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சித்திரவதகை எதிரான இலங்க ஒன்றியம்
Sri Lanka Collective Against Torture

Press Statement

Sri Lanka's commitment to Zero Tolerance of Torture means D Tennekoon should not be in Public office

In the context of the routine and systemic nature of cruel treatment and torture by officers of the Sri Lanka police of citizens the Sri Lanka Collective Against Torture (SLCAT) takes note of the recent judgment of the Supreme Court in SCFR 107/2011 dated 14th December 2023. SLCAT emphasises the recent judgment is yet another reminder that successive governments have failed to take necessary measures to address institutionalised violence within the Police Department.

We highlight that Article 11 of the Sri Lankan Constitution guarantees that all persons are free from torture in Sri Lanka and the Constitution recognises it as non-derogable right. This means the protection from torture cannot be limited or restricted under any circumstance or for any reason even during war or an emergency. It is an absolute guarantee to all citizens and all public officers must protect and promote this right.

In view of the Supreme Court judgment in SCFR 107/2011 which finds Deshabandu Tennekoon in his capacity as Senior Superintendent of Police, Western province, perpetrated extreme cruel acts of torture, it is imperative that immediate action is taken by the President, the Attorney General and the National Police Commission of Sri Lanka. Only immediate and strong action will signal the government's commitment to zero tolerance of torture and restore public faith in public institutions, particularly the police..

We also note with deep concern that the Minister of Public Security, Tiran Alles, in a speech made on 17th December 2023, after the delivery of the Supreme Court judgment, appears to continue to endorse the Acting IGP Deshabandu Tennekoon. No initiative supposedly for the public good, can justify keeping in public office a person found responsible for the torture of a citizen of Sri Lanka. The Minister of Public Security must be a foremost voice against torture as public security includes freedom from torture for every person in this country. Statements by senior figures in the government that are silent on the fact that the current acting IGP has been found to have violated fundamental rights, or endorse him and seek to discredit legitimate voices asking for action in the interest of the public, seriously undermine the rule of law and citizens' ability to be enjoy the protection against torture enshrined in the Constitution.

As SLCAT,

We call on Deshabandu Tennekoon, acting IGP to respect the principle that holders of public office must act in a manner that maintains public confidence and public trust in state institutions and resign with immediate effect in view of the finding in the Supreme Court judgment SC FR 107/2011..

We call on President Wickremasinghe to remove Mr. Deshabandu Tennekoon from the post of Acting IGP with immediate effect in view of the Supreme Court judgment.

We call on Parliament to make necessary measures to remove Mr. Deshabandu Tennakoon from the Post of Acting IGP with immediate effect in view of the Supreme Court Judgement.



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We also call on the Attorney General to initiate proceedings in terms of the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment Act, No. 22 of 1994 against all police officers found responsible for torture in the said judgment.

We call on the National Police Commission of Sri Lanka to take disciplinary action against all police officers found responsible for torture by the said judgment. We also urge the National Police Commission to take note of the several Supreme Court decisions that have observed systemic torture by the Police Department and take a strong zero tolerance stance on torture in the police, by holding such police officers accountable, address the police culture of torture and cruel treatment.

We call all members of Parliament, all media institutions and all civic minded Sri Lankans to stand up against torture. This judgment of the Supreme Court, gives us yet another reminder and yet another opportunity to insist that changes are made and reject the culture of institutionalized violence within the Sri Lanka police.

Sri Lanka Collective Against Torture (SLCAT) is an alliance of human rights organizations and human rights defenders in Sri Lanka dedicated to eradicating torture and protecting human dignity. We work through advocacy, legal support, documentation, and education to combat torture, promote accountability, and ensure justice for victims.