

VOL: 1 NO: 5

June 04, 2021

Neglect & Loss



by Akila Jayawardana

Published by: ASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



Contents

SRI LANKA: Office on Missing Persons and the Zero Policy on Justice	1
SRI LANKA: An inability to prosecute: The Meaning of an Attorney General's Role.....	4
PAKISTAN: Attacks on rights continue	8
NEPAL: Joint Statement on the Occasion of the International Week of the Disappeared 2021	12
MYANMAR/BURMA: Myanmar Situation Update (24 to 30 May 2021)	16
The impact of the Kulinas.....	18
The habits of the Kulinas	23
Cultural Roots of Cruelty	25
A Webinar On Freedom Of Expression	28
A Webinar On the International Day In Support Of Victims of Torture	29

SRI LANKA: Office on Missing Persons and the Zero Policy on Justice

By Basil Fernando

One of the issues that demonstrated the approach of the Sri Lankan authorities to the problem of enforced disappearances could be discovered in a close study of the narrative of the Office on Missing Persons (OMP). In essence, what it shows is the international diplomacy of deception that Sri Lankan authorities have cleverly developed and practiced over a long period of time in dealing with the United Nations (UN) Human Rights High Commissioner's Office and other UN agencies relating to human rights.

The diplomacy of the deception became quite blatantly manifest with the appointment of the new Commissioners to this Office very recently. Some of the names included will naturally create cynical laughter among anyone who know something about these individuals who have been appointed and their own involvements in the events relating to enforced disappearances and also in the diplomacy of deception, particularly in relation to matters relating to justice.

It is simply impossible for anyone to grasp the whole exercise relating to enforced disappearances in all parts of the country: South, North and East without touching on some of the most difficult problems relating to the administration of justice that has evolved over several decades in Sri Lanka.

The issue that the international community has found it difficult to deal with is the fact that enforced disappearances in Sri Lanka developed as a State policy. The greatest manifestation of this State policy is that the largest amount of cases of persons who had disappeared has faced that fate while they were in the custody of the security forces. Commissions on involuntary disappearances which is the only somewhat serious attempt to investigate into enforced disappearances have clearly recorded in their reports that disappearances in Sri Lanka means the abduction in place of arrests, and interrogations and torture while a person is in the Police custody and finally the causing of death and the disposal of the bodies of these persons by the security authorities. These were not accidental events for which only some errant officers were responsible.

The laws were made in order to enable enforced disappearances. The suspension of the laws relating to the disposal of bodies of suspicious deaths was done through gazette notifications which announced emergency regulations. An officer, not below the rank of an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) was allowed to decide on the disposal of the body of a person without following any procedures or without subjecting themselves to judicial scrutiny. Thus, in talking about disappearances in Sri Lanka, what we have is a situation where a policy of allowing enforced disappearances was pursued through national security laws and regulations.

It is only a government that is willing to admit that wrong policies have been adopted and allowed in the past which were of a criminal nature and is willing now to reveal this fact to their own society and to make a genuine resolve in order to end this practice, could undertake a serious investigation into enforced disappearances.

The only time that things came closer towards accepting this responsibility, was during the early period of former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's Government which appointed Commissions on involuntary disappearances. The recordings were through a genuine process without overt obstructions from the Government at the time. That led to a body of information that if pursued further would have made a significant difference not only about the persons who have disappeared but also about the damage done to the legal system, particularly the criminal justice system in Sri Lanka. Due to various reasons, these Commissions reports did not lead to a healthy conclusion.

The OMP was created by the Government of former President Maithripala Sirisena and former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, to create the impression that the Government is not at "war" with the UN human rights bodies. It was meant to reduce tensions and to buy time to allow a slow process of undermining the demand for compliance with the State obligations to investigate and prosecute those responsible for these violations. However, the Government knew that such investigations were very problematic, as the chain of command that led to such violations, extended beyond those who carried out the actual criminal acts.

While several commissions were keenly interested in carrying out their functions, the Government's way to undermine their efforts was by delaying processes by creating technical difficulties in setting up a functioning office. It took a considerable time in getting the computers.

However, some dedicated work was done by the Commissioners, who received floods of applications from families in the North and the East. A lot of sweat was spent to collect the tearful tales and to find the credible facts and to record them.

Change of Government

When the Government changed, the policy also changed. Zero justice is the new policy. Justice is now seen as a threat to the stability of the Government. War on justice is now the tacit policy. The OMP now must be transformed to a justice denying instrument. Therefore, those chosen to carry out this function must be those who are willing to carry out this function.

Their real tasks will be the following:

Discredit the complaints and witnesses.

Destroy the evidences of facts that have been collected.

Erase the very idea of the right to seek justice for enforced disappearances.

It brings back the original policy that made disappearances possible: In Sri Lanka, it is a right of the State to cause disappearances when the State thinks it necessary to do so. Thus, what is asserted is that Sri Lanka has its own view on the killing of human beings. These may not be the same as what is found in the law, locally or internationally. In short, the policy is 'We decide what crimes are and what is or not a crime'. It is this policy that will determine the fate of the OMP.

SRI LANKA: An inability to prosecute: The Meaning of an Attorney General's Role.....



One Attorney General went into retiremand another was appointed. The reflections in this short article is not about the persons involved but the position that has been held and passed over. And also it is not about the specific position of the Attorney General but about the department that the holder of this office represents. Outgoing AG Mr. Dappula De Livera was reported as saying that on his retirement he was offered a diplomatic post but, he refused. Furthermore, if a suitable position to serve the country is offered, he would accept. Otherwise, he would set up in private practice.

Taking that statement on face value, it indicates that the former Attorney General is willing to enter into service of his country. The few suggestions that are made in this article are perhaps one of the most valuable services he could render. Giving to his country, to the department in which he has served for a long time (and was its head) to the legal system as a whole and thereby to the entire country.

It is well known that the time he had to serve within this department was not an enjoyable time at all. Nobody can choose the circumstances under which one has to live and function. In the circumstances under which he served in the Attorney General's office was not a pleasant time. It is not the fault of any officer but it is a sort of pre-determined situation.

Therefore, when we say about the time that it was not a nice time, it means that it was not a nice time for the nation as a whole and all the public institutions including the Attorney General's Department.

An issue that may be bothering many people now, and may bother many thinking people in the country in times to come, (particularly those associated with legal and judicial positions), would be: the questions as to what was the evolution of the Attorney General's role over those years?

