



Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)
Commonwealth Day Statement

13 March 2023

Commonwealth Day 2023: Member States must honour and implement commitments made in Commonwealth Charter

London, Accra, New Delhi - 13 March 2023: On this Commonwealth Day, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative urges Member States to take stock of their commitments on human rights, good governance and the rule of law, and work together to ensure the realisation of human rights across the Commonwealth.

The theme for 2023's Commonwealth Day is '**Forging a sustainable and peaceful common future**', which rests on the 'promotion of peace, prosperity and sustainability, especially through climate action, so as to secure a better future for our young people and improve the lives of all Commonwealth citizens.'

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the [Commonwealth Charter](#), which was signed into action on 11 March 2013, and which contains the values and aspirations that unite the Commonwealth.

The Charter reflects the commitment of Member States to freedom, democracy, peace and prosperity, and acknowledges the role of civil society "in supporting the goals and values of the Commonwealth".

As we celebrate the ties that bind us as a diverse international group, we cannot ignore the fact that the Commonwealth family is also marked by deep and persistent human rights violations in many of our Member States.

From extrajudicial killings, the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities, harassment of journalists and restrictions on freedom of speech and expression and access to information, to attacks on the LGBT+ community and the curbs on activists and civil society organisations, we

are witnessing a troubling trend where governments across the Commonwealth are using their power to trample on the rights of their own citizens, often with impunity.

As we strive to promote human rights and dignity for all, we must also act to address the prevalence of contemporary forms of slavery in all parts of the Commonwealth. This includes forced labour, human trafficking, and other forms of exploitation that deprive individuals of their freedom and basic rights.

As a community of nations committed to promoting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, we cannot turn a blind eye to these violations. In this context, it is crucial that all Member States, including those just joined, and those in the process of potentially rejoining the Commonwealth, reaffirm their commitment to the principles outlined in the Commonwealth Charter - in not just words, but also in action.

As 2023 is the Commonwealth Year of Youth, it is imperative that Member States create an environment of freedom and democracy in which young people thrive, are enabled to reach their full potential, and can contribute to a more peaceful and prosperous Commonwealth.

We call on all Member States to renew their commitment to upholding the Commonwealth Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other international standards and frameworks, and to take concrete steps to address the human rights violations and abuses that continue to diminish lives across the Commonwealth.

It is the responsibility and imperative of governments to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their race, religion, gender, age, capacity, ethnic or national origin, disability or sexual orientation, are able to exercise their rights, and that those who commit human rights violations and abuses are held to account.

Let us remember on this Commonwealth Day that the Commonwealth was founded on the principles of democracy, equality, and justice. States must work together, alongside Commonwealth institutions and civil society organisations, to ensure that these principles are upheld by all the members of the Commonwealth.

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