



Press Notice No: HRC/P/i/E/21/02/25

## **Press Notice**

### **Dialogue with Sri Lanka Police on Strengthening Human Rights**

On 18 February 2025, a high-level dialogue was convened at the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) to discuss critical human rights concerns related to Sri Lanka Police. The meeting was attended by the Chairman and all commissioners of the HRCSL, senior officials of the HRCSL, the Acting Inspector General of Police (IGP), the Deputy Inspector General of Police – Legal, the Director of the Human Rights Division of Sri Lanka Police, and the Director – Legal, Sri Lanka Police. The meeting between the officials was constructive and several key issues concerning Sri Lanka Police were discussed at length.

The HRCSL expressed concerns over the increasing number of complaints received against police officers, particularly regarding allegations of torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, harassment, and inaction with respect to complaints. The Commission acknowledged that under the new police administration, efforts are being made to address these issues through capacity building, institutional restructuring, and the adoption of new techniques and equipment. Officials from Sri Lanka Police responded by emphasising their aim to significantly reduce rights violations within the next year.

Specific attention was drawn to the role of the Special Investigation Unit of Sri Lanka Police, particularly in terms of investigating law enforcement officers allegedly involved in torture and enforced disappearance. The HRCSL raised concerns with respect to the low levels of prosecution and convictions in this regard. The Commission also raised concerns with respect to the rights of human rights defenders to engage in the advocacy of human rights, including the right to stage peaceful protests against government policies.

The HRCSL also raised concerns regarding the representation of women within Sri Lanka Police and the presence of Tamil-speaking officers in specific regions. It was noted that these concerns will be addressed in upcoming recruitment efforts.

Furthermore, the HRCSL emphasised the need for specialised training of police officers, particularly those serving in Women and Children’s Desks. It accordingly highlighted the importance of:

1. Ensuring privacy for victims at police stations;
2. Training officers on online gender-based violence for more effective and sensitive case handling; and
3. Sensitizing officers at the ground level, particularly those who frequently interact with persons from the LGBTQI community.

The Acting IGP noted that Sri Lanka Police has initiated proceedings under the Torture Act of 1994 in response to allegations of torture. He also undertook the responsibility of issuing three formal advisory notes to all officers based on the following key guidelines issued by the HRCSL:

1. The General Guidelines and Recommendations, No. 1 of 2024 on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
2. The Draft General Guidelines and Recommendations to Sri Lanka Police on Preventing Custodial and Encounter Deaths
3. The Guideline for Police Officers to Ensure the Protection of Transgender Persons

Additionally, the IGP agreed to issue an advisory note to raise awareness among police officers on section 26 of the HRCSL Act, which protects officers of the HRCSL from legal action.

This dialogue underscored a mutual commitment to strengthening human rights protections within law enforcement and fostering a more accountable and rights-based policing framework in Sri Lanka.

Nihal Chandrasiri  
Media Spokesperson/ Director –Research & Monitoring Division  
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

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Telephone: 011 2505595

Email: [rm.director.hrsl@gmail.com](mailto:rm.director.hrsl@gmail.com)