



## Targeting Rights: Unraveling Torture's Harm

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[www.slcat.org](http://www.slcat.org)

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[Right to Life Sri Lanka](#) | [Aithiya](#) | [Daily Reporter](#)

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*Nagaraja Alex, 26, died in custody after exposing in a video that he was harassed by Vadukkodai police in Jaffna district of Sri Lanka.*

The right to freedom from torture is a fundamental human right enshrined in international law and is also safeguarded within the legal framework of Sri Lanka. This right is protected by various international conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Sri Lanka is a signatory to.

In the Sri Lankan context, the right to freedom from torture includes:

- **Absolute prohibition of torture**
- **Legal Safeguards**
- **International Obligations.**
- **Prevention and Accountability**
- **Support for Victims**
- **Non-Discrimination**
- **Awareness and Education**

Sri Lanka must uphold its commitments under international human rights law, establish robust mechanisms to prevent torture and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable. Additionally, promoting a culture of respect for human rights and providing support to victims of torture are essential steps towards safeguarding the right to freedom from torture in Sri Lanka.

The objective of this quarterly newsletter is to monitor the aspect of torture in Sri Lanka and report on the prevalence, measures for prevention, and legal actions.

*Right to Life Human Rights Centre (R2L), is a civil society organization aiming to promote and strengthen fundamental human rights, through providing legal and financial assistance to seek social justice.*

# September, October and November, 2023

Incidents of torture monitored by the Right to Life Human Rights Centre, affiliated network of Human Rights First Aid Centres (HRFACs) and other partners.

September 07, 2023

### **Elderly Woman Allegedly Assaulted by Police While Trying to Protect Son-in-law**

A 65-year-old woman named Kusumavatih, residing in Karanpatara, Navuttuduwa, Matugama, was allegedly assaulted by police officers while attempting to protect her son-in-law, Asanka Suresh, aged 27, from being taken into custody.

Article link - <https://www.slcet.org/elderly-woman-allegedly-assaulted-by-police-while-trying-to-protect-son-in-law/>

October 16, 2023

### **Man Alleges Police Brutality and Coercion in Drug-Related Arrest**

Ranawila Arachchilage Shanaka Chaminda, a 33-year-old resident of Hokandara, has come forward with allegations of severe police brutality and coercion during his recent arrest by the Malabe police.

According to Shanaka Chaminda, his ordeal began when his brother-in-law, Lasantha Madhushanka, was released from prison after serving time on drug charges. Lasantha Madhushanka, after his release, found himself back behind bars without any charges laid against him for an entire year. This incident led Lasantha Madhushanka to file a complaint with the Human Rights Commission.

Article link - <https://www.slcet.org/man-alleges-police-brutality-and-coercion-in-drug-related-arrest/>

October 23, 2023

### **Young Man Files Complaint Alleging Assault and Death Threats by Kesbewa Police, Investigation Underway**

On October 23, a young man filed a formal complaint with the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission, accusing officers from the Kesbewa Police Station of violently assaulting him and issuing death threats. The incident took place on the 17th when multiple police officers apprehended him without any apparent reason. They then transported him to a secluded area, where they restrained him and subjected him to physical abuse, according to the victim's statement.

Article link - <https://www.slcet.org/young-man-files-complaint-alleging-assault-and-death-threats-by-kesbewa-police-investigation-underway/>

November 19, 2023

### **Youth Dies in Custody Amid Allegations of Police Torture; Family Points to Human Rights Commission Inaction**

In a tragic incident that has raised serious concerns about police conduct and human rights in Sri Lanka, a 26-year-old youth, Nagarasa Alex, was found dead in police custody on Sunday, November 19. Alex, hailing from the war-affected north of Sri Lanka, had been arrested by the police in Vaddukoddai on November 8 on charges related to burglary.

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The family of the deceased alleges that Alex was subjected to severe torture during his time in custody, and they believe that timely intervention by Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission could have saved his life. Alex was remanded by the Mallakkam magistrate court two days after his arrest and was discovered lifeless when brought to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. (Four police officers were later produced before the court and remanded in relation to this incident.)

Article links - <https://www.slcat.org/tamil-youth-dies-in-custody-amid-allegations-of-police-torture-family-points-to-human-rights-commission-inaction/>

### **R2L Demands Justice for Nagarasa Alex: Calls for Urgent Police Reform in Sri Lanka**

Right to Life Human Rights Center issued a press release demanding justice for the untimely death of 25-year-old Nagarasa Alex, who reportedly succumbed to injuries inflicted during his custody by the Sri Lankan police. This tragic incident has ignited a fervent call for comprehensive police reform and the immediate implementation of amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) to empower magistrates in overseeing the conditions within police stations and prisons.

