

Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka

October 2024



Tamil families of the disappeared in Vavuniya protest as the search for their forcibly disappeared relatives.
Source: Tamil Guardian.

Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka in September 2024.

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INFORM was established in 1990 to monitor and document the 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 levels. INFORM also focused on working with other communities whose rights were frequently and systematically violated. Currently, INFORM focuses on election monitoring, freedom of 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.

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1. Executive Summary

Context: Sri Lanka opposes the draft Resolution at the UN Human Rights Council and rejects any related mandate. But asserts it is committed to addressing human rights concerns domestically.

The Acting IGP instructed police to stop interfering with public video recording, stating it's legal.

The Acting Inspector General of Police has also introduced the 1997 hotline to report all forms of misconduct, including bribery, by police officers.

It has been communicated to all police officers by Acting IGP through a special internal circular that identifies individuals' ability to access and utilise digital media.

The Magistrate of Kuliypitiya ordered the immediate arrest and court presentation of the Chief Inspector of Police due to an alleged attack on a man during an investigation of a family dispute.

A tense situation arose between the police and locals when a large group of locals gathered in front of the police station and demonstrated against the alleged brutal beating of two youths who had been arrested by the police.

Superintendent T. M. Ajantha Rodrigo was named new Director of Public Order Management but was quickly removed due to social media backlash over human rights violations.

The Police Commission has sanctioned the reappointment of former SSP Shani Abeysekera to the Police service for a duration of one year under a contractual agreement.

Tamil residents stopped government officials from surveying land for a Navy camp in Mandaitivu.

A petition has been submitted to the District Governor requesting that the Mullaitivu - Keppapulavu lands be released and handed over to them.

Residents and activists organized a demonstration in front of the Northern Province Governor's office in Jaffna this week, calling for the restitution of land currently held by the Sri Lankan military.

Tamil residents in Manthai West protest for the return of ancestral lands.

Tamils residing in Kattaidamban, Mannar, assembled in front of the Madhu Divisional Secretariat to express their opposition to the Sri Lankan Forestry Department's appropriation of their ancestral lands.

Manuel Udayachandra, the convener of the North-East Valindu Families of the Disappeared Association, was arrested by police and released on bail.

Police have issued another summons to Thambirasa Selvarani, the head of the Association for Enforced Disappearances in Ampara.

A supporter of National People's Power interrupted a protest, harassing and threatening demonstrators in Vavuniya.

The leader of the Tamil National People's Front, Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, announced that his party is ready to firmly oppose Sri Lanka's unitary constitution.

Cabinet minister Vijitha Herath said that the government will investigate past crimes and expedite seven high-profile cases.

The Cabinet approved the President's proposal to raise the bribery raid account limit to Rs. 150 million.

M.R.Y.K. Udawela has been designated as the new Director General of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption subsequent to the resignation of the previous Director General.

DIG Dhammika Priyantha has been designated as the new Director of the State Intelligence Service.

Selvin Ireneuss Mariampillai was appointed chairman of Palmyrah Development Board, but faced opposition from the United Workers' Union for alleged financial irregularities and misconduct.

Former Sri Lankan Navy Commander, Admiral Sirimevan Sarathchandra Ranasinghe, has been appointed as Chairman of the Sri Lanka Ports Authority, accused of shielding a suspect in the abduction and murder of 11 youths.

It has been revealed by transgender workers employed in the Export Processing Zones that transgender persons that are employed by manpower agencies are more prone to be exploited compared to others.

Media Spokesperson of Prisons Commission stated that attention will be paid to allocating separate spaces for transgender prisoners in prisons to be built in the near future.

The government states that three separate intelligence teams have been appointed to monitor 24-hour information provided by foreign intelligence services on matters related to the country's security.

The Director of Law Enforcement at the National Child Protection Authority has disclosed that the authority employs merely three attorneys to handle all criminal cases involving children. The police have notified the Colombo Magistrate's Court of their initiation of investigations aimed at capturing the main suspect linked to the incident involving the distribution of defamatory posters aimed at the Mannar High Court Judge.

The case involving the Good Shepherd Convent in Nuwara Eliya, where the principal, a Reverend sister, allegedly assaulted twelve students, has ignited a discussion regarding corporal punishment in educational institutions and the urgent need for enhanced oversight.

Private individual's land suspected to contain LTTE weapons interred, but unsuccessful excavations in Vadduvaakal region, Mullaitivu Police Division, failed to uncover any materials.

Defence Secretary Air Vice Marshal Thuyacontha stated that the Sri Lankan government has no intention to restrict the entitlement of tri forces personnel.

The Ministry of Defense has made the decision to temporarily reclaim all firearms and ammunition that were distributed to civilians for the purpose of self-defense.

Sri Lanka's President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has appointed new governors for the nine provinces. Nagalingam Vethanayagam is the Governor of the Northern Province, and Professor Jayantha Lal Ratnasekera is the Governor of the Eastern Province.

Residents in Mullaitivu district report that free drinking water supply from the Army has ended. The army camp had supplied water in Kappapilau for a long time.

Case updates: Indictments were handed over before the Colombo High Court against five defendants, including former Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka Ajith Nivard Cabraal, for allegedly causing the government to lose Rs. 184 million by investing in Greek bonds.

The Supreme Court has dismissed four petitions seeking a ruling that the fundamental human rights have been violated through the Government's decision to reduce the interest paid for the investments of Employees' Provident Fund in Treasury bills and bonds to 9%, under the domestic debt restructuring process.

The government has dismissed the report from the investigative committee regarding the Easter Sunday bomb attacks, which was presented by former Member of Parliament Udaya Gammanpila. Minister Vijitha Herath indicated that the government will initiate a new investigation into the case. Gammanpila was heavily criticised by many parties, including Minister Herath implying that the timing of the report, shortly before the general election, was a reflection of personal motives rather than a genuine effort for accountability.

The Office on Missing Persons has successfully identified 16 individuals who have been reported missing since the year 2000, from a total of around 6,000 inquiries conducted since December 2022. Also stated that they are not allowed to disclose the identities of these individuals without their consent.

The U.S. Embassy in Colombo issued a security alert, saying it received credible information warning of an attack targeting popular tourist destinations in the Arugam Bay. As a result U.S. citizens were strongly advised to avoid Arugam Bay until further notice. The British High Commission and Russian Embassy, too updated their travel advisory altering their citizens visiting Sri Lanka.

The Supreme Court has granted the petitioners permission to include former President Ranil Wickremesinghe as a respondent in a Fundamental Rights petition that contests the appointment of Deshabandu Tennakoon as the Inspector General of Police.

The Sri Lankan government will investigate the 2021 X-Press Pearl disaster causing environmental harm. The ship's owner will pay for beach cleaning, but claims for civil liability costs remain unfiled.

The Ministry of Mass Media proposed a chartered professional journalists' institute to improve the quality of journalism.

In Vavuniya, the families of the forcibly disappeared called for US Presidential candidate Kamala Harris and the US government to address their grievances and investigate the disappearances of their loved ones.

