Day 2025 under the theme **“Human Rights: Our Everyday Essentials.”** This year's theme resonates profoundly with the realities confronting our nation. In past few weeks, Sri Lanka has endured one of the most devastating natural disasters in recent history, a crisis marked by relentless floods and landslides that have swept through multiple districts, claiming lives, displacing thousands of families, and causing widespread destruction to homes, schools, and vital infrastructure. Beyond the visible damage, this tragedy has laid bare deep-rooted inequalities, gaps in disaster preparedness, and the fragility of our social protection and emergency response systems. It serves as a powerful reminder that the safeguarding of human rights access to safe shelter, clean water, healthcare, education, and security is not a privilege reserved for times of stability, but a fundamental necessity that must guide our collective response and recovery efforts.

This moment serves as a compelling reminder that human rights are not abstract ideals reserved for times of peace and prosperity, they are the living foundations upon which dignity, equality, and survival depend every single day, especially in moments of crisis and uncertainty. When disaster strikes, the fragility of access to safe shelter, clean drinking water, healthcare, sanitation, education, information, and personal security becomes painfully evident, revealing the profound human cost of systemic neglect and inequality. The Commission stresses that these entitlements are not acts of charity or discretionary relief measures, but binding, absolute obligations of the State, anchored in Sri Lanka's Constitution and reinforced by its commitments under international human rights law. Upholding these rights demands not only immediate humanitarian response but also the establishment of resilient systems of governance that ensure transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in every aspect of disaster management and recovery. It is through this unwavering commitment to human rights that societies find their true strength, unity, and capacity to rebuild with justice and compassion.

The Commission acknowledges the tireless efforts of frontline responders, public officials, and community volunteers working to protect lives in affected districts. Yet, the challenges witnessed

on the ground also highlight the urgent need to strengthen disaster preparedness frameworks, ensure equitable distribution of relief, and protect vulnerable groups children, women, older persons, persons with disabilities, LGBTIG+ Community, and low income communities from disproportionate harm. The HRCSL reiterates that **a human rights based approach must guide all phases of disaster response**, including evacuation, relief, temporary shelter management, compensation, and long term recovery.

Beyond the current emergency, the Commission remains deeply concerned about other pressing human rights issues confronting the country, custodial deaths, children's rights violations, discrimination, delays in justice processes, and the continuing trauma of families affected by enforced disappearances. The Commission has issued several recommendations to State authorities over the year, and we reiterate that full and good-faith implementation of these directives is essential to rebuilding public trust.

As Sri Lanka continues to navigate economic strain, social tensions, and environmental vulnerability, **the protection of human rights must remain at the heart of national recovery and governance**. No sustainable development or reconciliation is possible without safeguarding the dignity, equality, and freedoms of all people.

On this International Human Rights Day, the HRCSL calls upon State institutions, civil society, and communities across Sri Lanka to reaffirm their commitment to human rights as the indispensable essentials of daily life. Let us work together to build a nation where every person regardless of circumstance can live with dignity, security, and hope.

Justice L.T.B. Dehideniya

Chairman

Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

10.12.2025