

# Repression of Dissent

November 2022



*Anti government protesters scuffle with police officers as police block their protest march in Colombo (AP Photo/Eranga Jayawardena)*

**INFORM**

**Human Rights Documentation Centre**

[www.inform.lk](http://www.inform.lk)

Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka in November 2022.

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*INFORM was established in 1990 to monitor and document human rights situation in Sri Lanka, especially in the context of the ethnic conflict and war, and to report on the situation through written and oral interventions at the local, national and international level. INFORM also focused on working with other communities whose rights were frequently and systematically violated. Presently, INFORM is focusing on election monitoring, freedom expression and human rights defenders. INFORM is based in Colombo Sri Lanka, and works closely with local activists, groups and networks as well as regional (Asian) and international human rights networks.*

# Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Context	5
3. Case Updates	7
4. Repression of Media and Journalists	8
5. Repression of Freedom of Assembly.	11
6. Repression of State Officials	17

# 1. Executive Summary

**Context:** Inflation rates were slightly reduced compared to previous month. Headline inflation was 61%, while food inflation was 74%. An island wide survey conducted by CPA found 79% of people saying that their economic situation worsened compared to the previous year. Annual budget for Sri Lanka was presented to the Parliament. Many criticized it for containing many false promises, unrealistic goals and targets and its failure to present a workable plan for financial recovery, and not addressing immediate humanitarian concerns of people. Former Prime Minister addressing the parliament claimed that there is a local and international conspiracy to put down Sri Lanka's economy. 100 days of activism in the North and East demanding a dignified and righteous political solution for the long-standing national question reached its 100th day. As the annual Maaveerar remembrance also began in the month of November, militarization was increased in the areas. Various protests were organized throughout the country against government repression on protesters, arrest of activists, and rights of minorities. As Police forcefully prevented many protests, the Human Rights commission summoned the Police heads to inquire about recent human rights violations by the Police.

**Case updates:** Sandya Ekeneligoda, the wife of disappeared journalist Pargeeth Ekeneligoda wrote a letter to the chief justice on 03<sup>rd</sup> November 2022 as court authorities did not allow her to attend the hearing of Habeas Corpus (Writ) Petition on the disappearance of Prageeth Ekeneligoda at two occasions recently. The Supreme Court ordered the Police to produce the convener of Inter University Student Federation (IUSF) Wasantha Mudalige before a magistrate and before a Judicial Medical officer after hearing his Fundamental Rights Petition. Amnesty International made an appeal to the government asking them to drop the terror charges against Mudalige and Galwewa Siridhamma Thero, two activists who have been detained under terror charges. Colombo magistrate ordered them to be remanded until the Attorney General's instructions are received. Despite Ven. Galwela Siridhamma Thero was released on bail, he was arrested again and remanded under a different charge. Fort Magistrate Court issued an order to record a statement from the former president Gotabaya Rajapaksha over the Rs. 18 million cash found in the President's House by protesters.

**Repression of Media and Journalists:** Journalists Tharindu Jayawardena and Tharindu Uduwaragedara were summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department over a Social media post they published several months ago. Two police officers in plain clothes have visited the residence of exiled journalist S Nilanthan, the secretary of the Batticaloa District Tamil Journalist Association. In another case, army soldiers have visited the Mullaitivu Press Club and questioned journalist Kumanan demanding him to provide information on key people who are involved with the media centre of the Mullaitivu Press Club. Joining a parliamentary debate, the Minister of Mass Media has accused Sri Lankan media for damaging the country's reputation by publishing negative stories and photographs especially referring to anti-government protests. Local journalist Sambasivam Sathiskumar was threatened by the management of Kirkoswald tea estate and the estate superintendent of Ceylon labour congress while he was reporting a discussion between the tea estate management and the residents in the area.

