

# Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka

## November 2024



Police officers present at the event, monitoring the celebration of Velupillai Prabhakaran's birthday. Source: Tamil Guardian

Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka in September 2024.  
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# 1. Executive Summary

**Context:** Sri Lanka's Tenth Parliament elected Hon. Asoka Sapumal Ranwala as Speaker, Dr. Rizvie Salih as Deputy Speaker, and Hemali Weerasekara as Deputy Chairperson of Committees.

Sri Lanka's new cabinet, led by Dr Harini Amarasuriya, was officially sworn in on November 18, 2024, with 22 members and 29 deputy ministers.

Sri Lanka has appointed Justice Murdu Fernando as its new Chief Justice, becoming the second woman in the country's history, having previously served as Senior Additional Solicitor General and President's Counsel.

The Human Rights Watch letter to Sri Lanka's President, Anura Kumara Dissanayake, addresses key human rights issues and provides recommendations for the new government. It calls for progressive tax policies, increased spending on health and education, investigations into enforced disappearances, reform of the Office of Missing Persons, repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and the establishment of a Directorate of Public Prosecutions. The letter also calls for the end of the Yukthiya Meheyuma campaign, reformed Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act, and decriminalisation of same-sex relations and abortion.

Manoharan Kajendraroopan, from Inuvil West, Chunnakam, was arrested by the Terrorism Investigation Division for uploading a photo of LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran on Facebook.

Former Vedukkunarimalai Adilingeswarar Temple President Sasikumar and former Secretary Tamilchelvan are being summoned by the Counter-Terrorism Investigation Department for interrogation, requiring his rehabilitation documents.

The Vavuniya High Court acquitted three Tamil individuals, Periapuliangulatha Seranda, Sirisubramaniam Krisa, and Kanthapu Kayendran, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, citing insufficient evidence and a chemical analysis report.

The Maaveerar Naal event in Thirukovil, Ampara district was hampered by strict police surveillance, leading to frustration among the crowd and a brief confrontation between MP Gajendrakumar Gangaser Ponnambalam and the police.

The Mannar Magistrate Court dismissed Murunkan Police's Section 106 application for a restraining order to prevent Maaveerar Naal commemorations in their jurisdiction, and a similar case has been filed by Vavuniya police.

Dr. Asanga Wickramasinghe confirmed that legal plans to compensate patients affected by substandard medicines are being implemented under the current government.

Sri Lanka's President Anura Kumara Dissanayake appointed Retired General Aruna Jayasekara as Deputy Defence Minister. Jayasekara was involved in a Sri Lankan

peacekeeping mission in Haiti from 2004 to 2007, where 134 Sri Lankan peacekeepers were accused of sexually exploiting minors, including children as young as nine.

The IMF has agreed to review a US\$3 billion loan arrangement with Sri Lanka, subject to IMF approval. The agreement could result in a total disbursement of US\$1.3 billion. Sri Lanka's economy has shown positive growth, with fiscal reforms strengthening public finances. The IMF emphasises governance reforms to address corruption and foster sustainable growth.

Two Palaly Police Station officers are accused of threatening a Tamil woman with intimate photos and demanding a ransom of 1.2 million rupees. The woman filed a complaint, leading to their arrest.

A family in Chunnakam, Jaffna was assaulted by police after a motorcycle collision. The woman and her husband were beaten, and their child was thrown into a bush. The woman's brother was also attacked. The Jaffna DIG suspended four police officers following an investigation, including a police inspector, sergeant, and two constables from the Chunnakam Police.

A 41-year-old Galkiriyagama police sergeant has been arrested for abusing a 27-year-old mentally challenged woman in legal custody, discovered by her mother. The incident is set to be prosecuted.

A disabled detainee was severely beaten, verbally abused, and injured by a guard at Weerawila Open Prison. Despite treatment, he was denied treatment for seven days, leading to his hospitalization and legal action.

Relatives of a 45-year-old detainee, Pradeepan, have filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, requesting a fair investigation into his death due to a brain injury.

A 57-year-old man from Chettikulam, Vavuniya, died mysteriously in prison on November 23rd. An autopsy and forensic police investigation are underway to determine if the death was due to foul play or natural causes.

Plantation workers are demanding the Estate Management Authority cease collecting monthly membership fees from them, citing union leaders' failure to provide benefits and lack of detailed reports.

