



TRUTH

TARGETING RIGHTS UNRAVELING TORTURE'S HARM



Quarterly Torture Monitoring Report: January - March 2024

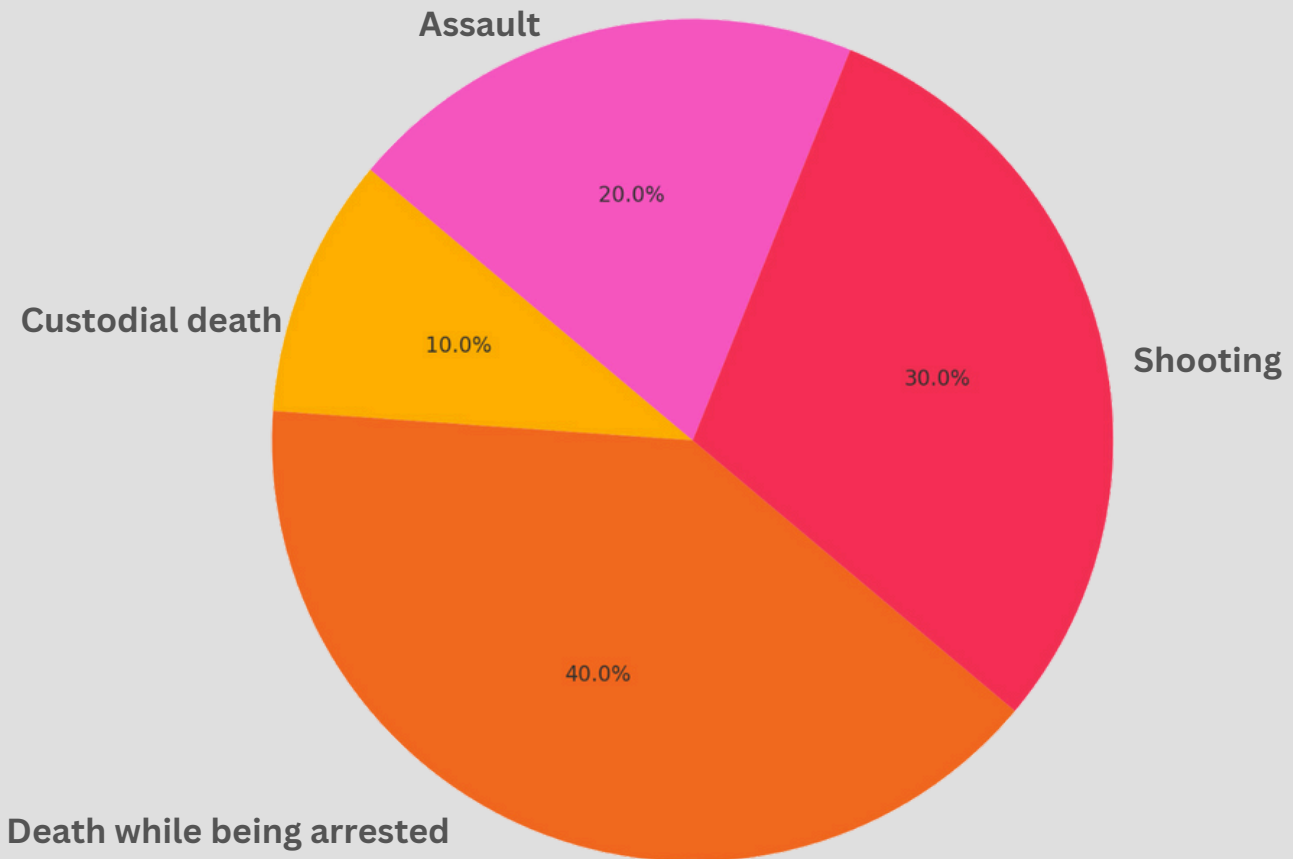


The first quarter of 2024 has witnessed a series of deeply troubling incidents involving the use of force by law enforcement authorities in Sri Lanka. These events, varying from fatal shootings to alleged assaults in custody, have raised significant human rights concerns. This quarterly report provides an overview of the documented cases that have occurred from January to March 2024, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive reforms and accountability mechanisms within the police force

The incidents detailed in this report include a tragic shooting in Dampelessa, resulting in the death of a lorry driver during a routine police inspection; the death of a 22-year-old in police custody in Anuradhapura; and various other cases involving alleged police misconduct, including the assault of a businesswoman over a dispute related to mango prices, and a confrontation with police that led to the death of a wanted ex-Army soldier. Each of these incidents has prompted investigations, reflecting a pattern of potentially excessive use of force and highlighting systemic issues within the law enforcement practices



The continuation of such incidents, despite ongoing scrutiny from local and international human rights bodies, indicates a dire need for effective oversight and reform. This report aims to contribute to the dialogue necessary for enacting meaningful change, ensuring the protection of human rights, and restoring public trust in law enforcement agencies.



1. **Tragic Shooting Incident Unfolds in Dampellessa: Driver Killed in Police Gunfire**

January 18, 2024

A man lost his life in Dampellessa, Narammala, as a result of police gunfire on the evening of January 18. According to Police Media Spokesman SSP Nihal Thaldewa, the incident transpired when a group of police officers pursued a lorry whose driver failed to comply with a signal to stop at a police checkpoint in the Dampellessa area.