Former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa is willing to testify in the habeas corpus inquiry regarding the 2011 disappearance of activists Lalith Weeraratne and Koogan Muruganandan, but only before a court other than the Jaffna Magistrate's Court.

The Supreme Court allowed former President Ranil Wickremesinghe to be named as a respondent in the fundamental rights petitions filed against the Police for their violent crackdown on a 2022 protest.

P. Ariyanenthiran, who contested as the Tamil 'common candidate' in Sri Lanka's recent presidential elections, has been summoned by the Terrorism Investigation Division for questioning, along with his campaign supporters.

Demonstrations have taken place outside the Tissa Vihara, a Buddhist temple that is reportedly built in contravention of legal regulations and infringes upon the properties owned by local inhabitants in Thaiyiddy.

In November 2020, prisoners at Mahara Prison protested for COVID-19 testing and better medical care. The unrest led to 11 inmates' deaths from gunfire by prison guards. In 2023, a court deemed the deaths a crime, but the Attorney General's Department instructed the CID to close the case, claiming officers acted legally in self-defense.

Three directors of W. M. Mendis and Company Ltd. received six months in prison for not paying Rs. 3.5 billion in VAT. The court denied their appeal to move the case to the High Court and pay in installments.

The Attorney General informed the Supreme Court that the new government plans to review the wind power project in Mannar, involving India's Adani Group.

A petition claims former Director of the State Intelligence Service Nilantha Jayawardena did not do his part to stop the Easter Sunday attack.

Excavation activities at the Mannar mass grave have recommenced, notwithstanding the restrictions against photography or video documentation of the ongoing excavations.

Public Security Minister Vijitha Herath said that the government will urgently investigate the misplacement of files from the Criminal Investigation Department related to the investigation into the controversial MiG fighter jet deal during the Mahinda Rajapaksa government.

The Minister, Vijitha Herath, announced that the government has initiated an inquiry regarding the purported occurrence of missing pages from the Special Presidential Commission's report on the Easter Sunday bomb attacks.

Fr. Fernando expressed alarm that the Presidential Commission's report on the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings, which had been handed to President Ranil Wickremesinghe and then to the Attorney General's Department, had gone missing.

The Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission (SLHRC) has determined that several officials violated the rights of standup comedian Nathasha Edirisuriya.

In an inquiry conducted by the Sri Lanka's Police Headquarters, it was revealed that *Yukthiya Meheyuma* (Operation Justice) has failed to meet its objectives as it has been criticised as nothing but a media spectacle rather than a genuine effort to combat drug trafficking.

Election Situation: The Executive Director of the Campaign for Free and Fair Elections (CaFFE), stated that the election for the Elpitiya Pradeshiya Sabha was conducted peacefully; however, it did not exhibit a significant level of enthusiasm.

Sasikala Raviraj, who contested from the Jaffna district has filed a complaint with the Chavakachcheri Police alleging that a group of people attacked her house.

Chanu Nimesha, serving as the Secretary of Women's Affairs for the Sri Lanka Socialist Party, has made history by being the first transgender person to run for an election in Sri Lanka.

A prison guard and his brother who assaulted the Kalkuda organizer of the National People's Power party were arrested by officers of the Sandiveli Police.

Repression of Media and Journalists: Induka Silva, head of the police Criminal Investigation Department's homicide unit, sought legal action against Tharindu Jayawardhana, editor-in-chief of MediaLK, over a video in which Tharindu Jayawardhana commented on allegations of misconduct against Silva.

Colombo Additional Magistrate has ordered the Cinnamon Gardens Police to investigate death threats received by Tissa Ravindra Perera, Deputy News Editor of the 'Aruna' newspaper.

Tamil Guardian journalist Selvakumar Nilanthan, was apprehended due to his coverage of protests related to purported corrupt practices by a local government official in 2020.

In a media release issued by Mullaitivu Media Association to commemorate the 24th death anniversary of journalist Mylvaganam Nimalarajan stated that Tamil-speaking journalists continue to face harassment, intimidation and surveillance by state security apparatuses, including intelligence and the military.

Freedom of assembly and association: The Tamil People's Alliance (TPA) alleges police misconduct after an attack on their supporters in Jaffna. Their initial complaint was ignored but later accepted. The TPA claims police handcuffed victims in the hospital under superiors' orders.

Lakshman Nipunarachchi's statement at a rally in Kesbewa criticised the frequent disruptions caused by strikes in sectors like education, healthcare, and transportation, and expressed a vision for a future where such issues no longer exist.

Repressive Legal and Policy Action: Coordinator of the Voice of the Voiceless Organization, stated that although the Tamil political prisoners who were arrested and detained under the Anti-Terrorism Act have been released, they are still being subjected to both direct and indirect forms of interrogation.

Other Incidents: A young man was arrested for allegedly obstructing police while filming an SUV accident near Wariyapola. The SUV reportedly belongs to former minister Lohan Ratwatte. A video shows a police officer, identifying himself as the OIC of the Wariyapola Traffic Division, threatening the young man recording the incident.

2. Context

Sri Lanka rejects UNHRC Resolution 51/1

Sri Lanka has firmly opposed the draft Resolution presented during the 57th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. Furthermore, Sri Lanka maintains its opposition to Human Rights Council Resolution 51/1 and does not consent to any Resolution that seeks to prolong the mandate of the external evidence gathering mechanism. Despite the rejection of the Resolution, Sri Lanka remains resolutely committed to addressing significant human rights concerns, including reconciliation, through its own domestic mechanisms (Ceylon Today, 2024; Office of the Cabinet of Ministers - Sri Lanka, 2024).

“... Resolution 51/1 was tabled without Sri Lanka’s consent as the country concerned, and was adopted by a divided vote. As such, any subsequent decision extending mandates established by this resolution lacks consensus in the Council. As we have repeatedly reminded this Council, setting up of this external evidence gathering mechanism within the OHCHR is an unprecedented and ad hoc expansion of the Council’s mandate, and contradicts its founding principles of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity. No sovereign state can accept the superimposition of an external mechanism that runs contrary to its Constitution and which pre-judges the commitment of its domestic legal processes. Furthermore, many countries have already raised serious concerns on the budgetary implications of this mechanism given its ever-expanding mandate. For the above reasons, we are obliged to reject the draft resolution which is tabled before this Council today seeking to extend the mandate of Resolution 51/1...”

Statement delivered by Sri Lanka’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations at the 57th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 9th October 2024

New developments in the Police

The Acting IGP¹ Priyantha Weerasooriya issued a special circular to prevent police from continuously interfering with video recording in public places (MediaLK, 2024). Issuing a directive addressed to all police officers, the Acting IGP said that such actions taken by the public are not deemed illegal or in violation of the law. He further indicated that the videos

¹ Inspector General of Police

obtained by the public could also be utilised as evidence in criminal and civil cases (Newswire, 2024).

The directive issued by the Acting Inspector General of Police arises from a recent incident in Wariyapola, where a police officer allegedly threatened a person who was recording footage of the defender of former minister Lohan Ratwatte, following an accident (Newswire, 2024).