The Army has removed a military camp in Karkovalam, Jaffna, after nearly 30 years of occupation. The camp, which has been operational since 1995, was part of a broader initiative to return lands to Tamils.

The Elephant Pass military-police outpost, established in 1952 to prevent illegal substance smuggling, was removed after 17 years of operation, causing inconvenience to travellers and gaining satisfaction from Tamil politicians.

A Navy Captain was arrested in connection with the abduction, unlawful detention, and enforced disappearance of Generalalage Shantha Samaraweera 13 years ago. Samaraweera was detained in an underground torture chamber at the Trincomalee Naval Base and remains

missing. The case is linked to a broader pattern of enforced disappearances, including the Trincomalee 11 abduction case. The International Truth and Justice Project (ITJP) reports that senior naval officers involved in the case have not been questioned and alleged perpetrators have been protected. This pattern of human rights violations has been largely unaddressed by authorities.

The Frontline Socialist Party has called on the President to investigate and expose crimes against humanity, particularly those committed during the 1988-89 period, including Rohana Wijeweera's death. The FSP emphasises the need for justice and full disclosure of the truth and calls for swift action to reveal the truth and provide justice.

A complaint has been filed against Dr Archchuna Ramanathan, a first-time Jaffna District MP, with the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) over controversial statements he made. Civil activist Gunarathne Adikari criticised the MP for suggesting that Sri Lanka's North and East could be a separate state, despite his oath to protect the country's constitution. The Campaign for Free and Fair Elections also condemned his actions, stating they reflect poorly on Parliament.

**Case updates:** Former Central Bank of Sri Lanka Governor Arjuna Mahendran is being summoned by the Colombo Magistrate's Court over a 2015 bond issue involving over Rs. 10 billion in losses, allegedly due to insider leaks.

The Maligakanda Magistrate's Court has ordered the recording of statements from 18 former Cabinet Ministers regarding the alleged importation of substandard human immunoglobulin vials, including former President Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, and former Ministers.

Sri Lanka's Criminal Investigation Department is investigating a Channel 4 documentary on Easter Bombings, focusing on controversial information and possible conspiracies filed with the Ministry of Public Security.

The Colombo High Court judge ordered Dr Roshan Liyanarachchi to appear in court and present evidence regarding a medical certificate for former MP Wimal Weerawansa. The court criticized Weerawansa's repeated absences, citing illness as an excuse. The judge ordered Liyanarachchi to submit detailed medical documents, but Liyanarachchi failed to do so.

The Attorney General reported that the Office for Reparations received Rs. 311 million in compensation for victims of the Easter Sunday attacks. The Supreme Court ordered the Additional Solicitor General to submit a report on the disbursement.

Tamil families of the disappeared held a rally in Trincomalee for parliamentary elections, seeking answers about their missing relatives. Despite years of demonstrations, over 280 people died in pursuit of justice, calling on President Anura Dissanayake for genuine measures.

Police withdrew a case against Tamil protesters in Mannar against an Australian sand mining project, despite environmental concerns and displacement concerns, the government organizations have been supporting the ongoing project since 2015.

Former MPs, councillors, and government officers were given a deadline to return firearms issued for personal protection by December 30, 2024.

The Sri Lankan Supreme Court has granted President Anura Kumara Dissanayake the opportunity to present his stance on the appointment of Deshabandu Tennakoon as Inspector General of Police.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake pledged to investigate and bring justice for Wasim Thajudeen, Lasantha Wickramatunga, and Pradeep Ekneligoda's murders, emphasising the value of individual life and creating a safer environment.

Kuliyapitiya Chief Police Inspector Vajira Indrajith has been ordered to be remanded by the Kuliyapitiya Additional District Judge due to allegations of misconduct during an investigation. The Chief Magistrate criticized the CID for failing to follow legal procedures in Arjun Aloysius' case, including not submitting a B report, providing additional documentation, and making a proper oral presentation. The Magistrate emphasised the need for more responsible handling of such cases.

Three Tamil suspects arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act for possessing six claymore bombs were acquitted and released by the Vavuniya High Court, citing improper Attorney General's Department pursuit.

Minister Vijitha Herath stated that the government has not decided to modify the Muslim Marriage Act or other religious legislation, but discussions with religious leaders will lead to potential legal reforms. 18 Muslim civil society organisations and 135 citizens sent an open letter to the President and Prime Minister, arguing the Act violates Article 12 of the Constitution and requires government intervention.

