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Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

Press Notice

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

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka wrote to the Commissioner General of Prisons (Covering Up Duties) on its investigation into the violence at Negombo Prison and subsequent events at other prisons. Copies of the letter were sent to H.E. the President, the Hon. Minister of Justice, and the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Commission noted that the violence had reportedly resulted in the death of 21 inmates and six prison officials. It also referred to its visit to the National Hospital at which several injured inmates were interned, and its telephone conversations with the Commissioner General to ascertain the welfare of the injured inmates and officials.

The Commission was informed that several inmates had been transferred to other prison facilities in Angunakolapelessa, Boosa, Batticaloa, Dumbara, Jaffna, and Welikada to separate them from other inmates and to ensure their protection. The Commission informed the Commissioner General that in the evening of 7 July 2026, the Commission received information that several inmates who 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. It informed the Commissioner General that at approximately 8.30 PM on 7 July, a team of officers from the Rapid Response Unit of the HRCSL visited the Welikada Prison to inquire into the welfare of the inmates. It expressed deep concern 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. The Commission noted that according to sections 11(d) and 28(2) of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka Act of 1996, the Commission is statutorily mandated to enter the Welikada Prison at any time to ascertain the conditions of detention of any inmates. In these circumstances, the Commission issued the following directives to the Commissioner General:

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, Batticaloa, Dumbara, 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, Batticaloa, Dumbara, 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.

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