**Repression of freedom of Assembly:** Police have obstructed and arrested some members of the Samagi Vanitha Balawegaya, the Women's Front of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) who were marching in a protest to the United Nations office in Colombo on 14<sup>th</sup> November, in commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. In another case, two women

who were marching in protest demanding the release of the long-detained student activists, were arrested. When a mass protest was organized by trade unions, student unions and political parties on 2nd November demanding the release of detained student activists and actions to resolve the economic crisis, Police issued a letter of warning saying that the permission would not be granted to go ahead with the protest, and protest was prevented using Police force, teargas and water cannon attacks. The day before the protest, Government MPs had a press briefing to condemn the protest, in which one of the MPs labelled the protesters as traitors. Several days before the protest, a group of business chambers also issued a joint statement asking to call off the protest as it would undermine the efforts being taken to resolve the current economic crisis. On 18th November, police fired tear gas and water near the Nelum Pokuna theatre to disperse a protest march held in Colombo organised by the Inter-University Student Federation (IUSF). Police were also deployed to prevent protesters from entering the UN compound to demand international pressure. On 11th of November, Police attempted to disperse a satyagraha campaign launched near the United Nations office in Colombo. Lawyers of Aragalaya, Attorney Manoj Nanayaklara alleged that the Minister of Public Security has ordered the Inspector General of Police to arrest the Rev. Fr. Jeewantha Peris the priest who was actively engaged in the recent anti-government protests. During a protest that was held near the Terrorism Investigation Division on 16<sup>th</sup> November, a high-ranking police officer has allegedly informed the demonstrators that they cannot use megaphones as their use in protests has been banned. On 27th November, Police destroyed the decorations made at a memorial event in Mullaitivu to mark the Great Heroes day to remember former Tamil rebels. On 26th November an unidentified person visited the Batticaloa District Civil Society Forums President S. Sivayoganathan at his residence and mainly inquired about his plans for "Great heroes day."

**Repression of State Officials:** Medical doctor and trade unionist Chamal Sanjeewa was interdicted after revealing about child malnutrition in Sooriyawewa area in Hambantota. The Ministry of Health informed him that he has been indicted for providing false information to the media and not taking permission from the Health Ministry before speaking to the media. President Ranil Wickramasinghe addressing the parliament on 24th November, mocked the human rights defenders and also admitted that the Human Rights Commission has no right to obstruct the duties of the Police officers and other state security officials.

**Other incidents:** On 22nd November, a gazette notification was issued calling out the Armed Forces under the powers granted under the Public Security Ordinance (Chapter 40) same as the previous months. Speaking at the parliament President warned that he will impose a state of emergency and military force in case that anti-government protesters make an attempt to overthrow the government as done with the former President. He also said that all protests should have prior approval from the Police.

## 2. Context

**Economic crisis:** Central bank reports said that inflation rates have slightly reduced in November, compared to previous month. Headline inflation reduced to 61% in November, from 66% in October, while food inflation reduced to 74% in November, from 86% in October.<sup>1</sup> However, an islandwide survey conducted by Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) found 79% of people saying that their economic situation is getting worse compared to the previous year.<sup>2</sup> Amidst numerous challenges linked to the economic and political crisis, the annual budget of the government of Sri Lanka for the year 2023 was presented to the parliament on 14th November.<sup>3</sup> Many criticized it for containing many false promises, unrealistic goals and targets and its failure to present a workable plan for financial recovery, and not addressing immediate humanitarian concerns of people who are facing the economic crisis.<sup>4 5</sup>

Meanwhile, former Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa addressing the parliament claimed that there is a local and international conspiracy that is putting down Sri Lanka's economy.<sup>6</sup> Former Finance Minister Basil Rajapakse who resigned amidst the economic crisis and left the country returned to Sri Lanka on 20th November. Civil society groups questioned the special welcome provided to the former Minister at the airport, including the presence of the chairman of the Police commission during the welcome event.<sup>7</sup>