The Supreme Court has ordered the High Court to summon former Police Inspector General Pujith Jayasundara and Defense Secretary Hemasiri Fernando after their acquittal in a 2019 Easter Sunday terrorist attack case.

Former Minister Johnston Fernando withdrew a writ petition related to an unregistered BMW car found at a Colombo hotel, stating he had already been granted bail. The Appellate Court accepted the withdrawal and dismissed the case.

Former Minister Johnston Fernando was recalled from an arrest warrant due to his failure to attend a corruption case hearing. The court granted him bail with a cash sum of Rs. 25,000 and a surety of one million rupees. The case involves allegations of government loss.



The Kurunegala Magistrate's Court acquitted Senior House Officer Dr Shafi Shihabdeen of charges related to his 2019 arrest, including unauthorized sterilisation surgeries, illicit wealth amassing, and terrorist links.



Kurunegala Teaching Hospital Gynaecology and Obstetrics Unit Senior House Officer Dr Shafi Shihabdeen who previously faced serious allegations in 2019 when he was accused of performing unauthorised sterilisation surgeries on women. Source: Life Traveler

Dr Shafi Sihabdeen, a Kurunegala Teaching Hospital doctor, has filed a complaint against the Ministry of Public Security for false accusations of political conspiracy, seeking accountability and preventing future injustices.

**Election Situation:** The National People's Power won a two-thirds parliamentary majority in Sri Lanka, becoming the first party to achieve this through the proportional representation system. They won 159 seats, including 141 district and 18 National List seats, and elected 21 female MPs, while Samagi Jana Balawegaya became the main opposition party.

The election campaign was uneventful due to exhaustion and resource limitations, with voter turnout being lower than in previous elections, ranging between 60-65%.

Over 100 high-level government appointments violated election regulations, raising concerns about undue influence and bribery, prompting calls for clearer guidelines from the Election Commission.

There was a lot of physical and online animosity directed at female candidates. Sasikala Raviraj, one of the candidates, was the target of harassment and attacks. Additionally, the



Prime Minister was subjected to ongoing harassment on social media based on her gender, which brought attention to the larger problem of women's delegitimation in politics.

During the election period, political discourse was dominated by majoritarianism, disregarding marginalized voices and resulting in media coverage of women at just 7%.

**Repression of Media and Journalists:** Tamil journalist S. Satheeskumar was attacked during the 2024 parliamentary elections in Bogawantalawa, suffering head injuries. Allegations suggest the intoxicated attacker is a United Democratic Voice candidate.

**Freedom of assembly and association:** Cabinet Minister Vijitha Herath ruled out trade union actions causing public inconvenience for political reasons, addressing a planned strike by railway station masters, ensuring solutions post-parliamentary elections.

Minister of Public Security and Parliamentary Affairs, Ananda Wijepala, has clarified that honouring the LTTE organization is not allowed due to its classification as a prohibited organization. Despite police harassment, some families of the LTTE have continued these commemorations.

Police removed Velupillai Prabhakaran's photograph from a 70th birthday celebration banner in Valvettithurai, Tamils continued the celebration despite challenges and six police interrogations.

#### **Repressive Legal and Policy Action:**

**Other Incidents:** The Theatermates drama group in the Malayaga Tamil community has reported harassment and intimidation from individuals falsely claiming to be linked to the Army and Criminal Investigation Department. They have filed complaints with Bogawantalawa Police and HRCL, but have not received any action.

## 2. Context

### **Newly-Elected Parliament**

The inaugural meeting of Sri Lanka's Tenth Parliament commenced on November 21st with the election of Hon. Asoka Sapumal Ranwala as Speaker. Following this, Hon. Dr. Rizvie Salih was elected Deputy Speaker, and Hon. Hemali Weerasekara was elected Deputy Chairperson of Committees. The Members took their oaths and signed the Members' Roll. Hon. Bimal Rathnayake was appointed Leader of the House, Hon. Dr. Nalinda Jayathissa as Chief Government Whip, and Hon. Sajith Premadasa was recognized as the leader of the opposition (Parliament of Sri Lanka, 2024).

The National People's Power (NPP) government's new cabinet was officially sworn in on November 18, 2024, before President Anura Kumara Dissanayake at the Presidential Secretariat. Dr Harini Amarasuriya was sworn in as the new Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. The Cabinet comprises 22 members and 29 deputy ministers were sworn in (President's Media Division, 2024).

