**State Minister of Foreign Employment Promotion**

**and Market Diversification**

**Piyankara Jayaratne**

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*Dear Minister Jayaratne,*

*I’m writing to express my grave concern about the worrying and continuing delay in the repatriation of 41 Sri Lankan women migrant domestic workers who are currently detained at the Exit 18 Deportation Detention (Tarheel) Centre in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.*

*It is distressing to learn that none of the women have been informed of the charges against them, nor have they been granted legal support to understand why and for how long they will continue to be detained. Detained for periods ranging from eight to 18 months, at least three women have young children detained with them, and at least one woman is known to be in urgent need of medical care which she is not receiving. Prison officials have repeatedly promised the women that they will be repatriated imminently in recent months, but they all remain in detention as of April 2021.*

*While I understand that that the Sri Lankan embassy in Riyadh has been in touch with the detained women and has offered multiple reassurances, however it is concerning that no one has yet been repatriated. The government must ensure that the costs of repatriation, such as airfare and any COVID-related quarantine requirements, are covered as many of the detainees cannot afford them.*

*The Sri Lankan government has an obligation to protect the human rights of all of its migrant workers in Saudi Arabia and to work in a timely manner to ensure that these detained workers are released and safely returned to Sri Lanka. Migrant workers are one of the major contributors to the Sri Lankan economy, and the government must not turn its back when it’s most needed.*

***I call on you to ensure that the Sri Lankan government acts urgently,***

* • ***To facilitate and ensure the voluntary, safe***, ***and dignified repatriation of all detained migrant workers as soon as possible***
* • ***Guarantee adequate consular support to all those detained to ensure their medical needs are met promptly and they enjoy decent conditions in detention.***

*Yours sincerely,*