**Protests in North and East:** 100 days of activism in North East continuously launched by civil society groups in former war affected North and Eastern provinces reached its 100th day on 8th of November. The campaign demanded a dignified and righteous political solution for the long-standing national question.<sup>8</sup> As the annual Maaveerar remembrance began in the month of November, the number of military checkpoints were increased in the north-eastern provinces. Media reports said that vehicles were subjected to intense searches, vehicle registration numbers and passenger details were noted down.<sup>9</sup> Remembrance events were organized in Mullivaikkal<sup>10</sup>, demolished war cemeteries in Vishwa Madu<sup>11</sup>, Kanagapuram Thuyilum Illam<sup>12</sup> and other places.<sup>13</sup> Families of disappeared staged a protest in front of Vavuniya District office, responding to a visit by the President.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/sites/default/files/cbslweb\\_documents/press/pr/press\\_20221130\\_inflation\\_in\\_november\\_2022\\_ccpi\\_e.pdf](https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/sites/default/files/cbslweb_documents/press/pr/press_20221130_inflation_in_november_2022_ccpi_e.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://srilankabrief.org/79-of-sri-lankans-economic-situation-has-got-worse-during-the-last-year/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.presidentsoffice.gov.lk/index.php/2022/11/14/budget-speech-2023-sri-lanka-towards-a-new-beginning/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/budget-2023-a-depth-or-dearth/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://groundviews.org/2022/11/16/2023-budget-false-promises-at-the-expense-of-women-and-working-people/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.newswire.lk/2022/11/22/mahinda-reveals-who-put-down-sl-economy/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.newswire.lk/2022/11/21/basil-vip-treatment-police-commission-chairmans-welcome-questioned/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://srilankabrief.org/north-east-peoples-protest-for-justice-reached-the-goal-of-100-days/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/sri-lankan-military-set-checkpoints-maaveerar-remembrance-week-begin>

<sup>10</sup> <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1596887080231063552>

<sup>11</sup> <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1596874252695011328>

<sup>12</sup> <https://twitter.com/TamilGuardian/status/1596901453419143170>

<sup>13</sup> <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1596442025221840896>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/families-disappeared-protest-sri-lankan-presidents-visit-vavuniya>

**Other issues:** The Human Rights commission issued a press statement saying that they have summoned the Inspector General of Police and Secretary of the Ministry of Public Security to inquire about recent frequent rights violations caused by the arbitrary actions of the Police.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.hrsl.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/HRCSL-Press-Release-14-11-2022-i.pdf>

### 3. Case Updates

**Disappearance of Journalist Prageeth Ekeneligoda:** Sandya Ekeneligoda, the wife of disappeared journalist Prageeth Ekeneligoda wrote a letter to the chief justice on 03<sup>rd</sup> November 2022 as court authorities had not allowed her to attend the hearing of Habeas Corpus (Writ) Petition on the disappearance of Prageeth Ekeneligoda at two occasions recently. On 25<sup>th</sup> of March and 25<sup>th</sup> of October, 2022 she has not been allowed to enter court premises by security officials who have claimed that civilians are not allowed to enter the court premises, though she has been allowed to attend the hearings previously.<sup>16</sup>

**Arrested student activists Wasantha Mudalige and Siridhamma Thero:** On 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022, when the fundamental rights petition filed by Mudalige was taken up for hearing, the supreme court ordered the police to produce the convener of Inter University Student Federation (IUSF) Wasantha Mudalige before a magistrate immediately. Court also ordered him to be presented before the judicial Medical officer of the Karapitiya Hospital in Galle.<sup>17</sup> Mudalige was arrested by the police while returning from a protest held in Colombo on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2022.<sup>18</sup> On 16<sup>th</sup> November, Amnesty International made an appeal to the Sri Lankan government urging to drop the terror charges against Mudalige and the convenor of the Inter University Bhikku Federation (IUBF) Galwewa Siridhamma Thero who have been arrested and detained under Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) over 90 days.<sup>19</sup> On 17<sup>th</sup> of November, the Colombo magistrate ordered them to remand them until the Attorney General's instructions are received.<sup>20</sup> On 23<sup>rd</sup> November, Ven. Galwela Siridhamma Thero was released on bail by the Colombo magistrate court. Despite the bail, he was arrested again on the same day regarding a different case, and presented before the Kaduwela magistrate court, and remanded until 6<sup>th</sup> of December.<sup>21</sup>