“... It has been reported that in certain cases, some police officers have scolded those individuals, seized the mobile phones used to record the video, etc., and in some cases even arrested the individuals who were recording the video. In many cases where some police officers have acted as described above, it has been observed that the illegal, undisciplined, or unethical actions of those officers have been recorded by those individuals. Thus, there is no law preventing the public from recording the duties or other activities of police officers...”

Police Circular dated 2024.10.30 RTM-924/ CRTM-762

The Acting Inspector General of Police has also introduced the 1997 hotline to report all forms of misconduct, including bribery, by police officers. Acting IGP Priyantha Weerasuriya stated that a plan has been implemented to take immediate action in this regard (Weerasinghe, 2024).

Individuals' ability to access and utilise digital media, including social media, is considered a fundamental right encompassing the expression and dissemination of ideas. However, such rights may only be restricted in accordance with the limitations outlined in Article 15 of the Constitution. This has been communicated to all police officers by Acting IGP Priyanta Weerasooriya through a special internal circular (MediaLK, 2024).

Police brutality

A police constable serving with the Tissamaharama Police, who was arrested and produced before the court on charges including sexual assault, criminal intimidation, cruel treatment, and wrongful confinement of three rookie police constables, has been remanded (Herath, 2024; Palihawadana, 2024; Weerasinghe, 2024).

The magistrate of Kuliyaipitiya ordered the prompt arrest and subsequent presentation in court of the chief inspector of police at the Kuliyaipitiya Headquarters. This action follows an alleged attack on a man that took place while conducting an investigation with regard to a long-standing family dispute (Serasinghe, 2024).

A tense situation arose between the police and locals when a large group of locals gathered in front of the police station and demonstrated against the alleged brutal beating of two youths who had been arrested by the police (Daily Mirror Online, 2024; Samarakoon and Dulgalpitiya, 2024; What News, 2024).

The Attorney General has notified the Supreme Court that his representation is limited solely to the 12th respondent, the Attorney General himself, and that he does not represent the police officers, including the respondent Inspector General, in the fundamental rights petition concerning the incident involving the pouring of water on the genitalia of a suspect apprehended by Teldeniya Police (Abeynayake, 2024).

In this petition, the Attorney General, the Inspector General of Police, the Teldeniya Headquarters Police Inspector and 11 others have been named as respondents. In his petition, the petitioner has stated that the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission's investigation confirmed that he was arrested and tortured by Teldeniya Police on January 27, 2023. He has requested in the petition to issue a verdict that his basic human rights have been violated due to this action (Abeynayake, 2024).

New appointments in the Police

Superintendent of Police T.M. Ajantha Rodrigo has been designated as the new Director of the Public Order Management Division, followed by the immediate annulment of Ajanta Rodrigo's appointment. The Acting Inspector General of Police made this decision in response to considerable backlash on social media, primarily stemming from various allegations of human rights violations linked to his previous actions (Mawrata, 2024; Rathnasekara, 2024).

The Police Commission has sanctioned the reappointment of former SSP Shani Abeysekera to the Police service for a duration of one year under a contractual agreement (What News, 2024).

The Institute for Democratic Reforms and Electoral Studies has issued a statement stating that Shani Abeysekera has not been reinstated into the police service at the right time. Through the statement, its Executive Director Manjula Gajanayake says that the appointment of Shani Abeysekera, a member of the collective of retired police officers who worked for the victory of the National People's Power during the last presidential election, to the position of Director of a Police unit during such a crucial election campaign period is a highly controversial and questionable decision (Herath, 2024).

Land acquisition attempts and military-occupied lands of Tamils in the North and East

It was reported that a group of Tamil residents effectively prevented government officials from conducting a land survey for a Navy camp in Mandaitivu. Government officials were compelled to retreat following resistance from a group of Tamil residents and politicians who opposed their efforts to secure land for a naval camp (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Tamil residents in the North and East often voice their grievances about how military and state departments such as the Department of Archeology have been trying to acquire their lands. Simultaneously, extensive areas of land continue to be held by the Sri Lankan military, which remains deployed throughout the North-East, even though the armed conflict concluded 15 years prior (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

A petition has been submitted to the District Governor requesting that the Mullaitivu - Keppapulavu lands be released and handed over to them. The petition requests the return of civilian lands acquired by the military in Keppappila, Mullaitivu (Tamilwin, 2024).

Tamil residents and activists organized a demonstration in front of the Northern Province Governor's office in Jaffna this week, calling for the restitution of land currently held by the Sri Lankan military (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Tamil residents from Manthai West, Mannar gathered in protest demanding the return of their ancestral lands. These lands, particularly the Cholamandala Pond land in Iluppaikadavi, under the Manthai West Divisional Secretariat Division, have been cultivated by Tamil farmers for over 30 years, and now face the threat of losing (Tamil Guardian, 2024; Tamilwin, 2024; Tamilwin, 2024).

A Buddhist monk has been recorded on video confronting a Muslim farmer operating a tractor in Pulmoddai, who was in the process of preparing his land for cultivation. This Buddhist monk arrived, threatened the farmer, and disrupted the farming activities. The distressed farmer has claimed that the monk is seeking to take possession of these lands with the backing of Sri Lanka's Department of Archaeology (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Later two Muslim farmers were arrested by the Kuchchaveli police. These farmers were apprehended on allegations of cultivating land identified as an archaeological site, a assertion they vehemently dispute. Following their court appearance, the Kuchchaveli Magistrate issued a remand order until October 14, alleging that they had caused damage to archaeological ruins (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Tamils residing in Kattaidamban, Mannar, assembled in front of the Madhu Divisional Secretariat to express their opposition to the Sri Lankan Forestry Department's appropriation of their ancestral lands (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Families of the disappeared Tamils in the North and East



Activist Manuel Uthayachandra. Courtesy: Tamilwin

Manuel Uthayachandra, the convener of the North-East Valindu Families of the Disappeared Association, was arrested by police and released on bail by the Mannar Magistrate (Tamil Guardian, 2024; Tamilwin, 2024; Tamilwin, 2024).

Police have issued another summons to Thambirasa Selvarani, the head of the Association for Enforced Disappearances (AERD) in Ampara. Selvarani has been leading initiatives to locate victims of enforced disappearances, and this is not her first encounter with such intimidation (Tamil Guardian, 2024).



Thambirasa Selvarani, the head of the Association for Enforced Disappearances (AERD) in Ampara. Courtesy: Lankaleader.lk

A person claiming to be a supporter of the National People's Power (NPP) interrupted a demonstration held by the Families of the Disappeared in Vavuniya, subjecting the protesters to harassment and intimidation while issuing threats of arrest. The aforementioned protest took place in observance of International Children's Day at the Vavuniya old bus station (Tamil Guardian, 2024; Tamilwin, 2024).

Tamil National People's Front vows to oppose Sri Lanka's unitary constitution

The leader of the Tamil National People's Front (TNPf), Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, announced that his party is ready to firmly oppose Sri Lanka's unitary constitution. He also underscored their dedication to tackling the enduring grievances and issues confronting the Tamil community in the North-East (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Jaffna and Eastern University's Student Unions asserts Tamil Nationalism

The Secretary of the Jaffna University Students' Union has emphasized that Tamils in the Northern and Eastern regions should unite under the principles of Tamil nationalism and choose representatives who are capable of advocating for the rights of the Tamil community (Tamilwin, 2024).