Link - <https://www.right2lifelanka.org/right-to-life-center-demands-justice-for-nagarasa-alex-calls-for-urgent-police-reform-in-sri-lanka/>

### **14-Year-Old Boy's Death After Arrest for Petty Theft**

A 14-year-old student, Narayanan Anandadevan Darsath, was arrested on November 16 by the Batticaloa-Kokkuvil police, accused of stealing a lamp and a bell. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of November the court rules that the boy should be handed over to the juvenile correctional school. The boy was reportedly assaulted by one of the employees and died on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November. The case is to be taken up by court on 18<sup>th</sup> of December in the Kalmunai magistrate court.

Link - <https://www.slcat.org/tragedy-unfolds-14-year-olds-death-raises-questions-amidst-arrest-for-petty-theft/>



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## **MOJO videos from HRFACs**

### **Malabe police torture**

Mr. S. Lasantha Madusanka, a resident of Hokandara, alleges that he was arrested, assaulted and prosecuted by the Malabe police for crimes he claims that he had not committed. His family was also harassed and his sister's husband was attacked when questioned the whereabouts of Mr. Lasantha.

Video link - <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/QGEilfDhLCthg9ng/?mibextid=UVffzb> (09<sup>th</sup> October published)

### **Kegalle police torture**

Mr. Manjula Silva, a resident of Kahatapitiya, Kegalle, was brought to the Kegalle police station and assaulted, falsely accusing him of extortion. In addition, the Kegalle police have also filed a false case against him saying that the key tag that was attached to the key of his motorcycle was a prohibited knife.

Video link - <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/i6ZRNkZe8SZQjYJh/?mibextid=UVffzb> (25<sup>th</sup> October published)

### **Ambalantota police torture**

On the night of 11.11.2023, W.H.G. Asanka Maduranga Suresh, a resident of Ambalantota Malpettawa, went to watch a musical concert held at Ambalanthota Maha Vidyalaya Stadium after consuming alcohol. He kept another bottle of alcohol in his trouser pocket and a sergeant of the Ambalanthota Police who was near the entrance gate took the bottle of alcohol from his pocket. When he questioned about it, the police officer assaulted him. The other police officers who were there also attacked him in public and took him into police custody. Suresh said that he was stripped and beaten at the police station.

Video link - <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/vBtBdHcCyYGMVGi1/?mibextid=UVffzb> (29<sup>th</sup> November published)

## **News Stories**

27.09.2023

Welamboda Police arrested a Constable working for the Kegalle Police who had allegedly assaulted and injured a person.

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2023/09/27/lawnorder/142880/pc-arrested-over-assault/>

02.10.2023

A police officer's dog had reportedly come near a shop, and the shop owner had allegedly beaten the dog to chase it away. The said police officer, attached to the Matale Police, had then assaulted the shop owner for beating his dog, and the police officer was later arrested by officers of the Habarana Police.

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2023/10/02/lawnorder/148904/cop-arrested-for-assaulting-shop-owner/>

09.10.2023

Police officers in Point Pedro in Jaffna, during a raid to arrest a person aged 27 years, shot at the person who allegedly attempted to escape, causing him to suffer serious injuries.

<https://www.newswire.lk/2023/10/09/wanted-suspect-injured-in-police-shootout/>

10.11.2023

An apprentice Police Constable attached to the Colombo City Traffic Police was assaulted by a Chief Inspector and admitted to the Colombo National Hospital.

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2023/11/10/lawnorder/223467/apprentice-pc-assaulted-by-ci-hospitalised/>

17.11.2023

A police officer on a motorcycle collided with a pedestrian while riding on the road and fell off. When the pedestrian went to help the officer, the officer hit him with his helmet.

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2023/11/17/lawnorder/237347/cop-in-hot-water-for-double-hit-on-pedestrian-crossing/>

### **Other special features (SLCAT)**



### **Ramzy Razeek's Arrest Declared Unlawful, State Ordered to Compensate and Officials Penalized**

On November 14th, the Supreme Court delivered a landmark ruling, declaring that the arrest of Ramzy Razeek in April 2020, under the ICCPR Act, infringed upon his Fundamental Rights. Consequently, the State has been directed to compensate him with Rs 1 million.

In a noteworthy move, Chief Inspector B.M.A.S.K. Senaratne, the first respondent, and former CID Director DIG W. Thilakarathne, the second respondent, have been personally instructed to pay Rs 30,000 to the petitioner, Mr. Razeek, within one month from their own funds.

Moreover, the Supreme Court has mandated the Attorney General, the sixth respondent, to issue a summary of the judgment's principles to the Inspector General of Police within a month. This summary is intended for dissemination



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among all Police officers, with strict instructions to adhere to these principles. The State has also been tasked with covering the legal costs incurred by the petitioner.

