

URGENT ACTION

PRISONERS AT RISK OF TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

On 5 and 6 July, violence inside Negombo Prison in western Sri Lanka left at least 28 people dead, including at least seven prison officials. Following this, Negombo Prison was declared a crime scene and hundreds of inmates were transferred to various prisons around Sri Lanka. On 8 July, local media reported the death of an inmate transferred to Boossa High Security Prison, following a “sudden illness”. On the same day, another inmate transferred to Agunukolapelessa Prison also died. Sri Lankan human rights groups have raised concerns that transferred inmates have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. Amnesty International is concerned about the risk of custodial torture, ill-treatment, reprisals and retaliatory violence against the transferred inmates and calls on the authorities to ensure their protection and to investigate the custodial deaths and all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Hon. Harshana Nanayakkara
Minister of Justice and National Integration
19 Sri Sangaraja Mawatha, Colombo 10, Sri Lanka
Email: minister@moj.gov.lk / secretary@moj.gov.lk
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Hon. Minister of Justice,

I am writing to you regarding the shocking news of the reported deaths of at least two inmates following their transfer from Negombo Prison, as well as allegations of torture and other ill-treatment of prisoners transferred following the clashes at Negombo Prison on 5-6 July, which led to the tragic deaths of at least 28 people, including at least seven prison officials.

On 8 July, local media reported the death of an inmate transferred to Boossa High Security Prison, following a “sudden illness”. On the same day, another inmate transferred to Agunukolapelessa Prison also died. The Committee to Protect Rights of Prisoners have alleged that transferred prisoners have also been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment – a concern also raised by Sri Lanka’s Human Rights Commission. Moreover, relatives of Negombo prison inmates have been unable to get information from prison authorities regarding the whereabouts of their loved ones following their transfer.

Following an official funeral at Welikada prison to pay tribute to the deceased prison officials, Amnesty International has received reports that emotions are running high amongst prison officials, leading to fears of custodial torture, ill-treatment, reprisals and retaliatory violence against the transferred inmates.

These events underscore the urgent need to address long-standing structural deficiencies within Sri Lanka’s prison system, such as overcrowding, and an effective National Prevention Mechanism to prevent torture and ill-treatment in custody.

I urge you to ensure the protection of the prisoners transferred from Negombo Prison from torture and other ill-treatment and to conduct a prompt and impartial investigation into the custodial deaths reported thus far. I also call on you to guarantee the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka unrestricted access to all prisons. The authorities have a responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of these prisoners in their custody and ensure they are protected against any reprisals. Additionally, I urge you to promptly inform the relatives of the inmates of the whereabouts of their loved ones following their transfer from Negombo prison, and provide them, and their lawyers with visitation access. Any inmates requiring medical care must also have prompt access to medical services.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) [raised alarm](#) after its second visit to the country just weeks before the incident in June 2026, over prolonged pre-trial detention, overcrowding and inadequate conditions in detention facilities and other places where people are deprived of liberty.

On 6 July, the Sri Lankan government announced that a three-person committee would investigate the violence at Negombo prison.

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) expressed concern over the inmates' torture and ill-treatment allegations and released a [statement](#) directing the Commissioner General of Prisons to protect inmates and ensure the Commission is able to access prisons.

An HRCSL Rapid Response Unit that visited Welikada Prison on the night of 7 July was denied access.

Link to Amnesty media quote: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2026/07/sri-lanka-deaths-of-transferred-negombo-prisoners-following-clashes-must-be-urgently-investigated/>

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Sinhala
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 10 October 2026
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Inmates transferred from Negombo Prison