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake announced a transformative shift in Sri Lanka's political history, focusing on multi-party democracy, unity, and justice. He acknowledged the decline in public trust and dignity in Parliament and pledged to restore transparency, accountability, and accessibility. Dissanayake emphasized the rule of law, addressing controversial crimes, and focusing on economic stability through IMF agreements and debt restructuring. Key sectors include tourism, IT, agriculture, fishing, and mining. He also announced social initiatives and a vision for transforming Sri Lanka into a maritime hub (parliament.lk, 2024).

The Secretary General of Parliament, Kushani Rohanadeera, announced that efforts are underway to create a seating arrangement and implement technical adjustments to accommodate Sugath Wasantha de Silva, the country's first-ever vision-impaired Member of Parliament, who was appointed through the National People's Power (NPP) National List (Ada Derana, 2024).

### **Appointment of the Chief Justice**

Justice Murdu Fernando has been appointed as Sri Lanka's new Chief Justice, becoming the second woman in the country's history. Fernando has a distinguished career in the Attorney General's Department, serving as Senior Additional Solicitor General and President's Counsel (Ada Derana, 2024).

## **Human Rights Recommendations for the New Government**

The letter to President Anura Kumara Dissanayake from Human Rights Watch outlines several key human rights issues in Sri Lanka and provides recommendations for the new government. It urges the government to implement progressive tax policies, recover stolen assets, and increase spending on health and education to improve economic, social, and cultural rights. It calls for investigations into enforced disappearances, the reform of the Office of Missing Persons, and accountability for those responsible for past abuses. The letter advocates for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), the release of long-term detainees, and the creation of more humane counterterrorism laws. It also recommends the establishment of a Directorate of Public Prosecutions, pursuing justice for war crimes, and consulting affected communities to build trust. Additionally, it calls for the removal of restrictions on civil society organizations, the protection of human rights defenders, and the reform of the Online Safety Act to safeguard freedom of expression and association. The letter urges the government to investigate arbitrary detentions, torture, and extrajudicial killings, and to end the *Yukthiya Meheyuma* (Operation Justice) campaign, which led to widespread abuses. It also suggests state agencies to cease encroaching on minority religious sites and practices, and that the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act be reformed to protect the rights of women and girls. Furthermore, the letter advocates for the decriminalisation of same-sex relations and the protection of transgender rights, as well as the full decriminalisation of abortion beyond cases of saving a woman's life. Addressing these human rights issues is seen as crucial to creating a lasting positive legacy for the new government (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

## **Implications of Anti-Terrorism Laws**

Manoharan Kajendraroopan from Inuvil West, Chunnakam, has been arrested by the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) under anti-terrorism laws. Kajendraroopan was reportedly detained for uploading a photo of Velupillai Prabhakaran, the leader of the LTTE, on Facebook (Shalin, 2024).

Sasikumar, the former President of the Vedukunaramalai Adilingeswarar Temple in Vavuniya North, and Tamilchelvan, the former Secretary, have been summoned by the Counter-Terrorism Investigation Department (CTID) for interrogation. Sasikumar, an ex-combatant, was specifically asked to bring his rehabilitation documents for the session (Kumanan, 2024).

The Vavuniya High Court has acquitted three Tamil individuals, Periapuliangulatha Seranda, Sirisubramaniam Krisa, and Kanthapu Kayendran who were charged under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) for allegedly possessing claymore mines in December 2019. The

court ruled that the Attorney General's Department failed to provide sufficient evidence to prove their guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, with only a chemical analysis report presented, and no other necessary certificates or evidence (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

### ***Maaveerar Naal* commemorations face intimidation**

The *Maaveerar Naal* event in Thirukovil, Amparai district, took place under tight police surveillance. Authorities recorded vehicle number plates of attendees before allowing entry, which led to frustration among the crowd. A brief confrontation occurred between MP Gajendrakumar Gangaser Ponnambalam and the police when he entered the venue (Shalin, 2024).

The Mannar Magistrate Court rejected the Murunkan Police's application under Section 106 of the Penal Code, which sought a restraining order to prevent *Maaveerar Naal* commemorations in their jurisdiction. A similar case has been filed by Vavuniya police (Uthayarasa, 2024).

