

*The Ambassador*



PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF  
**SRI LANKA**

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Ref. HR/50

19<sup>th</sup> September 2013

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Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right  
to Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Mr. Maina Kiai  
Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly  
and of Association

Mr. Christof Heyns  
Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions

Ms. Catarina de Albuquerque  
Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation

Mr. Juan E. Méndez  
Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading  
Treatment or Punishment

GoSL response to the joint allegation by 4 UN Special Procedure mandate holders on the  
Weliweriya incident

Please find given below the response of the Government of Sri Lanka to the queries raised in the Joint Allegation Letter of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression; the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association; the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions; the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation dated 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2013 addressed to me:

1. An incident did occur in Weliweriya during a public agitation. The public were agitating on the issue of contaminated water in that area where they alleged that a company manufacturing rubber gloves was responsible for the contaminated water. The company refuted the allegations on the basis that there was no proof that the

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factory had caused the contamination of water. The protestors had also blocked junctions connecting to the main Colombo-Kandy road thereby obstructing traffic.

2. A crowd of around 4000 had surrounded the factory and initial inquiries revealed that the protestors had turned violent and the Police were compelled to seek the assistance of the Army to contain law and order.
3. It is alleged that when the Army arrived, some of the participants of the demonstration started pelting stones and other objects at the Army. It is also alleged that petrol bombs were also used by the protestors. The protestors had attacked a nearby petrol station with petrol bombs and as a result a three-wheeler parked close by had caught fire. At this point, the Army had fired in the air, but had not been able to contain the crowd, and had opened fire which resulted in the killing one person and causing injuries to several others. Two of the injured later succumbed to their injuries. Due to these attacks 1 policeman and 8 army officials also sustained injuries.
4. The incident received the highest level attention with H.E. the President meeting with related agencies and stakeholders in order to decide on action that needed to be taken and arrive at an acceptable resolution to the issue.
5. A Police investigation and an internal inquiry by the Sri Lanka Army are currently being conducted on the incident. Four officers of the Sri Lanka Army have been relieved of their duties pending investigations. A magisterial inquiry is also in progress subsequent to facts being reported to the magistrate by the Police. The factory is to be relocated to an alternative site.
6. Steps have also been taken to ensure provision of safe drinking water (pipe borne water) for the population of the area.
7. Investigations are also being conducted on the environmental and other impact of the waste emanating from the manufacturing company in question and other similar factories located in the area.
8. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms Navanethem Pillay who visited Sri Lanka from 25-31 August 2013 was briefed on this issue by the Secretary of the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development during their meeting on 30 August 2013.



Ravinatha P. Aryasinha  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative