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## **CPA Calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to Uphold Commitments on Accountability and Security Sector Reform**

**11 January 2019, Colombo, Sri Lanka:** The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) is deeply concerned by the recent appointment of Major General Shavendra Silva as the Chief of Staff, Sri Lanka Army (SLA) and urges President Maithripala Sirisena to immediately review the appointment in light of serious allegations levelled against Major General Silva. These are made in a context where the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) made significant commitments to address accountability and usher in reforms to end the culture of impunity. Inaction at this moment will demonstrate the unwillingness by the political leadership to move forward on its own commitments.

Major General Silva was the commanding officer of the 58<sup>th</sup> Division of the SLA during the last stage of the war with allegations levelled against him in connection with violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL). CPA notes that the United Nations Panel of Experts (POE) names Major General Silva in their report with a recommendation for further independent investigations of violations committed during the war. Subsequent to the POE report, several other reports including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL) report, documented violations of International Humanitarian Law & International Human Rights Law.

CPA and several other groups raised similar concerns in May 2015 when President Sirisena appointed Major General Jagath Dias to the same position, urging the GOSL to initiate urgent security sector reforms including the vetting of military personnel. Subsequently the GOSL cosponsored the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Resolution 30/1 which contains specific commitments towards accountability and security sector reforms. It is indeed unfortunate that, despite the passage of time, there is limited progress with the full implementation of these commitments. Further, CPA is extremely concerned that repeated promotions of those who face serious allegations sends a message that the GOSL is protecting perpetrators and promoting impunity rather than taking genuine steps towards implementing essential reforms. The Interim Report of the Office for Missing Persons (OMP) recommended in 2018 that state officials including members of the armed forces who are named as suspects or accused in criminal actions relating to abductions and enforced disappearances be suspended or promotions halted pending the final determination of cases.

The promotion of Major General Silva comes weeks prior to when the GOSL is likely to speak of progress made with commitments in Resolutions 30/1 and 34/1. May 2019 also marks a decade since the end of the war and a time when the GOSL should be demonstrating their genuine commitment towards reconciliation. Instead, we are seeing very troubling signs of efforts to exacerbate and further entrench impunity in Sri Lanka.