**Magistrate orders questioning former president over cash found by protesters at his office:**

On 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022, Fort Magistrate Court issued an order to record a statement from the former president Gotabaya Rajapaksha over the Rs. 18 million cash found in the President's House when the anti-government protesters took over the building on 9<sup>th</sup> July. Protesters who handed over the cash have been prosecuted.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> <https://sinhala.srilankabrief.org/?p=42787>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/11/10/supreme-court-orders-to-produce-wasantha-mudalige-to-a-magistrate-karapitiya-imo/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/08/18/iusf-convener-wasantha-mudalige-arrested/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/11/sri-lanka-drop-terror-charges-against-student-leaders-detained-for-90-days/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.adaderana.lk/news/86211/wasantha-mudalige-and-ven-siridhamma-thero-remanded>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/11/23/siridhamma-thero-remanded-again-for-separate-case/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.newswire.lk/2022/11/11/police-ordered-to-question-gotabaya-rajpaksa/>



## 4. Repression of Media and Journalists

### 4.1. Police questions two journalists over a facebook post:

On 08<sup>th</sup> November Journalists Tharindu Jayawardena and Tharindu Uduwaragedara were summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department over a Social media post they published, based on a complaint made by the Inspector General of Police (IGP) on the matter.<sup>23</sup> They were also office bearers of the Young Journalist Association. On 17th October, they published a social media post asking the public to provide information on police officers who allegedly supported the pro-government mobs that attacked the protesters on 9th of May. The post titled as “public assistance sought to identify officers who misused the law” was published in their personal facebook timelines asking to provide information to the email of Young Journalist Association, in the context that Police were also publishing similar notices seeking public assistance to find out details of the people who took part in the recent anti-government protests.



Facebook post published by the Journalists. courtesy: theleader.lk

<sup>23</sup> <https://english.theleader.lk/news/2875-two-journalists-summoned-over-facebook-posting>

#### 4.2. CTID Police officers visit an exiled journalist's house:

Two police officers in plain clothes have visited the residence of journalist S Nilanthan, the secretary of the Batticaloa District Tamil Journalist Association. After facing intimidation and harassment from police at multiple occasions due to his work and activism, Nilanthan fled Sri Lanka several months ago. The police officers who visited his house in Chenkaladi on 27 November 2022 have questioned his whereabouts and demanded his presence at the Counter Terrorism Investigation Division when he returns to Sri Lanka.<sup>24</sup>



*Police visiting Nilanthan's family. Image courtesy: Tamil Guardian*

#### 4.3. Army soldier visits the Mullaitivu press club and demands information:

On 24th November, soldiers attached to the 591 Brigade of Sri Lanka Army allegedly visited the Mullaitivu Press Club and questioned journalist Kumanan demanding him to provide information on key people who are involved with the media centre of the Mullaitivu Press Club. The soldiers have said that they are gathering information based on an order from their Brigade Commander.<sup>25</sup>



*Army officers questioning the Journalist Kumanan at the Press Club. Photo courtesy: JDS Lanka*

<sup>24</sup> <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1597193082646429698>

<sup>25</sup> <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1595714079326408704>

