

**Sri Lanka Medical Association's media statement on the execution of prisoners
June 28, 2019**

The Sri Lanka Medical Association, as the apex professional organisation of medical doctors in our country and as an organisation that has always upheld and promoted ethical conduct in its members, is concerned about the implications, to both the nation and the profession, of recent attempts to hastily implement the execution of prisoners awaiting death penalty.

The justification for the death penalty is being increasingly questioned all over the civilised world. But quite apart from that, many citizens in our own country, including lawyers, have pointed out that it is unsuited to our own country, especially in view of the widespread problems prevalent in our legal system as well as the lack of access to legal recourse even within this problem-laden system. It should be noted that such problems affect the poorer members of our society disproportionately more. Fortunately, a strong debate on this issue has arisen in our country, and it is too early to arrive at any conclusions.

On this background, our Association would like to ask all concerned to refrain from taking any hasty decisions, to allow the current debate in civilian circles to continue, and to join it with reasoned arguments. We believe that such an approach upholds the democratic ideals that we all value, which political authorities are duty-bound to protect.

Our Association wishes to point out that it is unethical for doctors to take part even under compulsion in the process of execution of prisoners, in any part or in any way, including by examining prisoners for fitness for execution. This is because our profession holds as sacrosanct its ethical position to respect human life even if forced to act otherwise.

The Sri Lanka Medical Association urges the government and the state to refrain from executing prisoners. It urges all concerned to continue in the debate to explore better ways to achieve whatever socially desirable objectives that are said to justify such executions. It also informs all doctors that it is unethical to take part, in any manner whatsoever, in executions.

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