In the development of culture, in terms of larger historical events as well as institutional histories, the memoirs of the people who once served in these positions play a great deal. They explain and illuminate the nature of the developments taking place within a specific time frame. Numerous persons who served as Senior Judges or Attorney Generals or held high positions have left an enormous amount of literature in the more developed cultures. These writings have become a major reference for future generations. Particularly, the scholars in these fields and the field of Law and other related branches such as politics, social sciences and philosophy, draw a great deal of information and guidance in finding answers to the questions that bother them. This comes about through readings of various

memoirs left by persons who had taken an honest and introspective look into their own experiences. These experiences of public servants are not completely private affairs. They are part of the storehouse of knowledge about what happened, how different forms of thinking around policies developed, where things went right and where things went wrong. Unfortunately, such literature is quite rare in Sri Lanka. Many of the biographies written about politicians are pure propaganda. They aim to promote a particular individual or a particular party or a particular perspective. No politician has left a critical analysis of the different things they had participated in for the next generation to sort out, struggle and deal with.

In the field of Law, the same thing is valid with a few, rare exceptions. Former Chief Justice Shirani Bandaranayake has left a memoir entitled “Hold me in contempt”-- giving certain details and insights into the time she held office. Due to prevailing circumstances, some of these reflections and memories may be ignored. However, it is very likely, that a serious scholar looking into the tragedy of the Legal System of Sri Lanka, will find valuable sources of information and insights in her memoir.

Another person who left glimpses of the nature of the degeneration of Sri Lanka’s Legal System, (including the undermining of the independence of the Judiciary from within and from without), was the late senior lawyer S.L. Gunasekara. His condemnation of the system was far more ruthless and forthright. He minced no words when he came to describe the collapse of the system. For example, he quotes a senior lawyer of the time, telling him while watching the new Superior Court Complex under construction. “We built a new Parliament and lost Parliamentary democracy and now a new Court Complex is being built. And by the time it is completed, we will also lose the independence of the Judiciary. His book can be a guide to those looking into the history of the Institutions in our country.

There were others who left some glimpses of their insights in some form of writing. This could be Articles or comments made to other persons holding senior positions at that time.

In a memorial lecture for Kanchana Abhayapala, the former Attorney General, the late K.C. Kamalasabayason P.C. raised the following question “I will only pose a simple question. Is it more important in society to build roads to match international standards, spending literally millions of dollars, rather than to have a peaceful, law-abiding society where the Rule of Law prevails?” He made an attempt to raise the issue of the crisis of the Rule of Law in a limited way. Later, at the end of his term as Attorney General, he told the former lawyer, Deputy-Inspector General of Police, while pointing to the Hulftsdorp Court Complex, “I see here only buildings.” What he meant was that the outer structures of building complexes remained but the soul and the substance of them had been lost.

There are others who have left some memories in their speeches, for example, the late Chief Justice Neville Samarakoon. Disputes he had with the Executive were well known and there is some record of these matters. He wrote some personal letters to his former friends where he complained about the system’s failures. It was unfortunate that he did not leave a detailed memoir about everything that took place during his tragic period of tenure as a Chief Justice. If such literature were to be available, it would have produced a more

enlightened debate on what has happened and what was to happen as a result of the things that started during that period.

Great judges, such as the former Justice Mark Fernando whose unhappiness with the manner in which the system was functioning was quite well known, did not leave his own memoirs to posterity. They

would have thrown much light on the developments which had happened during his working life and thereby also thrown light on what is happening now.

The pronounced secrets about two of the most important institutions of any society, that is the Judiciary and the Attorney General's department, remain as secrets. People carry to their last days and to their graves the kind of information and knowledge that only they are aware of. Of course, there may have been many reasons why they have done so. That is not the issue. The issue is that a great deal of knowledge that society is entitled to know has been buried.

Not revealing the secrets about the past, particularly those that led to wrong directions and even tragedy, is an irreplaceable loss.

It would be worthwhile, if the retired Attorney General would someday opt to reveal to the nation his own four thoughts about the Law, about the institutions dealing with the Law and Law Enforcement during his time and above all the manner in which a particular structural problem has hindered the delivery of Justice. This would be a greater service to the nation than anything else that could be done by someone holding office. One of the major questions that distresses the people, which became quite manifest in the Easter Sunday massacre of 2019, is about the link that exists between the Attorney General's Department and the Criminal Investigation Divisions. The arrangement that prevails now is that there is a clear separation of investigation and the prosecuting function. In several of the Common Law countries, this division does not exist in the way it has existed in the 19th century or even the early parts of the 20th century. Thus, ensuring that investigations are conducted about crimes and that it is conducted within the framework of the Law is essential to the functioning of the Prosecutor's role. If the investigation function fails, the ultimate result will be the same as what the former Attorney General in a letter to the IGP remarked about- a sense of adequate evidence to prosecute.

Inability to conduct prosecutions due to this structural problem which begins with the problems of the Criminal Investigation Division is a major problem that affects the administration of justice in Sri Lanka. If the quality of prosecution fails due to bad investigations, then the whole purpose of prosecution fails. And this is reflected by the overwhelmingly large number of failed prosecutions in the Official Record. Why do these things happen and what are the ways of overcoming these problems in order to give a meaning to the prosecutor's function? This is a problem that will bedevil not only the administration of Justice but also the stability of society as a whole.

Where Prosecutors cannot play their role as expected in the terms of the Law and the norms and standards of the prosecutor's office, then this is not a simple matter. It is a failure of great magnitude which has ominous results for the society.

These matters need explanations. Only those who have seen things from the inside can reveal the actual situations which give rise to these serious failures. Thus, the insider's story is something that is essential to the life of society. What is meant here by insider story is not about scandals and gossip but about substantial issues that prevents the Public Institutions like the Attorney General's department from performing the duties essential to the country.

Another sad aspect of prosecutions that are being carried out are the long delays. There are cases whereby the time a case comes to an end, there had been about 6 - 7 or more representatives of the Attorney General's Department who had handled the files. There are instances that clearly indicates instances where the representatives that come from the department at a later stage are unaware of the many issues that arose in the early part of a trial which may have taken place some ten or more years earlier. Often, some unscrupulous Defense Lawyers misrepresent facts in the Courts, making use of these problems of memory, as a chain of individuals take the roles of others. In addition, within one trial there could also be several Judges hearing parts of the case; this makes for a fundamental absurdity in the whole process. It is a logical absurdity and a human impossibility of making judgements on such scattered evidence. In particular, when the behavior of many of the witnesses has not been seen either by those who come at a later stage or by Judges who come at much later stages.