#### **4.4. Media Minister accuses media for damaging the country's reputation:**

While joining the Debate on the Expenditure Head of the Ministry of Mass Media on 28th November, Minister of Mass Media Bandula Gunawardane accused Sri Lankan media for damaging the country's reputation by publishing negative stories and photographs especially referring to anti-government protests in the recent past. He further noted that tourists are discouraged to visit Sri Lanka as they are constantly reminded of images such as protesters blocking access to the airport, people bathing in the swimming pool at the President's House, and fuel queues etc. Accordingly, he said social media or any media should act in a manner that does not tarnish the country's image.<sup>26 27</sup>

#### **4.5. Journalist threatened by Tea Estate management**

Local journalist Sambasivam Sathiskumar was threatened by the management of Kirkoswald tea estate and the estate superintendent of Ceylon labour congress while he was reporting a discussion between the tea estate management and the residents in the estate. The discussion has been organized as the estate management declined a request to clean the water tank that provides drinking water to the local residents and threatened to discontinue the supply of water if they continue to make the demand. Journalist Sathiskumar has made a Police complaint stating that the estate superintendent of Ceylon labour congress Veerayya Vasudevan, field officer Thiyagaraja, and Assistant Manager had threatened him while he was reporting.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.dailynews.lk/2022/11/29/local/292090/no-suppression-media-dr-bandula>

<sup>27</sup> <https://colombogazette.com/2022/11/28/media-accused-of-damaging-sri-lankas-image/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://sinhala.srilankabrief.org/?p=42877>

## 5. Repression of Freedom of Assembly

### 5.1. Opposition party women protesters arrested

Police have obstructed and arrested some members of the Samagi Vanitha Balawegaya, the Women's Front of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) who were marching in a protest from independence square to the United Nations office in Colombo on 14<sup>th</sup> November. The Protest on ending violence against women was organised in commemoration of the "International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women." When the protest was passing the private residence of president Wickramasinghe, a heated situation arose between protesters and police.<sup>29</sup> Subsequently 14 demonstrators including MP Hirunika Premachandra have been arrested. They were bailed out by the Colombo Magistrate Court on 15<sup>th</sup> November.<sup>30</sup>

### 5.2. Two women marching in protest arrested

Nirosha Daniel and Priyanthi Fernando organised a protest march from Kalutara to Colombo (approximately 70 kilometres) on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2022, demanding the release of the student activists Wasantha Mudalige and Galwela Siridhamma Thero who have been detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). The two women were obstructed by the police in Wadduwa area and later Pandura police arrested them in Gorakapola area in Panadura.<sup>31</sup> While arresting, Police told them that they were not allowed to march in protest holding placards.<sup>32</sup>



*Nirosha Daniel and Priyanthi Fernando holding placards and marching the protest. Photo credit: Lankadeepa.*

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.newswire.lk/2022/11/14/tense-situation-reported-after-several-protesting-sjb-women-activists-arrested/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.newswire.lk/2022/11/15/hirunika-14-other-protesters-released/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1591370455457226752>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.newswire.lk/2022/11/12/watch-police-say-two-individuals-cant-walk-in-a-road-holding-placards/>



### 5.3. Police issue letter stating restrict permission to the protest organised:

On 2nd of November, a number of trade unions, student unions, mass organisations and political parties collectively organised a massive protest demanding the release of two student leaders detained under anti-terror laws and crackdown on anti-government protesters.

**Business chambers issue a letter requesting to call off the protests:** Several business chambers in a joint statement requested to call off the scheduled protest, claiming it could “undermine the efforts being taken to resolve the current economic crisis with the support of the international community.”<sup>33</sup>

**Letter of warning by Police:** Police issued a letter warning various groups including student unions, trade unions and political parties, stating that permission will not be granted to protest opposite the Fort Railway Station or in close proximity. The letter further said that the protest will obstruct traffic and affect the business community in the area.<sup>34</sup> Police officers visited the offices and residences of the protest groups early on the protest day to hand over the letter.

