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பெண்கள் மற்றும் ஊடகக் கூட்டமைப்பு
Women and Media Collective

18 May 2026

We express our deep shock and grave concern at the alleged rape and sexual assault of a 15-year-old girl by Pallegama Hemarathana Thero, one of the highest-ranking Buddhist monks holding the revered position of chief prelate and custodian of the 'Atamastana' in Anuradhapura. It is reported that the abuse allegedly took place in 2022, repeatedly, at an Anuradhapura temple. We understand that the prelate has been arrested and subsequently remanded by the Anuradhapura Chief Magistrate and is currently being kept under medical supervision at the Colombo prison hospital. It is also reported that the child's mother has been remanded on suspected complicity in the assault. We understand that the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) is active in this case. It is reported that the arrests have been made following the intervention of the NCPA and that they remain actively engaged in this case.

This case is deeply disturbing because of the alleged violence against a child, and equally because it involves an individual occupying one of the highest positions of religious authority and trust. Allegations of sexual violence occurring within institutions of authority compel us to confront difficult but necessary and critical questions about power, silence, impunity, and the barriers survivors face in seeking justice.

We have long argued that sexual violence is not merely an individual act, but is often enabled by unequal power relations and patriarchal social structures that protect authority while rendering women and girls vulnerable. The status or position of any individual cannot and must not place them beyond scrutiny or accountability. Thus, this case is not only about individual accountability. It is also about whether institutions and systems are capable of protecting girls, whether survivors can seek justice without fear, and whether society is willing to confront violence even when it occurs within revered spaces and structures of authority.

The rights, dignity, safety, and best interests of the child must remain paramount at every stage of this process.



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We therefore call for:

- An independent, impartial, and expeditious investigation, free from influence, pressure, or deference arising from the status of the accused;
- The appointment of a senior, child-sensitive legal representative to safeguard the interests and rights of the survivor throughout proceedings;
- Strict protection measures to ensure the child is not subjected to intimidation, retraumatisation, victim blaming, or public exposure;
- All evidence and testimony to be led sensitively and in camera, in line with child protection standards and survivor-centred approaches;
- Comprehensive psychosocial, emotional, and protection support for the child throughout the legal process;
- Active oversight by the Attorney General's Department, given the gravity and sensitivity of the matter;
- Ongoing engagement by the National Child Protection Authority, National Commission on Women, and Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka to monitor proceedings, support the survivor, and ensure accountability.

Justice requires not only accountability for alleged crimes, but a process that centres the survivor, protects her dignity, and affirms that no institution, tradition, or position of authority is above the rights and safety of women and girls.

Thank you
Yours Sincerely

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