Nobody today would doubt that the process of Fair Trial is in a serious crisis in the country. Seeing that the whole process of the Prosecutor's Role is around the issue of fair trial, makes it a fundamental failure of the institution. Those who have held positions in these institutions have an obligation and the responsibility to inform and educate society about the things that have gone amiss.

PAKISTAN: Attacks on rights continue

Press Freedom:

Despite promises to the contrary, attacks on rights in Pakistan, mostly by all-powerful military, continue. Only the days before, some people who identified themselves as belonging to the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's spy agency, tortured Asad Toor, a popular YouTuber highly critical of the government policies. They had followed him first and [then assaulted him inside his home](#). Ironically, instead of bringing the culprits to justice, The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) then [charged Mr. Toor himself for defaming a government institution](#) through social media.

This is not the first time authorities have targeted Mr. Toor. He was subjected to a similar investigation in September 2020 on the basis of a complaint by a private citizen. He was then charged for defamation and public mischief by the Punjab police. Asad Toor was also charged with separate sections of the Prevention of Electronic Crime Act 2016. He is hounded even after getting absolved by the Lahore High Court in that case speaks volumes about the vendetta against journalists in Pakistan. The Rawalpindi bench of Lahore High Court had then termed the Punjab Police's First Information Report (F.I.R) against Mr. Toor [Infructuous](#).

Mr Toor, however, is not the only journalist to get attacked by the authorities in Pakistan lately. This April, another prominent journalist [Mr. Absar Alam was shot and wounded](#) near his home in Pakistan's capital Islamabad allegedly, for his reporting. Pakistan in any case has not been a particularly good place for journalists and has ranked continuously low in the World Press Freedom Index released annually by the Reporters Sans Frontiers, a Media watchdog. In 2020, the country [ranked 145th among 180 countries](#) ranked by the organization with a abysmally low score of 46.86.

The Dawn, Pakistan's biggest English language daily newspaper had [reported](#) at least 148 documented attacks or violations against journalists across the country from May 3, 2020, till April 20, 2021. The attacks included six murders, seven assassination attempts, five kidnappings, 25 arrests or detentions, 15 assaults and 27 legal cases registered against journalists. Ironically, the state authorities, legally mandated to protect the journalists' constitutional rights turned out to be the biggest threat to them with being accused of orchestrating the attacks in a whopping 46 percent of the documented cases. The Dawn also reported that at least 138 journalists have been killed in Pakistan since 1990 to 2020 for reasons relating to their work.

The reports also pointed that Islamabad, the national capital of Pakistan is also [the most dangerous place for the journalists in the country](#). From May 2020 to April 2021, Islamabad recorded 34% of the violations (51 out of total 148 cases). Sindh was the second worst with 26% of the violations (38 cases) and Punjab the third most dangerous with 20% (29 cases). These were followed by Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) with 9% (13 cases), Azad Jammu,

and Kashmir (AJK) with 6% (9 cases) and Balochistan with 5% (8 cases). No violations were documented from Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B).

The physical and violent attacks on journalists had followed serious attacks on press freedom in Pakistan by the way of a new ordinance called [Pakistan Media Development Authority \(PMDA\) Ordinance, 2021](#) that media organisations are opposing and accusing of muzzling all press freedoms. The ordinance proposes to repeal all media related laws including the Press Council Ordinance, 2002, the Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration Ordinance, 2002, the Newspaper Employees, (Conditions of Service Act), 1973, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Ordinance, 2002, as amended by the Pemra Amendment Act, 2007, and the Motion Pictures Ordinance, 1979.

A joint statement by the representatives of media organisations including All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA), Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE), Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ, Barna Group), PFUJ (Dastoor Group) and the Association of Electronic Media Editors and News Directors (AEMEND) summarily rejected the ordinance.

They also termed the move as a return to martial law era tactics of suppressing free and the independent media.

The statement claimed that

“The move appears as an extension of now defunct Press and Publications Ordinance 1963 (PPO) of Ayub Khan era to all media platforms with regimental provisions to take over the independent and free media.”

The developments came high on the heels of other such attacks on journalists. The most prominent one among those was taking [Hamid Mir, a popular anchor with the Geo News off the air](#) allegedly under pressure by the authorities. Mr. Mir is a survivor of a shootout way back in 2014 after he hosted an episode highlighting alleged rights violations by the Pakistan Army in Balochistan.

Minority Rights:

Despite some positive news, including promises of safety and security from the government authorities, members of the minority community still live in fear in most parts of Pakistan.

This is particularly saddening [in the view of several positive developments as Imran Khan Government came to power](#). For instance, a Christian woman named Asia Bibi who was imprisoned in an allegedly false blasphemy case for almost a decade was freed, the permission to register Christian marriage with an official certificate was given. Also, in a

rare case, the marriage of a Hindu minor girl, Mehek Kumari, who was abducted and forcibly converted to Islam to marry a Muslim was nullified. The Government of Pakistan had also opened up Kartarpur Corridor for Sikhs making it easier for pilgrims from India. Yet, the developments did not last.

In January this year, a Hindu shrine named Sri Param Hansji Maharaj Samadhi that was attacked and desecrated in 1997 [was attacked again by a Muslim mob](#) led by a Cleric named Maulvi Mohammad Sharif, who is affiliated with the religious party Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam. Mr. Sharif had also led the attack on Shrine in 1997 and the Hindu community was rebuilding the shrine after the Supreme Court of Pakistan had ordered its rebuilding in 2015. The attack exposed the impunity enjoyed by rabble rouser clerics in the country and renewed the debate if Pakistan can protect its minorities.

The condition of the minorities in the country is so bad that the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom has recommended [redesignating Pakistan as a Country of Particular Concern in its 2021 Annual Report](#). The other countries in the list are Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, Nigeria, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. The report noted a sharp rise in targeted killings, blasphemy cases, forced conversions, and hate speech targeting religious minorities including Ahmadis, Shi'a Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Sikhs. The report also noted of abduction, forced conversion to Islam, rape, and forced marriage remaining an imminent threat for religious minority women and children, particularly from the Hindu and Christian faiths.

Blasphemy laws continue to be a particular enabler for hate speeches, assaults and even targeted killing of those accused of blasphemy. Earlier in May this month, a mob of dozens attacked a police station in country's capital Islamabad demanding that [two brothers arrested on the allegations of blasphemy were handed over to them](#).