After a brief chase, the police successfully intercepted the lorry and initiated an inspection of the vehicle. Unfortunately, during the inspection process, an inadvertent discharge of a firearm occurred, leading to the tragic death of the lorry’s driver.



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2. Investigation Launched into Death of 22-Year-Old Drug Suspect in Sri Lankan Police Custody

January 30, 2024

The Sri Lanka Police have initiated a thorough investigation into the death of a 22-year-old suspect who passed away while in police custody on Tuesday, January 30th. The deceased, a known drug user, was apprehended by the Anuradhapura Range Criminal Investigation Division, and the case is being led by an Assistant Superintendent of Police.

According to a senior police official, the suspect fell critically ill while detained in a police cell and was subsequently transferred to the Anuradhapura Teaching Hospital, where he later succumbed to his condition.

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3. Alleged Assault by ASP: Businesswoman Seeks Justice

February 1, 2024

A 21-year-old businesswoman has filed a complaint with the Hanwella Police, alleging that an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) assaulted her during a disagreement over mango prices. T. Uddika, residing in Alelanda, Dombagahawela, Monaragala, claimed that the ASP, who came to buy mangoes in uniform, attacked her with mangoes and a price display board at a fruit shop in the Wanahagoda area on the Colombo road in Avissawella. Following the incident, Uddika has been admitted to Salawa Hospital for treatment, and the Hanwella Police have initiated investigations.

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4. Suspect Wanted for Multiple Crimes Dies in Confrontation with Police

February 28, 2024

In a recent encounter with the Police Special Task Force in the Suriyawewa area, an ex-Army soldier wanted for the killing of a meat shop owner in Mahabage and several other crimes, tragically succumbed to injuries sustained during the confrontation. The raid, prompted by intelligence of the suspect's presence, led to an exchange of gunfire when the STF officers attempted to apprehend him. The suspect, armed with a firearm, opened fire on the officers, resulting in injuries to both him and a Special Task Force officer. Despite efforts to save his life, the suspect passed away while being treated at the Suriyawewa Hospital.

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5. Udappuwa Crimes OIC arrested over assault incident

March 5, 2024

The Officer-In-Charge (OIC) of the Udappuwa Police Crimes Division was suspended from duty after being arrested for allegedly assaulting villagers on Tuesday night (05 March). Witnesses reportedly captured footage of the OIC using rude language and berating residents for spitting on his vehicle. Two civilians were hospitalized with injuries from the altercation, while the OIC, claiming to have sustained injuries as well, was also admitted to the hospital. He was arrested the following morning (06) and suspended pending investigations. Police have obtained blood samples to determine if the officer was under the influence of alcohol during the incident.

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6. Fatal Shooting Incident in Ganemulla

Officers of the Police Special Task Force were involved in a fatal exchange of gunfire with an individual they were attempting to arrest in the area of Ganemulla over an attempted murder. Tragically, the 28-year old suspect, a resident of Eheliyagoda, was shot and later succumbed to the injuries after being admitted to the hospital.

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7. Fatal Shooting Incident During Police Operation in Narammala

March 26, 2024

In a recent incident reported from the Narammala area, as police officers attempted to apprehend a group involved in robbery, a confrontation ensued, leading to the accidental discharge of a police officer's firearm, resulting in the death of 23-year-old Dinesh Dulara, a resident of Veragala area. The police also noted that two suspects managed to evade capture during the operation. The incident unfolded following a complaint received by the Polgahawela Police regarding a group engaged in fraudulent activities, targeting individuals seeking to purchase mobile phones advertised on social media.

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8. Police Raid on Illegal Gambling Den Results in Shooting Incident in Tissamaharama

March 30, 2024

A late-night operation by the Tissamaharama Police to clamp down on an illegal gambling operation turned violent, resulting in the shooting of a 29-year-old man in the Ranminithenna area. The incident has sparked controversy and raised questions about police procedures.

According to official reports, on the evening of March 30, a team comprising a sergeant and two constables, not in uniform, of the Tissamaharama Police, was conducting a raid on a house suspected of hosting illegal gambling activities. It is during this operation that H.K. Ruwan Kumara, a resident of the area, sustained a serious injury from a gunshot to his right shoulder.

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9. Air Force Corporal Involved in Fatal Shooting Incident at Police Checkpoint

April 8, 2024

The confrontation led to the death of the Corporal, who was part of the Air Force Rugby pool. He succumbed to his injuries after being taken to the hospital, marking a tragic end to the altercation. The incident occurred on April 8, 2024, and the police have disclosed that the shooting was in connection with a previous incident that took place within the Moragahena Police area on April 7, 2024.

The deceased airman, who joined the SLAF on June 18, 2009, was attached to the Air Force Base Ratmalana and was a noted member of the Air Force Rugby Team. Reports suggest that the Corporal was on leave at the time of the incident. Details provided by the police indicate that there was an attempt by the officers at the checkpoint to apprehend the Corporal in connection to the earlier-mentioned shooting. This led to an exchange of fire, resulting in the unfortunate loss of life.

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10. Investigation launched into Sri Lankan Police's assault of Tamil youth

The Jaffna regional office of the National Human Rights Commission has launched an investigation into a brutal assault of a Tamil youth by officers attached to the Achchuveli Police. The victim, currently receiving treatment at the Jaffna Teaching Hospital, was reportedly assaulted on the street for allegedly failing to attend an investigation. Regional coordinator, has recorded a statement from the victim following a case filed in response to the incident.

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