**Police disrupt the protest:** Despite the warnings made by the Police, thousands of protesters attended the protest. Around 20 opposition political parties including Samagi Jana Balavegaya, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the Frontline Socialists Party, and over 150 trade unions and mass organizations joined the protest. The protest began around 3pm in Maradana area in Colombo and marched towards Colombo Fort area. A large number of Police officers present at the protest blocked the roads and prevented the protest.<sup>35</sup>



<sup>33</sup> <http://www.adaderana.lk/news/85878/business-chambers-urge-all-parties-to-call-off-protests-planned-for-nov-02>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.newswire.lk/2022/11/02/todays-protest-police-issues-letter-giving-reasons-why-no-permission-given/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/11/02/colombo-mass-protest-ends-at-the-police-blockade/>

*Anti-government protesters scuffle with police officers as police block their protest march in Colombo (AP Photo/Eranga Jayawardena)*

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka issued a statement saying that peaceful protests should be allowed.<sup>36</sup> Amnesty International issued a statement saying that protesters should not be required to obtain permission from authorities as they are exercising their basic rights.<sup>37</sup>

#### **5.4. UNP MP Vajira Abeywardena claims anti-government protesters are traitors:**

Speaking at a media briefing held on 1st November, United National Party (UNP) MP Vajira Abeywardena labelled the groups who organise the protest on 2nd November as traitors. He further said that it was a traitorous act to protest when the government is engaging in a program with the international monetary fund (IMF) to help the country to overcome the economic crisis. He said that the public should at least give one year to the government to carry out the program with the IMF.<sup>38</sup> SLPP MP Indika Anuruddha who joined the same press briefing stated that no one should strangle a country by its neck when it is barely able to breathe.

#### **5.5. Police fired tear gas and water cannons at student union protest**

On 18th November, police fired tear gas and water near the Nelum Pokuna theatre to disperse a protest march held in Colombo organised by the Inter-University Student Federation (IUSF) to demand the release of arrested and detained activists IUSF Convener Wasantha Mudalige and Inter-University Bhikku Federation (IUBF) convener ven. Galwela Siridamma Thero.<sup>39</sup> Police were also deployed to prevent protesters from entering the UN compound to demand international pressure.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/11/02/hrcsl-to-monitor-today-s-2-protest/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/11/02/restrictions-jeopardize-freedom-of-expression-amnesty-international/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://newsroomodisha.com/mass-protest-march-in-colombo-despite-police-warning/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.newswire.lk/2022/11/18/police-fire-tear-gas-to-disperse-iusf-protesters/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1593536289428672517>



Police attacked with teargas and water cannons at protesting students in Colombo [Photo: [WSWS](https://www.wsws.org)]

**5.6. Lawyers of Aragalaya claim Police are planning to arrest activist and priest Fr. Jeewantha:**

Lawyers of Aragalaya, Attorney Manoj Nanayaklara alleged that the Minister of Public Security has ordered the Inspector General of Police to arrest the Rev. Fr. Jeewantha Peris the priest who was actively engaged in the recent anti-government protest. Further Attorney Manoj claimed that the Inspector General of Police has complained to the President Ranil Wickrmasinghe regarding the order issued by the Minister of Public Security, Tiran Alles.<sup>41</sup> The Police Media division has issued a media statement rejecting the allegations.<sup>42</sup>

**5.7. Police attempt to disperse the Satyagraha near the UN Office colombo**

A satyagraha campaign launched near the United Nations office in Colombo demanding the release of the Inter University Student Federation (IUSF) Convener and others was held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Police officers attempted to convince the protesters to disperse the protest. The protesters handed over a letter to Hanna Singer-Hamdy, the United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRC) of Sri Lanka. She has stated that they will follow up the case and take the necessary measures with regard to the letter handed over.<sup>43</sup>

**5.8. Police says megaphones are banned during protests:**

During a protest that was held near the Terrorism Investigation Division on demanding the release of the convener of Inter University Student Federation Wasantha Mudalige and Inter-University Bhikku Federation Convener Galwela Sridhamma Thero on 16<sup>th</sup> November, a high ranking police officer has