The European parliament too had taken notice of the blatant misuse of the blasphemy laws for reasons as varied as settling personal scores to property disputes and even the authorities framing dissidents in Pakistan in April this year and [demanded their repeal](#) in a resolution. Unfortunately, the government of Pakistan refused to do so in a strongly worded reply on the issue that called for no compromise on the controversial blasphemy laws.

The numbers of the complaints related to harassment, anti-government posts, blasphemy and pornography have been increasing steadily in the country, as acknowledged by a [report compiled by the Cybercrime Wing of the Federal Investigation Agency](#) (FIA). For most of the accused of blasphemy, this often means end of the road.

There was one definitively positive news though. In a country where people from the transgender community are regularly stigmatized, a transgender woman Nisha Rao made history by [becoming country's first transgender lawyer](#). In another positive development for the community, Pakistan census included transgender people as a separate community

for the first time in 2017. Though many social activists and members of the community believe the actual count of 10,418 to be a massive underestimation, it is a recognition of the community nonetheless and can help their fight against stigmatization.

NEPAL: Joint Statement on the Occasion of the International Week of the Disappeared 2021

A Joint Statement by the Asian Human Rights Commission and 44 national and international organizations

On the occasion of the International Week of the Disappeared 2021, we, the undersigned human rights organizations and victims' associations of Nepal reaffirm our position to the government of Nepal to undertake immediate steps towards a reawakening of the stalled TJ process by adopting a transparent and consultative process for amendment of the law.

We call on all levels of government to ensure access to health, vaccine and other basic needs of the conflict victims affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with high priority.

Every year, in the last week of May, the victims and their families along with the international human rights community, commemorate the International Week of the Disappeared, initiated in 1981 by the Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared-Detainees (FEDEFAM) during its first Congress in San Jose, Costa Rica.

This year, we pay tribute to the strength and courage of the victims and family members of the disappeared persons and express our unwavering solidarity with the families in their persistent quest for truth and justice.

At these trying times when the entire human civilization is threatened by the alarming spread of COVID-19, the families of the disappeared - the majority belonging to the downtrodden sections of society, are among the hardest hit. With the State constantly turning a blind eye to the long pending demands of the conflict victims, the ongoing pandemic has further added insult to injury, pushing them to extreme economic crisis. Extended prohibition orders enforced by the government without proper plans for food security, income generation, health and other basic services have left the victims of human rights violations in a state of utmost grief and despair.

While commemorating the International Week of the Disappeared, we would like to point out that it has been more than six years since the Supreme Court (SC) of Nepal ordered the Government to amend the Enforced Disappearance Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation

Commission Act, 2014, in line with international human rights standards making amnesty impermissible for those involved in enforced disappearances. More than a year has lapsed since 27 April 2020, when the full bench of the SC rejected a petition filed by the Nepal Government demanding a review of its previous order. Yet, the Government has not taken any concrete steps to advance with the amendment.

Despite the National Penal Code, 2017 criminalizing enforced disappearances, no cases thus far have been investigated under this Code as police authorities refuse to initiate criminal investigations on the pretext that these cases will be duly dealt with by the transitional justice (TJ) mechanisms - the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP). The national and international human rights community is well aware of how these TJ mechanisms have been nothing but a political instrument functioning at the behest of their political masters. Disappointed by these Commissions not being able to ascertain the fate of a single case of enforced disappearances, despite having more than 5 years of their mandates, human rights organizations and many victims groups have ceased engaging with these Commissions. The Commissions have been used as a means to blatantly delay, dilute and derail the TJ process and obstruct victims' access to truth and justice.

The undersigned organizations therefore, call upon the Government of Nepal:

- To ensure truth, justice and effective remedy to victims and families of the disappeared;
- Start fresh consultations to amend the law in compliance with international human rights law and the Supreme Court's directives, including the scrapping of provisions allowing amnesty for perpetrators;
- To revise the Penal Code to bring it in line with international standards including the revision in the penalty for an enforced disappearance to make it proportionate to the gravity of the crime;
- To reconstitute the Commissions, and appoint a new set of commissioners under the revised Act that respects victims basic right to truth and justice;
- To investigate, prosecute and punish crimes of enforced disappearances under the new Penal Code;
- To remove statute of limitations to file complaints in enforced disappearance cases;
- To ensure fair and equitable distribution of COVID-19 relief packages and health services and take care of the basic needs of victims of human rights violations;
- Immediately ensure the social, cultural, economic, psychological and legal support to the victims and families of enforced disappearance as a part of victims' right to reparation;
- Ratify International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances Punishment.

Endorsed by:

1. Accountability Watch Committee (AWC)	2. Advocacy Forum-Nepal (AF-Nepal)
3. Alliance for Social Dialogue (ASD)	4. Amnesty International-Nepal
5. Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)	6. Centre for Legal Studies (CLS)
7. Civil Rights Association Nepal (CIRAN)	8. Collective Campaign for Peace (COCAP)
9. Conflict Victims' Common Platform (CVCP)	10. Conflict Victims' National Alliance (CVNA)
11. Conflict Victim Women National Network (CVWNN)	12. Conflict Victims' Society for Justice (CVSJ)
13. Democratic Freedom and Human Rights Institute (DFHRI)	14. Discharged People's Liberation Army Nepal (D-PLAN)
15. Forum for Protection of People's Rights Nepal	16. Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD)
17. Forum of Women Journalists and Communicators (Sancharika Samuha)	18. Ganesh Ujjan Memorial Foundation
19. Human Rights Foundation (HURFON)	20. Human Rights and Justice Centre (HRJC)
21. Human Rights for Justice	22. Human Rights Organizations Nepal (HURON)
23. Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC)	24. International Institute for Human Rights, Environment and Development (INHURED International)
25. Justice and Rights Institute Nepal (JuRI- Nepal)	26. Law and Policy Forum for Social Justice (LAPSOJ)
27. Legal Aid and Consultancy Centre Nepal (LACC)	28. Maina Bal Bikash Samiti
29. Martyrs' and Disappeared Warrior Children Academy	30. Nagarik Aawaz (NA)
31. National Alliance of Women Human Right Defenders	32. National Network of Disabled Conflict Victims
33. National Network of Families of Disappeared (NEFAD)	34. Nepal Peacebuilding Initiative

35. Forum for Restorative Justice (Nepal Punaristhapakiya Niyaa Manch)	36. Nepal Law and Policy Centre
37. Peace Envisioners	38. Public Defender Society of Nepal (PDSN)
39. Sankalpa	40. Tarangini Foundation
41. Terai Human Rights Defenders Alliance (THRD Alliance)	42. The Story Kitchen
43. Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal (TPO)	44. Voices of Women Media (VOW Media)
45. Women for Human Rights (WHR)	

MYANMAR/BURMA: Myanmar Situation Update (24 to 30 May 2021)

Download the Full Statement [Here](#)

The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) released the [final comprehensive report](#) of its international election observation mission to the 2020 Myanmar general elections and said “*it is its informed opinion that the results of the 2020 general elections were, by and large, representative of the will of the people of Myanmar*”. It also said despite the raging COVID-19 pandemic, 27.5 million people voted thanks to the hard work of polling staff and election or health officials, their voices cannot be silenced. ANFREL has identified the election postponement, disenfranchisement of the Rohingya community and the other ethnic minorities, legal framework outlined by the 2008 military drafted constitution as the shortcomings of the election that has to improve in future elections. International and local media reported the findings, and diplomatic missions of Canada, US, UK, New Zealand, Switzerland to Myanmar also quoted ANFREL in their social media accounts with its full report.

The junta-appointed Union Election Commission (UEC) called for a meeting with the political parties on 21 May in Nay Pyi Taw and 59 political parties joined. The popular parties like National League for Democracy (NLD), Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, Arakan National Party, Democratic Party for New Society did not attend the meeting while a representative of the People’s Party, known as a pro- democracy party attended. The party faced mass resignation over the decision that seven out of 20 central executive committee members resigned, including co-founder Ye Naing Aung. At the meeting, the junta- appointed election commission chair Thein Soe said they will dissolve the NLD due to “electoral fraud” and the regime will prosecute NLD leaders as “traitors”.

The protests continued in different parts of Myanmar despite the crackdown by the junta. Tension between the junta forces and the civilian resistance fighters increased during the week that the situation in Mindat, Chin State further escalated after junta forces entered Mindat. The junta has blocked road access to the town and cut off its water supply, making life very difficult for those who stayed behind. Local media also reported the locals fled to the nearest forest due to the attacks on Mindat town and they desperately needed emergency support for food and medicine.

The clashes between the junta forces and the civil resistance fighters also emerged in several places in Kayah state such as Loikaw, Hpasawng, Demoso, and Bawlake townships. Media reported that emergency support on food, shelter and medicine were

needed in IDPs camps of Kayah.

Kachin Independent Army (KIA) forces also clashed with the Myanmar military forces over the week in Kachin state, Sagaing region and Shan state. Continued fighting with KNU forces and military has also left many to flee to Thailand. The civil society organizations based in Thailand and Thai-Myanmar border urged the Thai government to delay the repatriation of Myanmar refugees and allow war refugees and displaced persons at the Thailand-Myanmar border by the Salween to have access to humanitarian aid. According to Indian government officials, more than 15,000 had sought refuge since the Feb. 1 coup. A local official of the Union Election Commission (UEC) in Magway Region was also tortured to death by junta troops.

According to the information compiled by ANFREL, at least 57 bomb blasts happened across Myanmar in the past week. It was reported that at least 11 people died including a nine-year-old boy, and at least 40 were injured.

International Crisis Group reported that Myanmar's junta is seeking to limit access to the internet to an internal network of only "whitelisted" sites to quash opposition. Reports said that military and intelligence agencies are conducting some tracing of SIM cards and interception of calls.

United Nations General Assembly vote on 18 May on a draft resolution calling for "an immediate suspension of the direct and indirect supply, sale or transfer of all weapons and munitions" to Myanmar has been postponed. The US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated 16 individuals and one entity connected to Burma's military regime including adult children of previously designated senior Burmese military officials and the UK extended its sanctions to Myanmar Gems Enterprise, a distributor of jade and other precious stones.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), as of 23 May, 818 people were killed by the junta. 4,296 people are currently under detention and 95 are sentenced. 1,822 warrants have been issued. 20 were sentenced to death and 14 to three years imprisonment

Download the Full Statement [Here](#)

The impact of the Kulinas

Basil Fernando

Chandra de Silva, in his book on the history of Sri Lanka, mentions about the rise of the Kulinas in the following words: “.....”

According to him, this group that identified itself as the Kulinas emerged in the 11th Century. In the previous Centuries preceding the 11th Century, Sri Lanka was subjected to continuous invasions from India. The impact of the Indian invasions was so fundamental that it virtually changed the religion of the majority itself. Chandra de Silva writes “.....”. It was through this transformation that the Indian influence of caste was introduced into Sri Lanka. It took a modified form as compared to India which had a few thousand years of history in terms of caste. The Indian system consisted of the Brahmin at the top, soldiers and merchants in the second ladder and all those who engaged in physical labour as the fourth category. In Sri Lanka, it was the landlords who were at the top and everyone else was considered to be below them. Thus, while there were many castes in terms of hierarchy, there were two main categories, the landlords and all others who were engaged in whatever the work that they did.

However, the root of the Kulina concept and practice was not the mere holding of large portions of land. It was a combination of the caste related notions borrowed from India, combined with the land holdings.

It was not the mere ownership of large lands that created the kind of oppression that was meted out to everyone else other than the Kulinas. The way that those who were considered to be Kulinas were treated and the way that all others were to be treated were designed in terms of borrowed notions of caste based practices which were prevailing in India.

The two basic notions around which the Indian caste system had been based were the complete prohibition against social mobility. This meant that a son was expected to do the father's job and that there could be no exemption to that. The notion of change of position through achievements or merit was not permitted.

The second principle was the principle of disproportionate punishment. The disproportionate punishment meant that anyone who was not a Kulina, if he or she engaged in any transgression, would be punished by way of extremely harsh punishment such as death. However, the more harsh aspect was that it would not be the individual who would be punished but the whole family and even the clan.

These two principles when it is practiced rigourously in a society for a long period of time as over the course of many Centuries, it creates the kind of mentalities that have a permanent impact on the mind, soul and character of the people.

The study of the emergence of the Kulinas and their impact is important from a contemporary perspective of engagement in attempting to explain the kind of behaviour

that prevails among Sri Lankans as a whole. While the Kulina concept was basically among the Sinhalese, a similar conception and practice was also there in terms of the Tamils.

