

Acting Inspector General of Police
Mr. Chandana Depal Wickramaratne
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Dear Mr Wickramaratne,

I am deeply worried about the situation of Sri Lankan poet and teacher Ahnaf Jazeem, who has been detained without charge since 16 May 2020 by the authorities. It is distressing to know that a year has passed, and no credible, admissible evidence of wrongdoing has ever been presented before a court. The draconian Prevention Terrorist Act (PTA) under which Ahnaf is arrested, allows authorities to arbitrarily detain individuals without any charges for up to 18 months without charge or trial.

I find it alarming that he has been denied due process and fair trial rights, including unrestricted access to his lawyers and his family. Ahnaf's legal counsel states that he has been coerced to make false confessions while under interrogation and has been made to sign documents written in a language he does not understand. These are all clear violations of rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Sri Lanka and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Sri Lanka is a state party.

Furthermore, I am concerned that he has been detained under squalid conditions that may amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, which has led to the deterioration of his health. Ahnaf's family is concerned about his health and safety, a fear heightened by his restricted access to lawyers and family members and not knowing when this ordeal might come to an end.

I, therefore, urge you to immediately release Ahnaf Jazeem or, if there is sufficient evidence of criminal wrongdoing, promptly charge him with a recognisable offence, in accordance with international standards. Pending release or charge, I call on you to ensure that his fair trial rights are guaranteed. I also call on the Sri Lankan government to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which does not meet international human rights standards, and immediately end its use.

Yours sincerely,