Similarly, the Students' Union of the Faculty of Arts at Eastern University has urged the Tamil community in the East to support political parties that prioritize Tamil nationalism, taking into account the national and ethnic concerns of the Tamil people (Tamilwin, 2024).

Allegations and Investigations Related to Criminal Activity and Corruption

Addressing the media Cabinet Spokesman (of the interim government) Vijitha Herath said the government is committed to thoroughly investigating all previous crimes and taking legal action against individuals deemed responsible, in addition to expediting the seven high-profile cases that have been specifically ordered (Newswire, 2024).

The incidents encompass the Central Bank Bond scandal, the Easter Sunday attacks, the abduction and assassination of journalist D.P. Sivaram, the vanishing of Lalith Kumar and Kugan Muruganandan, the mysterious disappearance of Vice Chancellor Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath, the homicide of Dinesh Schaffter, and the shooting event that occurred outside the W15 hotel in Weligama (Newswire, 2024).

The Cabinet Spokesman underscored that the directive is not limited to the seven specified cases, noting that investigations will be carried out into all previously reported incidents, including economic crimes, homicides, and the disappearances of journalists (Newswire, 2024).

Minister Herath has also affirmed that inquiries will be initiated regarding the deaths of the late rugby player Wasim Thajudeen and the late journalist Lasantha Wickremetunge, as well as the unresolved disappearance of the journalist Pradeep Ekneligoda. Further stated that thorough and systematic investigations into the Easter attacks have already been commenced (Newswire, 2024).

The Cabinet of Ministers has endorsed the proposal put forth by the President to implement essential measures aimed at raising the maximum threshold of the bribery raid advance/imprest account for the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) to Rs. 150 million (Daily News, 2024; The Morning, 2024).

It has been reported that the precise amount associated with bribery remains indeterminate, coupled with the complex nature of the bribery allegations. Given the substantial sums being solicited, the maximum expenditure limit must be urgently revised (Daily News, 2024; The Morning, 2024).

President Anurakumara Dissanayake announced during a political rally that 400 corruption cases have been documented. These cases have been closed, with some currently stuck in the Attorney General's Department and others in the Criminal Investigation Department. Some are stuck in the Bribery or Corruption Commission. Some are limited to a complaint. The government has instructed the relevant institutions to reopen cases and launch the necessary investigations for systematic prosecution (Jayasekara, 2024).

New Government Appointments

M.R.Y.K. Udawela has been designated as the new Director General of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) subsequent to the resignation of the previous Director General (Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption, 2024; Gold FM, 2024).

DIG Dhammika Priyantha has been designated as the new Director of the State Intelligence Service (SIS) (Ada Derana, 2024; Daily Mirror Online, 2024; Weerasinghe, 2024).

Selvin Ireneuss Mariampillai was appointed as Chairman of the Palmyrah Development Board. With the subsequent opposition from the United Workers' Union concerning allegations levelled against Mariampillai for his alleged financial irregularities and misconduct, his appointment was revoked and soon replaced by Vinayagamoorthy Sahadevan (Hewajulige, 2024).

Concerning these appointments, Transparency International Sri Lanka stated that these appointments were seemingly in violation of current election laws. Further stated that such appointments erode public confidence and may jeopardise the integrity of the electoral process. TISL also urged the Election Commission to conduct an investigation into these appointments and to implement timely corrective measures (Transparency International Sri Lanka, 2024).

Admiral Sirimevan Sarathchandra Ranasinghe, a former Commander of the Sri Lankan Navy, who has been accused of shielding a suspect involved in the abduction and murder of 11 youths, has assumed the role of Chairman of the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) in Colombo this week. Ranasinghe has been implicated in inquiries related to the abduction of 11 young individuals, who are reported to have been killed at the Gun Site prison in Trincomalee (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Transgender community: Challenges and New Developments

It has been revealed by transgender workers employed in the Export Processing Zones (EPZ) that transgender persons that are employed by manpower agencies are more prone to be exploited compared to others (Daily Mirror, 2024).

Export Processing Zones exhibit strict gender segregation, leading to the employment of transgender men by manpower agencies in jobs/tasks typically performed by men. Nevertheless, they continue to receive lower wages at rates which women are paid. Transgender workers of ethnic minorities, particularly face discrimination at the hands of factory management as job interviews are often conducted in Sinhala (Don Maya, 2024).

On the other hand, transgender individuals are often denied employment in the EPZ based on their gender expression. One of the most pressing issues faced by transgender people employed in the EPZ is that they are often denied washroom facilities due to the strict gender-segregated nature as most factories in EPZs do not have gender neutral washrooms. Transgender, particularly transsexual persons are frequently not granted employment opportunities as sometimes their gender expression does not align with their designated gender/sex on identity-proving documents such as National Identity Card, Birth Certificate and Driver's Licence (Don Maya, 2024).

It has also been highlighted transsexual individuals working in the EPZs opt for manpower work instead of securing permanent work at factories due to the fact transgender clinics at public hospitals often require people who pursue medical transition to regularly attend transgender clinics which are often open on working/week days. Transsexual persons who work permanent jobs at factories find it challenging to attend transgender clinics on weekdays twice a month. Mainly because getting leave approved is challenging. Even if they manage to get leave, it can negatively affect the attendance allowance which makes up a significant proportion of the take net salary (Don Maya, 2024).

Media Spokesperson of Prisons Commission Gamini Dissanayake stated that attention will be paid to allocating separate spaces for transgender prisoners in prisons to be built in the near future. He further said due to the current lack of facilities in prisons, it is a challenge to allocate separate space for transgender prisoners (Imbulana, 2024).

Mechanism for the prevention and resolution of disputes in the public sector

The Cabinet has decided to introduce a mechanism for the prevention and resolution of disputes in the public sector. The aim is to implement this mechanism throughout the entire public service (ITN News, 2024 ; Weeraratne, 2024).

NGOs spend funds without sufficient oversight

It has been reported that registered local and international NGOs with the National NGO Secretariat have pledged to allocate up to Rs.30 billion this year; however, unregistered organizations are spending more than twice this amount (Bandara, 2024).

An information source has indicated that there are currently 1,851 organisations registered with the NGO Secretariat, of which only 618 remain active. The secretariat exercises direct oversight over the expenditures of these NGOs, which are engaged in various development and charitable initiatives in partnership with government institutions (Bandara, 2024).

Sri Lankan employees in Kuwait lose insurance benefits

Due to the blacklisting by the Foreign Employment Bureau of an insurance company that insured employees from Sri Lanka who are working in Kuwait, many Sri Lankan employees have been unable to obtain benefits from that company (Gunasekare, 2024).

Three Special Intelligence Teams to deal with the information provided by Foreign Intelligence Services

The government states that three separate intelligence teams have been appointed to monitor 24-hour information provided by foreign intelligence services on matters related to the national security (Hewajulige, 2024).