The question that is being posed often contemporarily is as to how Sri Lanka during the latter part of the 20th Century became one of the most violent places in the world. It has been pointed out that when compared to the size of the population, the number of people who were killed since the early 1970s may far exceed the number of people who have been killed in terms of other countries.

It is the attitudes regarding killing that were nurtured within the cultural dominance of the Kulinas that could throw light on understanding the kind of mentalities that were needed to be created in order to maintain a social order in which the position of the Kulinas was never challenged in any significant way.

The role of cruelty in creating the kind of mentalities that makes people obey and do work which is very hard for the body and also for the mind, clearly shows the role played by cruel practices in generating those kinds of attitudes which make people engage in such activities.

By now, we have considerable knowledge about the manner in which slavery was maintained in the United States (US) as well as in some countries in Europe including the United Kingdom. The people who were made to be slaves were in fact free and independent people living in their own environment in some of the African countries. They were forcibly taken away from their countries by slave traders and brought in ships and sold to employers who were looking for slave labour in the US. The life stories of slaves written later by some former slaves themselves like Frederick Douglass and many others, as well as by the people who organized themselves as the abolitionists, were able to leave a lot of details about the manner in which the slaves were tamed, how they were kept under the fear of lashing, how they were prevented from even having families of their own and every kind of humiliation that these slaves were made to suffer.

The imposition of the Kulina dominance over the rest of the population in Sri Lanka happened also through similar methods. Without cruelty, it was not possible to tame people. To create a mentality of fear that is so deeply internalized is a necessary condition to have absolute obedience from those over whom the Kulinas have dominance.

One of the questions that is posed by Sri Lankans themselves, more and more, is to how such deep levels of insensitivity exist among the people themselves about the sufferings imposed on their own. Perhaps one of the most glaring examples of this in terms of modern times is the practice of enforced disappearances in Sri Lanka. In terms of Asian countries, Sri Lanka has the highest record of enforced disappearances perpetrated by State agencies. That was done not only with official approval but with a great deal of detailed planning in terms of a common enterprise in order to ensure that as large a number of persons as possible would be forcibly disappeared in order to create intimidation in the rest of the population.

The question of insensitivity in terms of the experience of enforced disappearances is many sided. On the one hand, the number of people who would have engaged in causing such a large number of disappearances has to be quite a lot of people. How could such a lot of persons who are officers of the State or who worked under the direction of the officers of the State engage in the killing of persons who were taken into their legal custody? What we know as enforced disappearances in Sri Lanka is the arrest of persons by way of kidnapping, torture and interrogation of people in places of detention which are not the approved places of detention under the law, the killing of such persons and the subsequent disposal of the bodies. The people who were engaged in each of these activities were not robots. They were other human beings. There is no record of a protest on the part of those who were ordered to engage in such killings. There were no moral protests and there was not even a sort of disgust for having to engage in such low forms of human behaviour.

The studies done about World War I in particular showed that many soldiers who went to war, when confronted with shooting their enemies, often shot in a way so as to not hit the target. Despite many preparations in military school, when the people were confronted directly to kill another person deliberately, many found that an impossible task to do. Much of the changes in weapons in later times such as to be made into automatic weapons were developed after military experts recognized this human aspect of the soldiers' behaviour.

However, when we look into large scale killings by way of disappearances, we do not see expressions of such human sensitivity. That is not shown when the people were called upon to do it or when they were doing it and even after they have done it.

There are many records for example of American soldiers who were mobilized in Vietnam and who later expressed a grave sense of guilt and regret about what they had to do during that war. The problem became so large that special programs had to be developed to deal with the trauma of those returnees from the war.

However, in Sri Lanka, we do not see any significant work done by anyone in order to record the impressions of the Police and the military which were engaged in the killing of the people, particularly killing after arrest. Killing after arrest means the killing of unarmed people. Somebody is completely in one's control and is unable to offer any kind of resistance. Such a person is incapable of creating any impression of a threat to the officers who are keeping them under custody. Within such a completely neutral situation, a person is subjected to severe forms of torture and is killed either by shooting or by other means and the body is subsequently disposed of.

How is it that all of this can be done without a sense of guilt? It is not possible to explain this merely in terms of obedience to orders and/or purely as an unavoidable consequence of the requirements of the job. There has to be much deeper cultural roots for creating such kind of a person who could comfortably carry out such horrible acts of cruelty towards another human being who happened to also be a national of his own country.

The examination of the cultural roots of this takes us back to the impact of the Kulinas in Sri Lanka's history. The culture of cruelty was nurtured over Centuries. And almost

everyone including the religious establishment got adjusted to this culture of cruelty. We do not find any writers or poets or anyone who deeply rebelled against the kind of cruelty that the Kulinas perpetrated in Sri Lanka. This only means the depth of the impact of violence that has gone into the psyche of the Sri Lankan people.

Understanding of the kind of behaviour not only in terms of killing but also in many other forms of violence including the violence of the rebels is not possible without understanding the deep impact of the fear syndrome that was created by the Kulina's dominance. The rebels who had a history of victimization under this system of dominance acquired the same characteristics as the dominant group, and when confronted, they acted with even greater cruelty because of the fear of annihilation that is inbuilt into the mentality of the rebel.

Rebels who fear instant annihilation also act with the same ferocity to annihilate the enemy. Then the battle becomes one involving annihilators. And that in fact is what has happened in Sri Lanka not only during the time of insurgencies but also in the political field.

The mentality of the competitor and the mentality of the annihilator are two different kinds of things. The competitor prefers a peaceful environment to compete. In the process of one's own assertion of the right to compete, he or she also preserves the rights of others to compete. The competition takes place in terms of skill development and other intellectual forms and many other forms of development where the ultimate test becomes one of merit. Merit based competition requires a high level of ethical principles.

What was developed under the dominance of the Kulinas was not that kind of competitive environment within the context of merit. Those who dominated knew that they were not in that position due to any merit. They were fully aware that they could maintain their position only by way of the use of naked force. And they developed various methodologies of maintaining an environment within which the actual use of extraordinary violent means or the threat of the use of such was the dominant factor.

That created the mentalities and the spiritual makeup of the dominant group as well as of those who were being dominated. The dominant group showed ferocity in every possible way. The way they talked to those whom they thought were inferiors, the way they expected various forms of demonstration of respect to them from their perceived inferiors, the way they were paid for their jobs, and also the way they even maintained relationships with others including women, all revolved around the use of their superior position and capacity to enforce extreme forms of violence on the rest.

