

මගේ අංකය }
எனது இல. }
My No. }

ඔබේ අංකය }
உமது இல. }
Your No. }



දිනය }
திகதி } 8 July 2026
Date. }

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

Mr. R. Prasad Hemantha Kumara
Commissioner General of Prisons (Covering Up Duties)
Department of Prisons
Prison Headquarters,
No.150, Baseline Road,
Colombo

Dear Commissioner General,

Investigation into the Violence at Negombo Prison and Subsequent Events at Other Prisons

We write to you with reference to the violence that took place at the Negombo Prison on 5-6 July 2026 and subsequent violence against inmates who were transferred to several prison facilities on 7 July 2026.

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) has launched an investigation with respect to the breakout of violence at the Negombo Prison on 5-6 July 2026 and subsequent events at several other prison facilities. The HRCSL understands that the violence that took place at the Negombo Prison has reportedly resulted in the death of 21 inmates and six prison officials. We also acknowledge that you have appointed a special investigation team to inquire into the violence.

The HRCSL wishes to recall its observations with respect to deaths in prisons in its 'Prisons Study' published in 2020. The Commission observed that systemic 'shortcomings' as well as 'severe shortage of resources and staff' have caused 'prisons to become a highly perilous environment for vulnerable prisoners'. The study also included findings with respect to inmates being subject to torture and other forms of ill-treatment within prison facilities, and the lack of accountability for such violations. It recalls the following recommendations with respect to 'procedures and mechanisms to deal with deaths due to violence in prison':

1. Maintain vigilance on prisoners who complain of pre-imprisonment violence and produce them before Judicial Medical Officers to provide necessary treatment and proceed legal action against perpetrators to prevent deaths from such violence prior to admission.
2. Take preventive action on violence among inmates by minimizing interaction between rival inmates and permit change of wards if requested due to threats, as well as take immediate action on such complaints.
3. Ensure prisoners are effectively segregated by adhering to the information on prisoner's background conveyed via confidential report to prison as per Crime Circular 19/2014 (IG Circular 2508/2014), including their membership in organised crime gang[s] and relevant rivals.

ප්‍රධාන කාර්යාලය } 14, ආර්. ඒ. ද. මෙල් මාවත, කොළඹ - 04.
தலைமைக் காரியாலயம் } 14, ஆர்.ஏ.த.மெல் மாவத்தை, கொழும்பு-04.
Head Office } 14, R.A.De Mel Mawatha, Colombo - 04.
දුරකථන }
தொலைபேசி } 94-11- 2505580/81/82
Telephone }

සභාපති }
தவிசாளர் } 011-2505451
Chairperson }
ලේකම් }
செயலாளர் } 011-2505521
Secretary }

1
ලැකිය }
தொலைநகல் } 011 2505541/74
Fax }
කණික }
தூரித அழைப்பு } 011-2505575
Hotline } 1996

විද්‍යුත් තැපෑල }
மின்னஞ்சல் } sechrsl@gmail.com
E-mail }
වෙබ් }
இணையம் } www.hrsl.lk
Web }

4. Create awareness of the legal limitations on the use of force and instrument of restraint by prison officers and Superintendent of Prisons to take swift action on ill treatment, assault or other irregularities as per section 15 of the Departmental Standing Orders of 1956.
5. Maintain records of ward transfers of deceased to identify responsible parties in the event of a death due to violence.

On 6 July 2026, a team of officers from the HRCSL attempted to visit the Negombo Prison to monitor the situation but was unable to enter the facility due to serious security concerns. On 7 July 2026, the HRCSL visited the National Hospital at which several injured inmates were interned, and made inquiries into the welfare of the inmates. The HRCSL also received direct updates from you during several telephone conversations with the Director of the Inquiries & Investigations Division of the HRCSL and a commissioner of the HRCSL. The welfare of injured inmates and prison officials was discussed during these telephone conversations, and you reported that several inmates had been transferred to other prison facilities in Angunakolapelessa, Boosa, Dumbara, Batticaloa, Jaffna, and Welikada to separate them from other inmates and to ensure their protection.

In the evening of 7 July 2026, the HRCSL received information that several inmates that had been transferred to the abovementioned facilities had been subject to torture and other forms of ill-treatment. It also received information of a death of an inmate in the custody of Welikada prison officials.

At approximately 8.30 PM, a team of officers from the Rapid Response Unit of the HRCSL visited the Welikada Prison to inquire into the welfare of the inmates. **The Commission is deeply concerned that the Chief Jailer of the Welikada Prison denied the abovementioned Team access to the Prison.** The said prison official stated that he was unable to grant access to the Team, as it was afterhours.

We wish to remind you that the HRCSL is empowered under **section 11(d)** of the HRCSL Act, No. 21 of 1996 to 'monitor the welfare of persons detained either by a judicial order or otherwise, by regular inspection of their places of detention, and to make such recommendations as may be necessary for improving their conditions of detention.' Moreover, **section 28(2)** of the Act provides that officers authorised by the Commission:

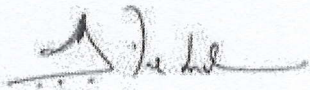
[M]ay enter **at any time**, any place of detention, police station, **prison** or any other place in which any person is detained by a judicial order or otherwise and make such examinations therein or make such inquiries from any person found therein, as may be necessary to ascertain the condition of detention of the persons detained therein' (emphasis added).

It is noted that the powers and functions of the HRCSL permit it to enter a prison 'at any time'. **Accordingly, the HRCSL is statutorily mandated to enter the Welikada Prison at any time to ascertain the conditions of detention of any inmates.**

In the above circumstances, the HRCSL wishes to issue the following directives, which you are required to implement in full and without delay:

1. **Forthwith issue written directions to all prison officials including chief jailers at all prison facilities to grant unimpeded access to HRCSL staff members who visit such facilities at any time.**

2. Issue written directions to all prison officials to refrain from any acts of reprisal, including torture or other forms of ill-treatment, against any inmate in their custody, including inmates who were recently transferred from Negombo Prison, and provide effective protection to all such inmates in prison custody.
3. Issue written directions to all prison officials to preserve all evidence with respect to the treatment of inmates at the Negombo, Angunakolapelessa, Boosa, Dumbara, Batticaloa, Jaffna, and Welikada prisons, and to refrain from the destruction or tampering of any such evidence.
4. Conduct a full and impartial investigation into allegations that prison officials subjected inmates at the Angunakolapelessa, Boosa, Dumbara, Batticaloa, Jaffna, and Welikada Prisons to torture or other forms of ill-treatment, take immediate disciplinary action against any officials found to have either engaged in such acts or failed to prevent such acts, and provide a detailed account of such investigation to the HRCSL.
5. Fully cooperate with the HRCSL's current investigation into the violence at Negombo Prison and subsequent events at other prison facilities.



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:
1. H.E. Anura Kumara Dissanayake, - For your information pl.
President of the Republic of Sri Lanka,
Presidential Secretariat,
Colombo 01.
 2. Hon. Harshana Nanayakkara, - For your information pl.i
Minister of Justice and National Integration,
Ministry of Justice and National Integration,
19, Sri Sangaraja Mawatha,
 3. Hon. Vijitha Herath, - For your information pl.
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment & Tourism,
Republic Building,
Sir Baron Jayathilake Mawatha,
Colombo 01