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frzHlue9yII>

<sup>42</sup> <https://mawbima.lk/2022/11/26/the-video-about-igp-on-social-media-is-a-lie/>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.newswire.lk/2022/11/11/stay-as-much-as-you-want-unrc-tells-satyagraha-protesters-despite-police-blocking/>



allegedly informed the demonstrators that they cannot use megaphones as their use in protests has been banned.<sup>44</sup>



The protest held near the Terrorism Investigation Division. Photo Courtesy: Sunanda Deshapariya/ twitter

**5.9. Police destroy the decoration commemorating the Great Heroes Day:**

On 27th November, a few hours before starting the memorial events at Mulliyawalia war cemetery in Mullaitivu district to mark the Great Heroes day to remember former Tamil rebels, Police removed and destroyed a decoration made by local residents to honour the fallen rebel fighters.<sup>45</sup>

**5.10. Unidentified person visits and questions the civil society activist**

On 26th November an unidentified person visited the Batticaloa District Civil Society Forums President S. Sivayoganathan at his residence and mainly inquired about his plans for “Great heroes day” on 27th November 2022.<sup>46</sup> The great heroes day or Maaveerar Naal is a day commemorated by Sri Lankan minority Tamils to remember fallen rebel fighters who fought for a separate state for Tamils. He was previously summoned by Sri Lanka's Counter-Terrorism and Terrorism Investigation Department (CTID) both in September and October. He has been also interrogated in 2021, for his human rights work including organising protests, and about his social media activities.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> <https://twitter.com/sunandadesh/status/1592762030544809986>  
<sup>45</sup> <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1596783351188557824>  
<sup>46</sup> <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1596676558668042241>  
<sup>47</sup> <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/tamil-activist-summoned-sri-lankas-counter-terrorism-unit>





*Civil society Activist Sabaratnam Sivayoganatha. Photo Courtesy: JDSLanka*



## **6.2. President Ranil Wickramasinghe warns the Human Rights Commission**

President Ranil Wickramasinghe during his speech on 24<sup>th</sup> November at the parliament thoroughly admitted that the Human Rights Commission has no right to obstruct the duty of the Police officers and other security officials' duties. Also, he further mocked the Human Rights Defenders. In that Parliament speech he told that he is going to advise the Attorney General necessary rules to add one the Constitution Article 15.<sup>51</sup> <sup>52</sup> The Constitution of Sri Lanka in the 3rd chapter describes the Fundamental Rights of the citizens and by article 15 of the chapter describes the restrictions for enjoying the fundamental rights.

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<sup>51</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYrbizXEeY8&t=937s>

<sup>52</sup> <https://parliament.lk/uploads/documents/hansard/1672718827060553.pdf> Parliament hanzard. p.262-267

## 7. Other incidents

### 7.1. Gazette calling out armed forces

On 22nd November, a gazette notification was issued calling out the Armed Forces under the powers granted under the Public Security Ordinance (Chapter 40). The gazette notification provides powers for armed forces to intervene in civilian affairs. The Sri Lankan government has been issuing similar monthly gazettes for several years now, indicating the increasing militarization and shrinking civil space.<sup>53</sup>

### 7.2. President warns another state of emergency

Speaking at the Parliament on 23rd of November, President Ranil Wickramasinghe stated he would impose a State of emergency and use military forces in case another Aragalaya is attempted, to overthrow the government like previously done with the former President Gotabaya Rajapakse. “There are plans to initiate another Aragalaya to change the government. But I won’t give space for that. I will get the military and the forces and I will impose a State of Emergency,” President said. He also said that all protests and demonstrations should have prior-permission taken from the Police.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> [http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/10/2302-29\\_E.pdf](http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/10/2302-29_E.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> <https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-president-warns-against-unlawful-anti-government-protests-103856/>