Only three lawyers to handle crime cases against children

The Director of Law Enforcement at the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) has disclosed that the authority employs merely three attorneys to handle all criminal cases involving children (Gunasekare, 2024).

Sri Lankan Air Force now requires 'certified copies' of ID for any RTI requests

The Sri Lankan Air Force (SLAF) has come under scrutiny for its requirement of certified copies of National Identity Cards (NICs) from individuals requesting information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, a practice that lacks legal necessity (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

The issue arose when a Tamil individual from the North was instructed by the RTI office of the SLAF to submit a certified copy of their National Identity Card, despite having already provided a standard copy, which is typically adequate (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Videos made to insult the Army

The Sri Lanka Army has announced that in the past few days, several social media content creators have released videos on social media containing false information about the Army to defame the Army and undermine the public's trust in the Army (Dinamina, 2024).

National consumer prices fall 0.2%

In September, the national consumer prices experienced a decline into deflation, attributed to a decrease in food prices. Additionally, the reduction in fuel prices has significantly alleviated the pressure on non-food price inflation observed in recent months. This trend is a result of consecutive reductions in fuel prices, driven by the stabilization of global energy prices and the strengthening of the rupee (Ada Derana, 2024; Daily Mirror Online, 2024).

The National Consumer Price Index indicated that consumer prices experienced a decline of 0.2 percent for the year ending in September 2024, a reversal from the 1.1 per cent increase recorded through August 2024 (Ada Derana, 2024; Daily Mirror Online, 2024).

Criticism of the government regarding the national ethnic problem

Former Member of Parliament Sivashakti Anandan has asserted that the government is conveying to the Tamil population that a national ethnic issue does not exist (Tamilwin, 2024).

Defamatory posters targeting Mannar High Court Judge

The Police have notified the Colombo Magistrate's Court of their initiation of investigations aimed at capturing the main suspect linked to the incident involving the distribution of defamatory posters aimed at the Mannar High Court Judge (Ada Derana, 2024).

The Colombo Crimes Division has informed Colombo Chief Magistrate Thilina Gamage that investigations are underway to arrest former Parliamentarian J. Sri Ranga, who has been

identified as the main suspect in this incident. The investigating officers stated in court that the main suspect was not at home at this time (What News, 2024).

Good Shepherd Convent corporal punishment scandal in Nuwara Eliya

Nuwara Eliya Magistrate has ordered the principal Rev. Sister Mary Nilanka De Silva, who has been accused of assaulting 12 grade 11 students at the Nuwara Eliya Good Shepherd Convent to be remanded. The authorities were also ordered to submit a further investigation report regarding the incident of assault on the children and medical reports on the nun's mental health condition (Aruna, 2024).

This has brought to light the challenges associated with corporal punishment in educational institutions and the necessity for improved supervision, even in the presence of legal regulations that ban such practices (YoshLK, 2024).

SC suspends decision to deactivate political party

The Supreme Court has suspended the Elections Commission's decision to deactivate the Lanka Janatha Party, thereby permitting the party to participate in the General Elections (Daily Mirror, 2024).

Excavation in Mullivaikal in search of weapons of LTTE

Excavations have taken place on the land of a private individual, where it is suspected that weapons were interred by the LTTE in the Vadduvaakal region, located within the jurisdiction of the Mullaitivu Police Division in the Mullaitivu District. The excavation concluded unsuccessfully, as no materials were discovered in the vicinity (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

In a similar instance, a team of police officers from Colombo has been assigned to Mullivaikkal to conduct an excavation of a portion of the sports ground located in the eastern region of the area, where they claim that weapons utilised by the LTTE remain interred (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Police have secured judicial authorisation to carry out an excavation in the Vilakkuvaithakulam region of Vavuniya, following intelligence received from Batticaloa regarding a cache of LTTE weaponry. A judge from Vavuniya, along with officials from the Omanthai Police, were present during the operation. However the search only returned a crowbar (Tamilwin, 2024).

Government has no intention to curtail entitlements accorded to Tri Forces personnel

While addressing Air Force personnel upon visiting the Sri Lanka Air Force headquarters Defence Secretary Air Vice Marshal Thuyacontha (Retd) has said that the government does not intend to curtail the entitlement of tri forces personnel (Daily News, 2024; Department of Government Information, 2024).

Defence Ministry urges civilians to surrender all firearms issued to them

The Ministry of Defense has made the decision to temporarily reclaim all firearms and ammunition that were distributed to civilians for the purpose of self-defense (Daily News, 2024; Daily News, 2024; GoldFM News, 2024; Hewajulige, 2024; Ministry of Defence, 2024; Rubatheesan, 2024).

Young doctor² has been remanded for criticizing court's independent investigation

In relation to the ongoing case in the Mannar court, an order has been issued by the court to remand physician who publicly criticised the court's independent investigation and made posts on Facebook. Eventually this physician was arrested by the police after an arrest warrant was issued for his failure to appear in court last month and was produced in court yesterday (Tamilwin, 2024).

New governors appointed for Northern and Eastern provinces

Sri Lanka's President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has designated new governors for all nine provinces of the island, as stated in a release from the Presidential Media Division. Nagalingam Vethanayagam has been appointed as the Governor of the Northern Province, and Professor Jayantha Lal Ratnasekera has been selected as the Governor of the Eastern Province (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Social services provided by the security forces have been stopped in Mullaitivu

In the Mullaitivu district, residents have indicated that the supply of drinking water, which was previously provided at no cost by the Army, has been discontinued. A public drinking water distribution system has been operational in the Kappapilau area, provided by the army camp for an extended period (Tamilwin, 2024).

² Young physician Archuna Ramanathan, later secured a seat in parliament as an independent representative.

3. Case Updates

Multiple demonstrations have been launched in Kilinochchi

Multiple awareness campaigns and demonstrations have taken place in Kilinochchi to raise awareness about the forcibly disappeared. Relatives of the forcibly disappeared have taken part in the protest while holding photographs and banners depicting their missing loved ones (Tamilwin, 2024).

Cabraal has been indicted

Indictments have been handed over before the Colombo High Court against five defendants, including former Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka Ajith Nivard Cabraal, for allegedly defrauding the government of Rs. 184 million by investing in Greek bonds (Jayaweera, 2024; What News, 2024).

Petitions against waiving off EPF interest rates during debt restructuring dismissed

The Supreme Court has dismissed four petitions seeking a ruling that the fundamental human rights have been violated through the Government's decision to reduce the interest paid for the investments of Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) in Treasury bills and bonds to 9%, under the domestic debt restructuring process (The Morning, 2024).

Government rejects Easter Sunday attacks report released by Gammanpila, and assures fresh probe

The government has rejected the investigative committee report concerning the Easter Sunday bomb attacks, which was released by former MP Udaya Gammanpila. Minister Vijitha Herath (Cabinet Spokesperson of the interim government) indicated that the government will initiate a new investigation into the case (Ada Derana, 2024).

Herath cited an earlier Supreme Court case related to the infringement of fundamental rights of the victims of the Easter attacks, where Ravi Seneviratne's name was mentioned, but he was acquitted of all charges by a panel of seven judges, and Shani Abeysekera's name was not part of the case (Ada Derana, 2024).