On the other hand, as a response to this, what developed within the larger population which was considered inferior was a sense of fear. They learnt to make all the demonstrations of obedience and even faked loyalties to their superiors. At the heart of the relationship between this inferior-superiority complex was an extremely corrupt form of human relationship. Inferiors did not consider themselves as owing any kind of deeper, emotional loyalties to their superiors. They had to learn to play the double game of on the one hand showing respect, and on the other, carrying within themselves a great hatred and contempt

for those whom they called their superiors. This went into the formation of the character within Sri Lanka.

The inability of people to consider themselves as one people is not merely due to divisions in terms of race, religion and the like. It is far deeper. There is no human bond of friendship among the people because the culture of distrust is so deeply embedded into the very innermost souls of the people. The inhumanity shown by people to each other is a matter that is being taken for granted. The expectation is that at one point or the other, violence will erupt, cruelty will manifest itself and the mentalities that lead to the annihilation of each other will come to the surface.

Fearing this aspect of their inner self, they take precautions, often extraordinary precautions, to safeguard each other from one another.

Without understanding these character traits, all kinds of ideologies that try to portray a pseudo unity are itself products of the recognition of these deep divisions within the society itself. De-humanized human beings expect de-human reactions in everything. And they learn to deal with these inhumane reactions by taking shelter in many ways and where it fails, by themselves behaving as humanely as possible in order to maintain survival.

At the heart of it is the way human beings attempt to survive in an environment where cruelty is deeply embedded. Since survival is a higher instinct, the people thereby develop various means of coping with the expectations of cruelty, often by behaving as if they are completely passive people. The appearance of passivity is in itself a plea for peace. By demonstrating themselves to be very humble, they try to protect themselves from the aggressiveness of others. However, this passiveness is a facade. When challenged beyond a point, these facades break and the same mentality of the annihilator emerges.

That is what creates the kind of mentalities which have dragged Sri Lanka down to the point where it has been, as of present times, dragged down to.

The habits of the Kulinas

The stories told by the Jewish survivors who were exposed to virtual genocide by the Germans during the period of racism, reveals the many ways by which the German soldiers subdued the Jewish population before the deportations to concentration camps took place. Some of the habits were that the Jews were forbidden to look at any soldier of whatever rank by looking at their faces. Eye contact was completely forbidden. Completely forbidden during this time meant that if a transgression took place, the result could be death.

When a German soldier passed by a Jew, be it a man or a woman, the latter had to look down in a way so as to demonstrate overt forms of respect and to make no gesture of any kind which will indicate a feeling of equality. That the officer was a superior person had to be demonstrated by the physical gestures of complete submission by the Jews.

When they entered into any place including a house, the soldiers had full access to the place and there was no necessity at all for them to obtain any kind of permission to enter and stay in any place. The Jew had to get up whenever they saw a soldier.

Whatever a soldier would ask had to be done by the Jews, whether the action was extremely humiliating or hurtful was not a matter of concern. The Jews did not have any right to ask for any kind of identification on the part of a German soldier.

If a soldier was displeased, they could kick or otherwise attack a Jew and if he or she by any chance retaliated, the possible consequence could be death.

A Jew was not allowed to talk or ask questions from a German soldier. They were to regard themselves as too low to be in a position to ask any questions or to attempt to talk to a soldier. When things deteriorated further and the concentration camp stage started, there was no limit at all to what the soldiers could demand and what the Jews had to obey. They could be asked to go in one line which would lead directly to the gas chambers. If anyone resisted, they could be shot at any time.

This list could go on for very much longer. However, the essence was that the most extreme forms of punishment could be meted out on a Jew for which they simply had no right to protest or to disobey.

Looking into the Sri Lankan experience of the behaviour of the Kulinas, who according to historians acquired a prominent position from about the 11th Century Anno Domini (AD), it had many of the features similar to the above experiences suffered by the Jews. This meant that those who were not Kulinas had to show every possible form of docility, subservience and obedience to the Kulinas. Any kind of transgression was punishable not only by the death of the particular individual who makes the transgression, but also that of his/her family.

Various pictures that have been drawn at various times show various kinds of gestures through which the non Kulinas had to demonstrate their subservience and deference to the

Kulinas. Even by way of dressing, the non Kulinas had to demonstrate their inferiority to their superiors; meaning those who belong to the Kulinas. These details need not be repeated because it is very much in the memory and knowledge of the people even up to date.

A commentator commenting on the recent habits of very important persons (VIPs) going in their limousines illustrates that these habits still live on. When these limousines pass, the security guards or the Police will chase the people who are on the roads to move them out, even using force for that purpose. This was similar to the way the people had to behave when the Kulinas moved in and out of a place in the period when the Kulina superiority remained unchallenged. The importance of this is that in order to understand as to why despite many forms of violent treatment, insults and other extremely insensitive acts, it is a usual remark these days that Sri Lankans do not react to these things in the way that people of many other societies will angrily react to. For example, there were many comments on social media about a lack of popular protest against the type of behaviour that a Police officer exhibited a few days ago when he began to get on top of the body of a fallen man and started kicking him. Despite the photograph of this going viral, there was no reaction at all to compare with, for example, the reaction that the Americans and people of other countries showed when George Floyd was trampled to death by a policeman in the United States.

What is demonstrated by this is that the practices engaged in by the Kulinas from about the 11th Century up to the 19th Century have left deep, internal impressions and footprints that still determine the behaviour of a larger section of people. The fact of changes being effected to education and even the inculcation of a certain degree of liberal values in education does not seem to have had any telling effect in changing the mentalities that had been created during those Centuries.

It is not possible to understand the mind and the psyche of the Sri Lankan people without understanding how for centuries the Kulinas terrorized the people of Sri Lanka.

Cultural Roots of Cruelty

In my short article on the impact of the Kulinas, I have mentioned about the emergence of a powerful group of people called the Kulinas in the 11th Century and I have tried to trace their impact on the Sri Lanka's culture and history.

A few questions have been raised relating to this article. It should be said that the article was a very short comment on a debate that has gone on for a long time, particularly during the last Century. One of the main exponents of this debate was Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and his work has given rights not only to much wider literature but also to huge movements for the liberation of those who at one time were called untouchables and who now call themselves Dalits. In the creative writings, the novel, "The White Tiger" has given a very vivid expression to the meaning of the impact of caste on the mind, of creating a highly intimidated mindset amongst the so called working classes in India who were called the low caste. The low caste simply means people who engage in physical labour as contrasted to those who did not engage in physical labour.

