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## **Sri Lanka: Violence at Welikada prison**

Clashes between prisoners and guards broke out at Colombo's Welikada prison today after members of Sri Lanka's Special Task Force (STF), an elite commando unit, searched the prison for banned items.

Prisoners allegedly seized weapons from, and took control of, the prison's armoury and an exchange of fire was reported between inmates, the STF and prison guards. At least 11 people have been killed, with many others injured.

"The Sri Lankan authorities clearly need to deal with this violence that apparently was started by the prisoners. But the authorities must use only such force as is strictly necessary and proportionate, in accordance with international human rights standards regarding the use of force," said Amnesty International's Sri Lanka expert Yolanda Foster.

"Others in the prison or people in surrounding areas not involved in the violence are at risk, including from violence by the prisoners. All steps must be taken to minimise death and injury."

"Sri Lanka has had several prison uprisings in the past sparked by similar search operations by the security forces, or by inmates protesting poor prison conditions or arbitrary detention. After these uprisings Amnesty International received reports of violent retaliation by guards against prisoners, including fatal beatings – this must not be repeated."