Gammanpila was heavily criticised by many parties, including Minister Herath implying that the timing of the report, shortly before the general election, was a reflection of personal

motives rather than a genuine effort for accountability (Ada Derana, 2024).

Cabinet Spokesman Vijitha Herath elaborated on these allegations by stating that the committee was formed due to political motivations. Therefore, he said, the government will not accept the committee reports (Ada Derana, 2024).

He additionally stated that the government does not recognise this committee, which he alleged was established by former President Ranil Wickremesinghe for the purpose of political retribution, by appointing a retired high court judge who had faced allegations of misconduct (Ada Derana, 2024).

Sri Lanka's OMP says it has found 16 people alive - but refuses to explain

The Office on Missing Persons (OMP) has successfully identified 16 individuals who have been reported missing since the year 2000, from a total of around 6,000 inquiries conducted since December 2022. OMP Chairman Mahesh Katulanda has stated that they are not allowed to disclose the identities of these individuals without their consent (Mudugamuwa, 2024; Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Katulanda additionally highlighted that, from the total of 14,998 missing persons complaints submitted to the OMP, approximately 6,000 cases have been addressed in the last two years (Mudugamuwa, 2024; Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Potential security threat

The U.S. Embassy in Colombo issued a security alert, saying it received credible information warning of an attack targeting popular tourist destinations in the Arugam Bay. As a result U.S. citizens were strongly advised to avoid Arugam Bay until further notice. The British High Commission and Russian Embassy, too updated their travel advisory altering their citizens visiting Sri Lanka (Srinivasan, 2024).

The Police issued a statement saying special security measures had been put in place at Arugam Bay, to protect tourists, considering the conflict situation in the Middle East and Eastern Europe (Srinivasan, 2024).

Former President Wickremesinghe named respondent in FR petition challenging Deshabandu's appointment as IGP

The Supreme Court has granted the petitioners permission to include former President Ranil Wickremesinghe as a respondent in a Fundamental Rights petition that contests the appointment of Deshabandu Tennakoon as the Inspector General of Police (IGP) (Mawbima, 2024; Medagedara, 2024; Sooriyagoda, 2024).

The Young Journalists' Association of Sri Lanka submitted a petition contesting the legality of Deshabandu Tennakoon's appointment as Inspector General of Police (Sooriyagoda, 2024).

Case of the disappearance of journalist Prageeth Eknaligoda has been postponed

The case against former Giritale Army Camp Commanding Officer Shammi Kumararatne and several Army Intelligence personnel, related to the abduction and disappearance of journalist Prageeth Eknaligoda, was heard before a three-judge bench of the Colombo High Court. During the hearing, representatives from two private telephone companies provided evidence regarding telephone calls allegedly linked to the defendants. The Attorney General has filed charges against the defendants under the Penal Code for the abduction and murder of Eknaligoda in January 2010 (What News, 2024).

Government to launch probe over X Press Pearl disaster

The Sri Lankan government plans to investigate the 2021 X-Press Pearl disaster, where a container ship carrying hazardous chemicals caught fire off Sri Lanka's coast, causing severe environmental damage. While the ship's owner has agreed to cover costs for beach cleaning and debris removal, the government has not yet filed claims for the larger civil liability costs, including environmental damage and economic loss. An Australian law firm and international experts were hired to assess these claims, and the ship's insurance has already compensated the government \$7.85 million. However, the full extent of the damage is still being assessed, and the Attorney General's Department has not provided updates on the litigation in Singapore (Bandara, 2024).

A chartered professional body to standardise media

The Ministry of Mass Media has drafted a proposal to establish a chartered professional journalists' institute, aimed at improving the quality and professionalism of journalists and regulating those entering the media sector. The draft has been forwarded to the Attorney General's Department for review. Additionally, there are ongoing discussions about creating

an authority or commission to regulate electronic media, as there is currently no such institution in the country. Efforts will be made to establish this regulatory body, taking into account the new government's policies and expert opinions (Ilangakoon, 2024). However, Minister of Mass media, Vijitha Herath stated that the bill was forwarded to the Attorney General's Department before their government came to power and he was unaware of the bill being sent after the new government took office but promised to investigate and provide more information (What News, 2024).

A date has been set for the hearing of Gnanasara Thero's petition

The Court of Appeal has scheduled a hearing for the appeal filed by Venerable Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thero, General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena organization, seeking his acquittal and release from a four-year prison sentence. The appeal is related to comments made by Gnanasara Thero in 2016 about the Kuragala Temple, which were deemed to have insulted Islam. The hearing is set for April 3rd next year (What News, 2024).

Tamil families of the disappeared in Vavuniya mark 2804 days of protests



Tamil families of the disappeared in Vavuniya protest as the search for their forcibly disappeared relatives. Source: Tamil Guardian.

Tamil families in Vavuniya commemorated 2,804 days of ongoing protest as they persist in their efforts to locate their relatives who have been forcibly disappeared. During the demonstration, the families urged US Presidential candidate Kamala Harris and the federal government to respond to their concerns and to conduct an investigation into the disappearances of their relatives (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa agrees to testify

Former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has expressed his willingness to testify in the habeas corpus inquiry regarding the 2011 disappearance of activists Lalith Weeraraj and Koogan Muruganandan, but only before a court other than the Jaffna Magistrate's Court. The Jaffna court issued a notice for Rajapaksa to appear on September 27, 2019, but this was temporarily blocked by the Court of Appeal due to security concerns while Rajapaksa was contesting for president. The parents of the missing activists appealed this decision, and a three-judge bench of the Court of Appeal is scheduled to re-hear the case on March 18 (Abeynayake, 2024; What News, 2024).

Ranil named as respondent in FRs filed over crackdown on 2022 SYU protest

The Supreme Court has allowed former President Ranil Wickremesinghe to be named as a respondent in the fundamental rights petitions filed against the Police for their violent crackdown on a 2022 protest by the Socialist Youth Union (SYU). The protest, organised in opposition to Wickremesinghe, was violently dispersed by the police, leading to the arrest of 85 individuals, including monks, lawyers, and SYU leaders. The petitioners' legal team requested this inclusion during a hearing of two petitions related to the incident (Ada Derana, 2024; Daily Feature, 2024).

Ariyanenthiran and supporters summoned by Sri Lanka's TID

P. Ariyanenthiran, who contested as the Tamil 'common candidate' in Sri Lanka's recent presidential elections, has been summoned by the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) for questioning, along with his campaign supporters. The investigation focuses on the sources of his campaign financing, particularly how the funds were raised (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Police block Muslim burial following false claim by a Buddhist monk

Tensions in the Eastern Province escalated when police attempted to stop the burial of a Muslim woman in Ponmalaikuda, based on false claims by an extremist Sinhala Buddhist monk. The monk, Panamure Thilakawansa, has reportedly made a false claim asserting that the land is under the Department of Archaeology's jurisdiction. However, local Muslims, who have been using the site for burials for years, resisted, and after confirmation from the Kuchchaveli Divisional Secretary that the land was designated for Muslim burials, the police withdrew, allowing the burial to proceed (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

The series of protests against the Thaiyiddy Thissa Viharai has resumed

Demonstrations have taken place outside the Tissa Vihara, a Buddhist temple that is reportedly built in contravention of legal regulations and infringes upon the properties owned by local inhabitants in Thaiyiddy (Tamil Guardian, 2024; Tamilwin, 2024).

The protests that commenced last year have yet to elicit any response from the Sri Lankan government. In response to the demonstrations, the Sri Lankan police have established barricades surrounding the Buddhist site to restrict public access to the area (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Government to review AG's directive halting CID action in Mahara prison shooting

In November 2020, a protest by inmates at Mahara prison resulted in the deaths of 11 individuals following a shooting incident involving prison officers and the Police Special Task Force (STF). The protest, held on November 29, 2020, was sparked by demands for COVID-19 testing and proper medical care for infected inmates. In April 2023, the Welisara Magistrate's Court ruled that the deaths were a crime. The court noted discrepancies between the official justification for the use of force and the evidence presented, which showed that all 11 victims were shot in vital areas, including the head, chest, and stomach, contradicting claims that the shooting was a minimal use of force. Despite the court's ruling, which ordered the arrest of the involved officers, the Attorney General's Department intervened, issuing a letter on August 30, 2023, to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) instructing them not to take further action. The letter, written by Additional Solicitor General Haripriya Jayasundara, asserted that the officers acted within their rights and in accordance with Section 77 of the Prisons Ordinance, justifying their actions as necessary to maintain security during the protest. As a result, the Attorney General's Department decided to close the file on the incident, halting further investigations. However, Cabinet Minister Vijitha Herath said the government would review all investigation reports before making a decision (Balasuriya, 2024; Hassan, 2024; Lankadeepa, 2024; Rodrigo, 2024; What News, 2024).

The Committee for Protecting the Rights of Prisoners (CPRP) has expressed strong disapproval of the purported instruction issued by the Attorney General to the Director of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) to expedite the conclusion of the case. CPRP President and Attorney-at-Law Senaka Perera announced that his organization intends to initiate legal proceedings in the Court of Appeal challenging the decision made by the Attorney General (Hassan, 2024; Rodrigo, 2024).

Court rejects Arjun Aloysius' appeal against prison sentence

Three directors of W.M. Mendis and Company Ltd., including Arjun Aloysius, have been sentenced to six months in prison by the Colombo Magistrate's Court for failing to pay Rs. 3.5 billion in Value Added Tax (VAT) owed to the government. The tax default occurred between 2016 and 2019. The court rejected the directors' appeal to transfer the case to the Colombo High Court and allow payment in installments. Despite being ordered to pay the taxes by November 14, 2023, the directors did not comply, resulting in the imprisonment sentence (Abeynayake, 2024; Ada Derana, 2024).

Government to review Adani Mannar wind power project

The Attorney General has informed the Supreme Court that the new government plans to review the wind power project in Mannar, involving India's Adani Group. The government will consider the issues raised by petitioners, who seek to halt the project due to its potential harm to biodiversity and local communities. The Attorney General also committed to preserving the current state of the project until the new government reaches a suitable decision after the general election (Ada Derana, 2024; Sooriyagoda, 2024; Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Petition against Nilantha Jayawardena will be considered

The Court of Appeal has scheduled a hearing for November 13 to consider a petition against the former Director of the State Intelligence Service (SIS), Nilantha Jayawardena. The petition, filed by the Centre for Society and Religion (CSR), accuses Jayawardena of failing to prevent the Easter Sunday terror attack despite receiving prior intelligence. During the hearing, Jayawardena's defense argued that the petition should be dismissed since the National Police Commission is already investigating the matter following a Supreme Court order. The court will decide whether to confirm the petitioner's claims or allow its withdrawal at the next hearing (Ada Derana, 2024; Dinamina, 2024).

Excavation of Mannar mass grave resumes despite media restrictions

Excavation activities at the Mannar mass grave have recommenced, notwithstanding the restrictions against photography or video documentation of the ongoing excavations (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

The investigation, which commenced following the uncovering of a mass grave in 2019 amid construction activities, has been a subject of considerable debate. This location, which revealed 318 remains, including those of 18 children, is currently being examined for potential connections to war crimes or other heinous acts (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Investigation underway to find missing files in MiG aircraft deal

Public Security Minister Vijitha Herath said that the government will urgently investigate the misplacement of files from the Criminal Investigation Department related to the investigation into the controversial MiG fighter jet deal during the Mahinda Rajapaksa government (Rathnakara, 2024; What News, 2024).

Probe launched into missing pages of Easter Sunday bomb attacks report

The Minister, Vijitha Herath, announced that the government has initiated an inquiry regarding the purported occurrence of missing pages from the Special Presidential Commission's report on the Easter Sunday bomb attacks. The investigations will determine the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the pages and ascertain whether the report submitted to the President was complete and contained all its pages (Siriwardana, 2024; The Morning, 2024).

Fr. Cyril Gamini raises concerns over the Commission report on Easter attack disappears

Fr. Fernando expressed alarm that the Presidential Commission's report on the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings, which was handed to President Ranil Wickremesinghe and then to the Attorney General's Department, had gone missing. He emphasized that the report contained crucial evidence implicating high-ranking politicians and could lead to prosecutions if made public. Fernando called for a transparent investigation and greater scrutiny of the government's actions (Parakrama, 2024).

He further mentioned the formation of two committees under President Wickremesinghe to investigate various aspects of the attack, with report submission dates in this year. One to investigate on Channel 4's allegations about the military's role in the attack and the other focused on intelligence failures before the attacks (Parakrama, 2024; Perera, 2024).

Computer Crimes Division and the Immigration and Emigration Controller have violated Nathasha's rights

The Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission (SLHRC) has determined that several officials violated the rights of standup comedian Nathasha Edirisuriya. These include Senior Superintendent of Police Lucky Randeniya, Assistant Superintendent Chandima Arumapperuma, Sub Inspector SM Subasinghe, and the Controller General of Immigration. Nathasha was arrested on May 27, 2023, under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) act, following a standup comedy performance on April 1, 2023, that led to accusations of insulting Buddhism. She was detained at the airport by immigration officials and later by the Computer Crime Division, despite there being no legal order for her detention or travel ban (MediaLK, 2024).

The SLHRC investigation revealed that the detention and travel ban were imposed without proper legal grounds, based on an unfounded presumption. It was also noted that only a partial statement from Natasha was considered by the authorities, and there were significant procedural failures in the handling of the case. As a result, the Commission found violations of her constitutional rights, particularly Articles 13.1, 12.1, and 14.1.a. It recommended action against the involved officers and suggested that the Immigration Controller consult with the Inspector General of Police to establish legal guidelines for enforcing travel bans. Additionally, the officers were ordered to compensate Natasha with 50,000 rupees (MediaLK, 2024).

