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இலங்கை மனித உரிமைகள் ஆணைக்குழு
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

Prof. Mohan De Silva
Chairman
University Grants Commission
Ward Place
Colombo 7
Dear Sir,

Maintaining the Value of Diversity and Non-Discrimination in Institutions of Higher Education

In the aftermath of the terror attacks perpetrated on April 21, strict security measures are being enforced in all sectors, including in educational institutions. While the security measures are completely justifiable under the present circumstances, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka wishes to emphasise the need to enforce security measures in a manner that would not harm relations between the various ethnic and religious communities represented in institutions of higher education through actions or inaction that would result in discriminatory and degrading treatment against members of a particular community.

The Commission continues to receive complaints of persons, particularly women, refused access to public buildings and spaces even when they are not violating the Emergency Regulation that prohibits full-face covers. Similarly, we have learnt that in certain instances only members of the Muslim community are subject to searches while others are not. Hence, we have written to various public institutions, including the Ministry of Education, to ensure that guidelines be given to ensure that implementation of security measures do not discriminate against a particular community.

Further, our Commission is of the opinion that it is essential that an environment is created in all institutions, particularly in educational institutions that mould young minds, that respects pluralism and equal citizenship. There has to be a recognition that one community cannot be targeted for what a few who claim to be from that community have done, however heinous those acts may be.

We kindly urge you, therefore, to direct all public universities and institutions of higher education coming within your purview to take necessary action in that regard. It is important that education is imparted in an environment that respects the principles of non-discrimination, pluralism and free flow of thoughts and ideas.

While we recognize the principle of university autonomy, our recommendation relates to the overarching need to comply with constitutional guarantees of rights.

We thank you in advance for your consideration.


Chairperson

Dr. N. D. Udagama
Chairperson

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