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இலங்கை மனித உரிமைகள் ஆணைக்குழு  
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

## Press Notice

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) summoned the Commandant of the Special Task Force (STF) DIG Waruna Jayasundera and Director STF, SSP Romesh Liyanage, and SSP D.S. Wickremasinghe of the Special Investigation Unit to make statements relating to the assault on the media personnel of the 'Sirasa' news channel on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 2022 at and near 5<sup>th</sup> Lane Colombo 03.

The investigation revealed that SSP Romesh Liyanage was the Unit Commander deployed for security at and near the private residence of the current President on 5<sup>th</sup> Lane. There were 140 STF personnel under the Command of SSP Liyanage. It is also not in doubt that the media personnel posed no threat to the Police on that day. And the assault on the media was unjustified and intentional after being identified as media personnel by the STF and Police.

These officers of the STF who had assaulted the media were under the direct command of SSP Liyanage. He denied being present at the time of the assault. He denied any knowledge of the assault on the media personnel. He was shown video footage which was admitted as footage of the particular event. There is serious doubt regarding the credibility of the evidence given by SSP Liyanage to the HRCSL on oath. He is unequivocally responsible for the attack on the media personnel on this day. This is a gross violation of the people's fundamental rights and, importantly, of the rights of the free media, which is an integral part of every democracy. This irresponsible behaviour from the high ranks of Law enforcement officials is severe, detrimental, and dangerous for the safety of a just society.

The Officer handling the disciplinary inquiry informed that the perpetrators are yet to be identified, and identifying them in the current uniform is no easy task. One of the major setbacks is the identity of the assailant for the police investigation. Therefore, the HRCSL recommends to the IGP that the camouflage uniform in the present description is not the proper uniform for civil operation.

The IGP must take cognizance of the uniform currently worn by the STF for civilian operation and take appropriate action to have a proper uniform, especially for civic duty.

It was informed to the Commission that, SIU is currently conducting an inquiry, into this matter. The inquiry must be independent and impartial. In order to facilitate such an inquiry, it is recommended to IGP to transfer the SSP Liyanage to any other branch in the STF outside Colombo until the conclusion of the police investigation.

The above directions are transmitted to IGP for implementation immediately.

Justice Rohini Marasinghe,  
Chairperson  
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

02.08.2022

**Justice Rohini Marasinghe**  
Judge of the Supreme Court (Retired)  
Chairperson  
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka