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தொழிற்சங்கங்கள் மற்றும் வெகுசன அமைப்புகளின் கூட்டமைப்பு

Alliance of Trade Unions and Mass Organizations



65/4, අරු මැදුර,
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කොළඹ 02



011 245 8058

Investigation Officer,
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL),
14 R. A. De Mel Mawatha,
Colombo 00400,
Sri Lanka.

July 15, 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

We as Alliance of Trade Unions and Mass Organisations write asking the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) to initiate an immediate investigation into the excessive use of force by the Sri Lanka Army, the Special Task Force (STF) and Sri Lanka Police against civilians on July 9 and July 13, 2022. This excessive use of force has violated the right to life and the right to freedom from torture of Sri Lankan citizens in multiple instances.

In particular, we draw your attention to:

1. The shooting of live rounds by the Sri Lanka Army near the main entrance to the Presidential Residence compound at Colombo Fort on July 9. The use of live rounds in a small, confined space, in a context where thousands of citizens had gathered to exercise their right to freedom of speech and expression and right to freedom of peaceful assembly, is a clear instance of excessive use of force. Video footage captured of the incident appears to show a number of citizens heavily injured, endangering their **right to life**.
2. The use of excessive physical force by the STF at multiple locations on July 9, including near the main entrance to the Presidential Residence compound at Colombo Fort and near the residence of Ranil Wickremesinghe on Fifth Lane, Kollupitiya. This excessive physical force included attacks using batons and iron rods on completely unarmed citizens including journalists causing multiple serious injuries and subsequent hospitalisations, and endangering their **right to life** and **right to freedom from torture**.
3. The indiscriminate use of tear gas at multiple locations on July 9 and at the Prime Minister's Office on Flower Road, Kollupitiya, on July 13. The use of tear gas on thousands of citizens gathered in close proximity caused extreme physical discomfort to all tear-gassed citizens, and claimed the life of one person, 26-year-old Jaliya Dissanayake from Daladagama, who evidently suffered from a respiratory condition. This demonstrates clear violations of the **right to life** and **right to freedom from torture**.
4. The attack on at least four journalists on July 9 in front of the residence of Ranil Wickremesinghe on Fifth Lane. All four journalists were hospitalised. This not only endangered their **right to life**, but also violated their **right to freedom from torture** but has also violated their **freedom of speech, expression including publication**.

5. The un-clarified instructions by the Prime Minister instructing the Armed forces to take “whatever is necessary to restore order”. Such instructions from the acting Head of the Executive creates a situation of anarchy placing the life and safety of large number of population gathered in Colombo at risk. Such irresponsible orders have violated the right to life, the right to freedom from torture.
6. The statement made by the Sri Lankan Army on the July 14 stating “the Armed Forces are legitimately empowered to exercise their force”. The Sri Lankan Army or the Armed forces cannot use force in civilian spaces unless given particular instructions from the President. The Sri Lankan Army in making this statement failed to clarify on whose specific instructions this statement was made and what ‘force’ entails in a civilian space consisting of unarmed protestors. Therefore this arbitrary statement by the Sri Lankan army has placed the right to life, the right to freedom from torture of the protestors at grave risk.
7. The declaration of an unlawful curfew by the Prime Minister in the early hours of the July 13 placing public security, public movement and public safety at risk and chaos without. The conduct of the Prime Minister had place the right to life, the freedom of movement at risk amongst others

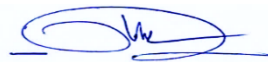
We kindly request you and the HRCSL to investigate these and all other instances of excessive use of force by the Sri Lanka Army, STF and Sri Lanka Police from July 9 to July 13. We further request you to identify the commanding officers within these institutions who issued orders for these excessive uses of force, as well as the officers who executed said orders. We finally request that you help initiate all necessary disciplinary measures against these officers and seek to provide effective remedies.

At this critical juncture in our nation’s history, we humbly seek you and the HRCSL’s commitment to securing and upholding the human rights of all Sri Lankan citizens by undertaking this critical investigation.

Sincerely,



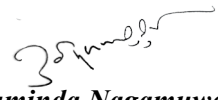
Joseph Stalin
General Secretary
Sri Lanka Teachers'
Union



Ranjan Senanayake
General Secretary
Ceylon Bank
Employees' Union



J B Gurusinghe
Senior Asst. Secretary
All Employees Union
of Information and
Telecommunication



Duminda Nagamuwa
Organizing Secretary
Workers' Struggle Centre



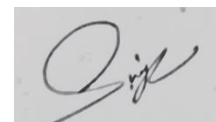
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General Secretary
Union of Post and
Telecommunication
Officers
Board



Nishantha Wanniarachchi
President
The Ceylon Estates
Staff Union
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