It was not my position that caste was introduced to Sri Lanka in the 11th Century. Actually, an exact date as to when caste related ideas came to Sri Lanka has not been definitely stated by any historian so far. It can be speculated that the period could be around the 8th Century when a militant movement arose in India to reintroduce the caste system and succeeded in doing so. In the period prior to that, from around the time of Gautama Buddha, there was a period when the working folk, the people who work in physical labour reigned with dignity and played a very creative role in the Indian society. It was this transformation from a suppressed people to a more liberated people which the Emperor Ashoka had to recognize, which he did, and which led to a period of greater egalitarianism in India. It was that moment that was gradually undermined and finally completely suppressed in India by militant movements led by the dominant group not engaging in physical labour called the Brahmins and their immediate social allies such as the soldiers and the traders. The people who successfully overcame the suppression of the working folk was greatly influenced by the rise of Buddhism and

Martin Wickramasinghe has noted the influence of these militant Brahmin movements in Sri Lanka. It was that which gradually led to Brahminism (which is also wrongly called Hinduism) becoming the majority religion in Sri Lanka.

This is why I maintain that the Sri Lankan caste system is a product arising from two combined factors that is the rise of a group of persons with larger land holdings plus the Indian form of social organization. And this transformed the culture which existed within Sri Lanka till then.

How did this rule of the Kulinas contribute to creating of a culture of cruelty? Creating a culture of cruelty does not imply that before that period there were no elements of cruelty in the people of Sri Lanka or elsewhere. It only means that the social conditions can create either the possibilities of lessening the cruel elements that exist within human nature struggling for survival or it could also do the opposite that is to increase the levels of cruelty

that exist within a society, for example in the creation of slavery, the cruelty of the people who were engaged in that slave trade and also those who benefited from the labour of the slaves underwent enormous change for the worse in terms of their cruelties. In the same way as the suppression of the Jews, the Germans showed greater propensity for cruelty than anything that the world has seen before.

Thus, the attribution of the cruelty that develops within the people purely to a human condition which would anyway exist anywhere does not explain how under certain circumstances people could behave less cruelly and under what circumstances do people engage in much more deeper forms of cruelty.

It also does not explain the impact of cruel practices which could last for centuries and their impact on the minds and souls of the people. If there is more tolerant cultural circumstances and these last for long periods, this creates certain habits opposing the rise of more cruel aspects of human nature. On the other hand, if for long periods of time, cruelty is not only allowed but legitimized as a proper way to conduct human affairs, that creates different types of mental and internal attitudes not only among the perpetrators of such cruelty but also on the victims of such cruelty.

The people who become powerful with a greater control of lands are not struggling for survival. It is the oppressed creature that has to struggle for survival as against the onslaught on their lives and livelihoods by the more dominant social groups which want to control them and to utilize them for the benefit of these more powerful social groups.

If the cruelty is purely an act of survival, then it should be the oppressed creature demonstrating far greater levels of cruelty than those who live comfortable lives and are quite secure in their positions. However, what we see in the case of Sri Lanka as elsewhere is that the long periods of cruelty on the oppressed creatures make them more timid, more submissive and willing to adjust their lives to the cruelty of a superior group of people because for them survival and submission go together.

Therefore, the version that cruelty is a product of human nature itself needs to be looked at from a more complex point of view as those who are in much superior positions with greater material possibilities for security and whose lives are not threatened, exhibit more cruelty than the oppressed people.

That is exactly the point that is made in the novel “The White Tiger” by Aravind Adiga. The author tells the Premier of China who is supposed to visit India to “go and watch the manner in which the people who live in very poor conditions remain so loyal to their superiors and are mortally scared to disobey and to cheat them simply because of the nature of cruelty that the superior group is able to impose not only on the individual transgressor but to their entire families and clans”.

The position that like the rest of the animals who exhibit cruelty in order to survive like the lion who may kill a deer, human behaviour cannot be explained in that same simple manner. Human beings because of their consciousness are capable of deliberately trying to

suppress their worst aspects of their nature and to build civilization. On the other hand, the same consciousness can also create tendencies to suppress others in order to benefit from other people's labour and work only for the benefit of a superior group. This is why the propensities of cruelty should be studied within a historical context and that purely taking a philosophical position that all human beings have a tendency to be cruel and that is the sole reason for the kind of cruelties we have seen in the recent histories does not lead to any explanation about why under certain conditions, people are capable of being fair and why under certain circumstances, people show that they are incapable of acting with fairness to others.

A Webinar On Freedom Of Expression

Particularly On Restriction Of SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET COMMUNICATION

Freedom of expression is one of the most vital rights in the protection of people. It is by freely expressing problems that people are faced with, that a conservation can be created for solving these problems. A peaceful path to solving problems is the only way to maintain a healthy social relationship and to avoid conflicts of interest degenerating into violence.

Freedom of expression is also essential to keep a healthy relationship between the Authorities and the people. If the people feel that they are unable to express their own thoughts and reactions to the proposals put forward by the authorities, an unhealthy social attitude and distrust of authority would be the result.

Unfortunately, there are constant complaints that there are unreasonable limitations on freedom of expression. This has become a common source of frustration for everyone, particularly those belonging to the lower income groups and marginalized groups.

In recent times, there are also many complaints about unreasonable restrictions on the use of social media and other internet facilities for furtherance of free expression. While the abuse of communication facilities by such means as fake news and false propaganda need to be condemned, this should not be made an excuse for restrictions of expression of ideas and opinions with responsibility and in good faith.

In this webinar, representatives from Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India will make short presentations on problems relating to freedom of expression in their respective countries.

This webinar will be held on 15 June at 4 PM Hong Kong time.

You are invited to participate in this webinar.

The link to the webinar will be sent to those who informed us of their acceptance of this invitation.

A Webinar On the International Day In Support Of Victims of Torture

You are hereby invited to join in a WEBINAR on the PRACTICE OF TORTURE in several countries in Asia.

Several speakers from Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India and other countries will make short presentations on their country situation during this webinar.

There will also be time for comments and questions and opportunities for participation by the VICTIMS.

You are invited to SEND IN questions or issues that you would like to be discussed during the WEBINAR .

If you wish to participate, kindly send in your acceptance of this invitation and we will send you the link for the webinar.

WEBINAR TO BE HELD ON 24 JUNE AT 4 PM HONG KONG TIME.