### **Plans to compensate patients affected by substandard medicines**

The Personal Secretary to the Minister of Health, Dr Asanga Wickramasinghe, has informed the representatives of the Doctors' Trade Union Alliance for Medical and Civil Rights that the necessary plans to provide compensation to patients affected by substandard medicines are already being implemented legally under the current government (Karunaratne, 2024).

### **Harassment of Religious Groups**

A woman from Waragama, Siyambalanduwa, who claims to heal patients through religious services, was attacked with excrement while taking them to a prayer centre in Ja-Ela. The police intervened and, at the request of the group on the bus, directed them to return to Ja-Ela, the location they were originally headed to for further treatment. Around 200 monks and locals protested near Waragama School, alleging that the women's activities were part of a religious conversion effort. The Buddhist Affairs Coordinator of the Siyambalanduwa Divisional Secretariat, D.M. Sarath promised that a meeting would be held on December 25th to discuss the matter. After this announcement, the protest ended peacefully (Goonathillake, 2024).

## **Controversial Appointments of the New Government**

Sri Lanka's President Anura Kumara Dissanayake appointed Retired General Aruna Jayasekara as Deputy Defence Minister. Jayasekara was involved in a Sri Lankan peacekeeping mission in Haiti from 2004 to 2007, where 134 Sri Lankan peacekeepers were accused of sexually exploiting minors, including children as young as nine (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

## **IMF reaches staff-level agreement on the Third Review under Sri Lanka's Extended Fund Facility Arrangement**

The IMF has reached a staff-level agreement with Sri Lanka for the third review of a 4-year loan arrangement worth about US\$3 billion, approved in March 2023. The agreement is subject to IMF management and Executive Board approval, contingent on actions like the submission of a 2025 budget and progress in debt restructuring. Upon approval, Sri Lanka could receive US\$333 million, bringing total disbursements to US\$1.3 billion. Sri Lanka's economy has shown positive growth (4% annually) with stable inflation. Fiscal reforms have strengthened public finances, and most targets for 2024 have been met. The IMF has stated that the new government is committed to continuing reforms, focusing on fiscal policy, social spending, and inclusive growth. Debt restructuring progress with bondholders is underway, and further restructuring steps are planned. The IMF emphasizes governance reforms to address corruption and foster sustainable growth. The IMF team commended Sri Lanka's collaboration with officials and stakeholders (International Monetary Fund, 2024).

## **Police Brutality and Violation of Prisoners' Rights**

Two officers from the Palaly Police Station are accused of threatening a Tamil woman with intimate photos of her and her boyfriend, demanding a ransom of 1.2 million rupees. The officers allegedly posed as members of a special police unit, identified the woman using the photos, and repeatedly called her with threats of legal action. Fearing for her safety, the woman filed a complaint with the Chunnakam police, leading to the officers' arrest. However, there is scepticism about the potential for a lenient punishment, as this case reflects a broader pattern of police abuse, particularly against Tamils in the North-East (Tamil Guardian, 2024).



The mother and 2-month-old baby were subjected to assault by the police. Source: Tamil Guardian. Source: Tamil Guardian.

A family in Chunnakam, Jaffna, was subjected to an assault at the hands of police officers. The incident occurred after a collision between two motorcycles and the family's vehicle. The family, travelling with a woman and her 2-month-old baby, stopped their vehicle to inspect the damage. Plainclothes officers arrived at the scene and demanded the husband's driving license, which he declined to provide, citing the lack of uniformed traffic officers. This led to an assault on the family. The woman and her husband were beaten, and their child was thrown into a nearby bush. When the woman's brother arrived at the scene to assist, he too was attacked. As the family attempted to seek medical help, officers blocked their path, with one officer threatening to damage their vehicle and assaulting the brother. Subsequently, the Jaffna DIG took steps to suspend four police officers following an investigation conducted by a special police team into the incident. The Police Media Spokesperson's Office stated that a police inspector, a police sergeant, and two police constables from the Chunnakam Police have been suspended (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

A 41-year-old police sergeant from Galkiriyagama has been arrested for abusing a 27-year-old mentally challenged woman who was under legal custody. The incident was discovered when the woman's mother saw her travelling in a three-wheeler. The police sergeant is set to be produced before the Kekirawa Magistrate's Court on charges of abusing a mentally challenged young woman who was under legal custody. (Dinamina, 2024).