The case was heard by Justices Buwaneka Aluwihare, Yasantha Kodagoda, and Janak de Silva. Attorneys-at-Law Nuwan Bopage and Chathura Weththasinghe, instructed by Ramzi Bacha, represented Mr. Razeek, while State Counsel Induni Punchihewa appeared for the first and third to sixth respondents.

Ramzy Razeek, a social media influencer and member of Sri Lankan Muslim minority, faced arrest on April 9, 2020, under the ICCPR Act and the Computer Crimes Act. This occurred a week after he posted on Facebook, advocating for an “ideological jihad” using the pen and keyboard to counter hate propaganda against Muslims by extremists from the Sinhalese Buddhist majority community.

Although released on bail on September 17, 2020, the criminal investigation against him remained open. Finally, on September 21, 2023, the Colombo Magistrate’s Court discharged him from the case after three years. Right to Life Human Rights Center also provided support throughout this legal process.

Article link - <https://www.slcg.org/ramzy-razeeks-unlawful-arrest-declared-state-ordered-to-compensate-and-officials-penalized/>

### **Former Surgeon Found Guilty of Injuring Nurse in Kurunegala Teaching Hospital Operating Theater**

In a recent ruling, Chief Magistrate and Additional District Judge Mr. Bandula Gunaratne found former surgeon Ashoka Wijemanna guilty of injuring a nurse with scissors in the operating theater of Kurunegala Teaching Hospital. The incident, which occurred around March 12, 2019, led to a case filed under Section 314 of the Ceylon Penal Code at the Chief Magistrate’s Court.

Chief Magistrate Bandula Gunaratne emphasized that surgeons should not act out of anger and must uphold discipline and restraint in their duties. He also informed the plaintiff nurse, Mrs. Madhavi Buddhika, that she has the option to file a compensation case against the defendant surgeon in the district court if needed.

Article link - <https://www.slcg.org/former-surgeon-found-guilty-of-injuring-nurse-in-kurunegala-teaching-hospital-operating-theater/>

### **Join Us in Combating Child Torture: Webinar on Screening, Documentation, and Monitoring**

In a dedicated effort to tackle a pressing issue impacting the most vulnerable, a webinar titled “Screening, Documentation, and Monitoring of Torture in Children” will be held on December 6, 2023, at 3 PM CET by the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims. This event is aimed to spotlight the critical need for identifying, documenting, and monitoring cases of torture among children. The webinar will delve into screening techniques, documentation methods, and ongoing monitoring strategies crucial for safeguarding at-risk children.

This initiative underscores a commitment to raising awareness, fostering collaboration, and effecting positive change in the lives of vulnerable children. As the global community unites to address this urgent issue, the webinar serves as a beacon of hope in the journey toward a world where every child can live without the threat of torture.

Article link - <https://www.slcg.org/join-us-in-combating-child-torture-webinar-on-screening-documentation-and-monitoring/>

### **Police Torture, its origin and solutions focused in a Policy Dialogue by Right to Life Human Rights Centre and Sri Lanka Collective Against Torture (SLCAT)**

Right to Life Human Rights Centre and Sri Lanka Collective Against Torture (SLCAT) will focus on the police torture, its origin and solutions focused in a Policy Dialogue to be held on 11 December 2023 on 2.30 p.m. at Lakshman Kadigamar Institute, Colombo 7.

Minister of Justice Hon. Dr. Wijedasa Rajapakse, Mr. Basil Fernando, AAL, Director of Asian Human Rights Commission, Mr. Clifford Perera, Professor of Forensic Medicine, Ms. Amitha Priyanthi, Victim Liaison Officer, and Mr. Priyantha Jayakodi, former Deputy Inspector General will be the keynote speakers in the event.

75th anniversary of the universal declaration of Human Rights

# Police Brutality

ORIGIN, CONTEXT AND SOLUTION

## Policy Dialogue

Speakers

				
<b>Dr. Wijedasa Rajapaksha</b> Minister of Justice	<b>Dulan Dasanayake</b> Lawyer	<b>Amitha Priyanthi</b> Victim Liaison Officer	<b>Prof. Clifford Perera</b> Forensic Pathologist	<b>Priyantha Jayakody</b> Retired Senior DIG

11th of December 2.00 PM

AT - The Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute Colombo 7

Moderated by

	
<b>C. Dodawatta</b> Senior Journalist	<b>Anjaana Karunaratne</b>

SLCAT

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Sri Lanka Collective Against Torture

RIGHT TO LIFE  
HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE

TRUTH  
Targeting Rights: Unraveling Torture's Harm  
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