

**Director of Terrorism Investigation Division**

**Mr. A.R.P.J. Alwis**

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Dear Mr. A.R.P.J. Alwis,

I am deeply concerned about the situation of **student leaders Galwewa Siridhamma Thero and Wasantha Mudalige**, who have been detained since 18 August 2022 and had their detention extended for 90 days on 21 August 2022 under the draconian anti-terror law Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

I find it alarming that they have been held under squalid conditions and denied due process and fair trial rights. Their families fear for their safety and health while in detention. Siridhamma Thero has contracted dengue fever while in custody and was later hospitalised with high fever. Detaining protesters using terror charges is a clear violation of the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly guaranteed by the Constitution of Sri Lanka and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Sri Lanka is a state party.

Using a draconian law—which the government itself has committed to reform—to crackdown on protesters is against Sri Lanka’s international human rights obligations, especially relating to the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. This points to the environment of systematic crackdown and stifling of dissenting voices against the background of the current economic hardship in the country.

As people in Sri Lanka face the brunt of the ongoing economic crisis, they have the right to express their opinions and call for accountability including through peaceful protests.

**I, therefore, urge you to immediately drop all terror related charges against Galwewa Siridhamma Thero and Wasantha Mudalige. In the meantime, I urge you to ensure their access to prompt and regular medical care as necessary.**

**I also call on the Sri Lankan authorities to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which does not meet international human rights standards, and to uphold the commitment to end its use. The authorities should immediately review the detention of others held under the PTA, ensuring adequate access to fair bail hearings, and immediate release for all those not facing internationally recognisable charges.**

Yours sincerely,