A disabled detainee was severely beaten by a guard at the Weerawila Open Prison after requesting painkillers for a headache. The guard ignored his request, verbally abused him, and then attacked him with a club, injuring his left arm. Despite the injury, he was denied treatment for seven days until his condition worsened and he was eventually hospitalised. Tharanga L. Patabedi, the Hambantota District Coordinator of the Right to Life Human Rights Center, condemned the inhumane assault and stated that legal action would be taken to address the abuse (Jayasekara, 2024).

The relatives of a deceased detainee have filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, requesting a fair investigation into the death of a prisoner at Vavuniya Prison due to a brain injury. According to the complaint, the relatives of 45-year-old Manivelpillai Sanjeev Pradeepan, a resident of Mulliyavale, Mullaitivu, were not informed that he was ill or that he had been hospitalised. Pradeepan received treatment at the Vavuniya General Hospital for a week, although it was later announced that he died from a brain injury. His relatives have doubts and stated they cannot accept this explanation. They believe that he may have died as a result of an assault in Vavuniya Prison. The relatives have called for an immediate and fair investigation into the matter, demanding that justice be served to the family and that those responsible be held accountable. The deceased detainee was a father of four and had been held at Vavuniya Prison under a court order for remand, following a trial related to a theft he had committed (Rathugamage, 2024).

A 57-year-old man from Chettikulam, Vavuniya, who was detained at the Vavuniya Remand Prison on charges of abuse, died under mysterious circumstances on November 23rd. He was arrested on November 19th and was due to appear in court on December 3rd. The prison guards handed his body over to Vavuniya Hospital. An investigation is underway, with an autopsy ordered and forensic police involved, to determine if the death was due to foul play or a natural cause (Samugam Media, 2024).



## **Demands of Estate Workers**

Plantation workers have requested the Estate Management Authority to stop collecting monthly membership fees (Rs. 250 to Rs. 330) from them starting in December. They argue that the union leaders, who were recently defeated in the general election, did not deliver benefits even when they were in power. The workers have also stated that the unions are not providing a detailed report of the monthly membership fees paid to them. A large group of workers plans to reject union membership applications for the first half of 2025 (Kumari, 2024).

## **Withdrawal of Military Camps and Police Outposts in the North**

The Sri Lankan Army announced the removal of a military camp in Karkovalam, Jaffna, after nearly 30 years of occupation. The camp, covering three acres was supposed to be returned to its rightful Tamil owners within 14 days. The camp had been operational since 1995, during the armed conflict in the North. There had been ongoing disputes over the land's ownership. The move to dismantle the camp is part of a broader initiative to return lands to Tamils. There were multiple efforts to expand the camp, including in 2021, when landowners and political leaders resisted further annexation and blocked survey efforts. In this context, Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) MP Namal Rajapaksa expressed his concerns over the potential impact on national security by referring to the 30-year conflict between the government of Sri Lanka and Tamil separatist movements (Tamil Guardian, 2024; Rajapaksa, 2024).

The Elephant Pass military-police outpost, located on the Jaffna-Kandy A9 road, was removed after 17 years of operation. Originally established in 1952 and reopened in 2008, the outpost was set up to prevent the smuggling of illegal substances from the South to the North. Its strict checks caused significant inconvenience to travellers. Tamil politicians in the North have expressed their satisfaction with the government's decision to remove the outpost (Rathugamage, 2024).

## **Reforms to the Sri Lanka Police**

The newly appointed Minister of Public Security and Parliamentary Affairs, Ananda Wijepala, outlined plans to reform the Sri Lanka Police, focusing on strengthening its recruitment system. He emphasised the need for a disciplined and law-abiding police force to create a just society and addressed challenges faced by junior officers and public grievances. Minister Wijepala highlighted the importance of proper recruitment to build the necessary manpower for tackling crime, drug trafficking, and underworld activities. He also announced plans to redeploy personnel from presidential and ministerial security units to reinforce the

police force (Ada Derana, 2024).

