



SRI LANKA COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

"WIJERAMA HOUSE", 6, WIJERAMA MAWATHA, COLOMBO 7, SRI LANKA.

Tel: +94 11 2056493; E-mail: contactslcpsych@gmail.com

Web: www.slcpsych.lk

Council 2020/22

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7th February 2022,

Press Release

The Sri Lanka College of Psychiatrists, as a key professional body in the field of mental health in Sri Lanka, would like to raise our concern about the implementation and continuation of Trade Union Actions at the National Institute of Mental Health, Angoda..

We are aware of, and respect, trade union rights of various professionals in the health sector. We appreciate that certain units like Lady Ridgeway Hospital for children and Apeksha Hospital Maharagama, are generally not included in trade union actions, due to humane reasons. Considering its unique place in the field of mental health in Sri Lanka, we would like to suggest to trade unions of all professions that the National Institute of Mental Health and should be exempted in a similar manner.

The National Institute of Mental Health is the largest medical institute governing the care of mentally ill patients in Sri Lanka, catering to around 1000 in-patients. Most importantly, it is the only institution in the country which, by virtue of the mental health ordinance, has the permission to treat mentally ill patients involuntarily. It also has a significant number of inward patients who are hospitalized under court orders,



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for further assessment and care. Furthermore, numerous mental health care wards around the country transfer the most high risk and complex patients from their units to the National Institute of Mental Health. A case in point being taking over and managing many Covid positive patients with mental illness from other units across the country and providing care to an extremely complex category of patients and thereby reducing the spread of the Covid pandemic as well.

The Sri Lanka College of Psychiatrists strongly feels that the implementation of Trade Union Actions at the National Institute of Mental Health significantly violates the basic rights of patients and also goes against moral and ethical principles that should be upheld by professionals in the health care sector. We feel there are adequate reasons to exempt the National Institute of Mental Health from trade union actions of all service categories in the healthcare sector of Sri Lanka and strongly recommend the relevant unions and authorities rectify this important matter.

Thank you,

Yours truly.

Dr.Gihan Abeywardena
President

Dr.Chamara Wijesinghe
Secretary