Desired objective has not been achieved, the Justice Operation is purely a media spectacle

In an inquiry conducted by the Sri Lanka's Police Headquarters, it was revealed that *Yukthiya Meheyuma* (Operation Justice) has failed to meet its objectives as it being criticised as nothing but a media spectacle rather than a genuine effort to combat drug trafficking. Senior police officials have reported that the operation resulted in the arrest of drug users and people who have long been distancing themselves from trafficking, rather than targeting actual drug dealers. Additionally, it was noted that the operation disrupted normal police duties, leaving complaints from the public unaddressed. Many officers were reassigned to the operation, and drug raids were not carried out effectively. In response, the Acting Inspector General of Police, Priyantha Weerasuriya, plans to prioritize arrests of real drug dealers and launch a more impactful operation in the future, without focusing on media visibility. Many complaints about the operation have also been lodged with the National Police Commission and the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission (Dinamina, 2024).

4. Election Situation

Elpitiya Local Council Election

The Executive Director of the Campaign for Free and Fair Elections (CaFFE), Manas Makeen, stated that the election for the Elpitiya Pradeshiya Sabha was conducted peacefully; however, it did not exhibit a significant level of enthusiasm (The Island Online, 2024; The Sunday Times, 2024; Newswire, 2024).

National People's Power, led by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake won the Elpitiya Local Council with 17,295 votes and 15 seats (The Island Online, 2024).

Transgender candidate contesting an election in Sri Lanka for the first time

Chanu Nimesha, serving as the Secretary of Women's Affairs for the Sri Lanka Socialist Party, has made history by being the first transgender person to run for an election in Sri Lanka (Perera, 2024).



Chanu Nimesha, Sri Lanka's first transgender person to contest in a general election runs her election campaign.

Source:- [luce.lanazione.it](https://www.luce.lanazione.it)

Special assistance for voters with disabilities

The Election Commission announced that voters with disabilities would receive special assistance during the parliamentary election 2024. Voters who are blind or have physical disabilities could bring an assistant to help them mark their ballot. The assistant was supposed to be at least 18 years old, not a candidate or campaign agent, and should not have any disabilities. To bring an assistant, voters must obtain a *certificate of eligibility* from local offices or the Election Commission's website and could present it at the polling station, along with valid identification (Fernandopulle, 2024; Senanayake, 2024).

Rehabilitated former LTTE members contest independently in the North-East

The leader of a rehabilitated group of former LTTE members, Kandasamy Inbarasa, announced that his group, which includes 3,500 of the 12,600 LTTE fighters who were rehabilitated after the war, would contest the general election in Sri Lanka. Since the party was unable to gain official registration with the Election Commission, its members submitted nominations as independent groups in the North and East. This marked the group's first attempt to compete in a general election, following previous independent campaigns in local government elections. This group aims to address the issues faced by its members through democratic means (Gunananda, 2024).

5. Repression of Media and Journalists

CID seeks court order against Tharindu for revealing information about Easter Attacks

Induka Silva, head of the police Criminal Investigation Department's homicide unit, sought legal action against Tharindu Jayawardhana, editor-in-chief of MediaLK, over a video in which Tharindu Jayawardhana commented on allegations of misconduct against Silva and the appointment of Ravi Seneviratne to the Ministry of Public Security. At the time, Induka Silva was investigating Seneviratne over his role in the failure to prevent the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings. Induka Silva's report accused Tharindu Jayawardhana of publishing false information and obstructing the investigation. The next hearing is scheduled for January 15, and Jayawardhana fears that he would be arrested (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2024).

Court orders to investigate death threats against journalist

Colombo Additional Magistrate Harshana Kekunawela has ordered the Cinnamon Gardens Police to investigate death threats received by Tissa Ravindra Perera, Deputy News Editor of the 'Aruna' newspaper. The threats, linked to Perera's reporting on national security and corruption, were made on October 5th after he covered a tile tender at Colombo Port. The police are to retrieve phone records and report their findings to the court (Aruna, 2024; Committee to Protect Journalists, 2024).

Journalist arrested for reporting protests

Tamil Guardian journalist Selvakumar Nilanthan, based in Batticaloa, was apprehended due to his coverage of protests related to purported corrupt practices by a local government official in 2020. Nilanthan was apprehended together with two individuals who are not journalists, facing allegations concerning the hindrance of official responsibilities (International Federation of Journalists, 2024; Tamil Guardian, 2024).

The Eravur Magistrate in the Batticaloa District granted bail to him, mandating his presence at a subsequent hearing scheduled for January 20, 2025. Although he was initially released on bail in 2019, the case was unexpectedly revisited on October 9, 2024, with law enforcement neglecting to inform the journalist about the ongoing proceedings (International Federation of Journalists, 2024).

Harassment faced by Tamil journalists

In a media release issued by Mullaitivu Media Association to commemorate the 24th anniversary of journalist Mylvaganam Nimalarajan stated that Tamil-speaking journalists continue to face harassment, intimidation and surveillance by state security apparatuses, including intelligence and the military (Tamilwin, 2024).

6. Freedom of Assembly and Association

Attack on TPA supporters

The Tamil People's Alliance (TPA) has raised allegations regarding police actions following an attack on their supporters in Jaffna on October 26th. While campaigning in Neervely Karanthan, TPA supporters were attacked by a gang of four men on a three-wheeler, injuring three people, including a woman. Despite reporting the incident to the police, their complaint was initially ignored by the officer in charge but later accepted after intervention from the District Superintendent of Police. The TPA further accuses the police of handcuffing the victims who were receiving treatment in the hospital, claiming this was done under orders from their superiors. They also note that no arrests have been made, even 24 hours after the attack. The TPA views the handcuffing as an act of intimidation (Tamilwin, 2024).

NPP candidate pledges to create an era where trade unions are not needed

Lakshman Nipunarachchi's statement at an October 31 election rally in Kesbewa criticised the frequent disruptions caused by strikes in sectors like education, healthcare, and transportation, and expressed a vision for a future where such issues no longer exist. Nipunarachchi stated that workers should resolve issues directly with the government, rather than resorting to strikes. He then announced that the government would take the first step by dissolving the trade unions within its own party. He urged voters to support a strong government in the parliamentary election which was held on November 14 to ensure stability and progress without interruptions (BBC Sinhala, 2024; Divaina, 2024; Ranabahu, 2024).

7. Repressive Legal and Policy Action

Investigations continue even after the change of government

Murugaya Komagan, coordinator of the Voice of the Voiceless Organization, stated that although the Tamil political prisoners who were arrested and detained under the Anti-Terrorism Act have been released, they are still being subjected to both direct and indirect forms of interrogation. He made this statement during a media conference held on 24th October at the Jaffna Press Club (Tamilwin, 2024).

8. Other

Youth arrested for recording ex-minister's defender involved in an accident

A young man who filmed an SUV involved in an accident near Wariyapola has been arrested for allegedly obstructing police duties. The SUV, reportedly belonging to former minister Lohan Ratwatte, was in a crash on the Anuradhapura-Padeniya road, causing significant damage. A video circulating online shows a police officer, identifying himself as the OIC of the Wariyapola Traffic Division, threatening the young man recording the incident. (Newswire, 2024; What News, 2024).



A police officer, identifying himself as the OIC of the Wariyapola Police Traffic Division, threatening the young man recording the scene.

Source:- Asian Mirror

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