### **Enforced Disappearances and their Implications**

A Navy Captain was arrested on November 18, 2024, by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in connection with the abduction, unlawful detention, and enforced disappearance of Ganeralalage Shantha Samaraweera, who disappeared 13 years ago in July 2010. Samaraweera, from Vajirawatta, Katupotha, was detained on or around July 26, 2010, and has been missing since. His whereabouts remain unbeknown. The arrest follows earlier arrests, Chief Inspector Saman Kumara Dissanayake, former head of the Alawwa Police Crimes Division. Two police sergeants, A.L. Kumara and R.D.S.B. Rajapaksha. These police officers were released on bail. The CID investigation into Samaraweera's disappearance was initiated after his sister filed a complaint and petitioned the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka. Reports from the International Truth and Justice Project (ITJP) indicate that Samaraweera was held in an underground torture chamber at the Trincomalee Naval Base, where he was allegedly tortured. Another detainee, Basnayaka Mudiyanseleage Wijayakanth, confirmed Samaraweera's detention at the same location. Samaraweera's sister, Lalitha Jayasinghe, filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission (HRC) after her brother's disappearance in 2010. She recounts multiple instances where the police denied holding Samaraweera, even though they later acknowledged his detention. The family was never given any information about legal proceedings or Samaraweera's whereabouts. The case is linked to a broader pattern of enforced disappearances, including the *Trincomalee 11* abduction case, which remains unsolved. The ITJP's Executive Director, Yasmin Sooka, criticized the failure of the justice system, pointing out that many senior naval officers involved in the case have not been questioned and alleged perpetrators have been protected. The ITJP report reveals that the enforced disappearances and torture were part of a systemic pattern involving the Sri Lankan Navy and other military units over many years. This pattern of human rights violations has been largely unaddressed by the authorities (Tamil Guardian, 2024; Weerasinghe, 2024).

### **Call for Justice regarding past crimes against humanity**

A letter from the Frontline Socialist Party has urged the President to take immediate action to investigate and expose crimes against humanity, particularly focusing on the murders, abductions, disappearances, and other atrocities committed during the 1988-89 period, including the death of Rohana Wijeweera. The FSP emphasises the need for justice for these crimes, which were committed using state power, and calls for the full disclosure of the truth behind these events. They also highlight the importance of investigating the large-scale human

rights violations that occurred during the decades-long war in the North, including the end of the war in 2009. The letter stresses that while previous commissions have been formed, what is now needed is to reveal the truth and provide justice, rather than forming new commissions. The FSP offers to support such an investigation and urges the current government to act swiftly on these matters (Mawrata, 2024).

### **The questionable decision to grant bail to a drug trafficker**

The Colombo High Court Judge instructed the Secretary of the Judicial Service Commission to investigate how a person arrested for possessing and trafficking 47.357 grams of Methamphetamine was granted bail by the Nugegoda Magistrate's Court. The prosecution, represented by State Counsel Nishara Jayaratne, argued that under a 2022 law, only the Court of Appeal has the authority to grant bail in such cases, making the release by the magistrate questionable (Abeynayake, 2024).

### **Controversies surrounded by Jaffna MP Archchuna Ramanathan**

A complaint has been filed against Dr Archchuna Ramanathan, a first-time Jaffna District MP, with the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) over controversial statements he made. Civil activist Gunarathne Adikari criticised the MP for suggesting that Sri Lanka's North and East could be a separate state, despite his oath to protect the country's constitution. The Campaign for Free and Fair Elections also condemned his actions, stating they reflect poorly on Parliament (Kaluarachchi, 2023).

Colombo Additional Magistrate has rescinded the arrest warrant for Jaffna MP Archchuna Ramanathan, who did not attend a court hearing concerning a road accident case from 2021. The MP faced allegations of involvement in the incident and purportedly assaulting another driver, leading to significant injuries. An arrest warrant was issued on November 26 due to his nonappearance; however, Ramanathan explained that he was unable to attend the hearing as he was engaged in a Parliament-related event and had overlooked the court date (Divaina Online, 2024).

### **3. Case Updates**

#### **Arjuna Mahendran summoned over 2015 bond scam**

The Colombo Magistrate's Court has summoned former Central Bank of Sri Lanka Governor Arjuna Mahendran to court over the 2015 bond issue. The case, from the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption, claims the issue caused a loss of over Rs. 10 billion. Mahendran allegedly leaked insider information, benefiting his son-in-law's company. He left Sri Lanka in 2016 and has not appeared in court. An international arrest warrant was issued, but extradition efforts from Singapore have been difficult (Daily FT, 2024).

#### **Substandard drugs scandal: Ex-ministers Ramesh, Roshan, Prasanna arrive at CID**

The Maligakanda Magistrate's Court has ordered the recording of statements from 18 former Cabinet Ministers regarding the alleged importation of substandard human immunoglobulin vials. The Attorney General's Department has notified the court that it is necessary to collect statements from 18 individuals, including former President Ranil Wickremesinghe, former Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, and former Ministers Tiran Alles, Mahinda Amaraweera, Wijeyadasa Rajapakse, Harin Fernando, Roshan Ranasinghe, and Nimal Siripala. These individuals were part of the Cabinet that sanctioned the Cabinet paper submitted by former Health Minister Keheliya Rambukwella regarding the importation of the drugs in question (Ada Derana, 2024).

#### **Probe launched into Channel 4's Easter attack allegations**

Sri Lanka's Criminal Investigation Department is investigating a documentary on Sri Lanka's Easter Bombings, aired by Channel 4. The investigation focuses on the spread of controversial information and possible conspiracies related to the bombings, which were filed with the Ministry of Public Security (Ada Derana, 2024; Mawbima, 2024).

#### **Ship owner appeals for Sri Lanka to review case against 'X-Press Pearl' Master - report**

X-Press Feeders has criticized the "bureaucratic and legal obstacles" that have led to significant delays in the situation concerning the X-Press Pearl, a container vessel that experienced a fire in 2021, resulting in one of the most severe environmental disasters in Sri Lanka's history. The captain of the ship has been unable to depart from the island for a duration of 1,280 days (Ada Derana, 2024).

### **Medical certificate issued for former MP Wimal Weerawansa**

The Colombo High Court Judge, Navaratne Marasinghe, issued a notice to Dr Roshan Liyanarachchi to appear in court and present evidence regarding a medical certificate issued for former MP Wimal Weerawansa. Weerawansa did not attend a court hearing on April 18, citing illness, and a medical certificate was presented. The court expressed concern over his repeated absences using illness as an excuse. The High Court emphasised that presenting medical certificates to avoid court hearings could obstruct justice, and ordered the doctor to submit detailed medical documents related to Weerawansa's treatment. When the case was taken up again on December 18, the doctor had not submitted the required documents. The defendant's lawyer, Shavendra Fernando, explained that the doctor had submitted reports to another court. The judge ordered the doctor to appear in person and provide evidence at the next hearing (Jayaweera, 2024).

### **Distribution of compensation for Easter attack victims**

The Attorney General informed the Supreme Court that the Office for Reparations has received a total of Rs. 311 million as compensation for the victims of the Easter Sunday attacks. The information was provided during the hearing of Fundamental Rights (FR) petitions related to the Easter Sunday attacks on December 18, 2024. The Supreme Court ordered the Additional Solicitor General to submit a report detailing how the compensation funds have been disbursed to the victims. The case was heard by a three-member bench consisting of Justices Murdu Fernando, S. Thurairaja, and A.H.M.D. Nawaz. (Ada Derana, 2024).

### **Army holds pooja at an illegally constructed Buddhist temple in Thaiyiddy**

The Army conducted a religious ceremony at the Tissa Raja Vihara, a Buddhist temple that was reportedly built without legal authorization in Thaiyiddy, Jaffna. Tamil protesters, accompanied by the Tamil National People's Front (TNPf), displayed black flags outside the unlawfully erected temple to advocate for the restitution of land that is privately owned by 14 Tamil families but currently occupied by the Sri Lankan army (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

### **Families of the Disappeared continue to demand justice**

Tamil families of the disappeared convened in Trincomalee as the campaigning period for the parliamentary elections came to a close, seeking clarity regarding the whereabouts of

their missing relatives, many of whom were forcibly taken during the conclusion of the armed conflict.



Tamil families of the disappeared gather in Trincomalee to demand justice for their loved ones who were forcibly disappeared. Source: Tamil Guardian.

Despite enduring years of demonstrations, these families have yet to receive any responses, and more than 280 individuals have lost their lives in pursuit of justice. In the lead-up to the elections, the Association for the Families of the Disappeared called upon President Anura Dissanayake to implement genuine measures rather than resorting to hollow electoral pledges (Ada Derana, 2024).



People in Olaithuvadai, Mannar opposing a heavy mineral sand mining project proposed by Titanium Sands Limited. Source: Tamil Guardian.

### **Tamils protesting against sand mining in Mannar**

The Police withdrew a case against Tamil protesters in Mannar against a proposed Australian company's heavy mineral sand mining project. Protesters fear environmental damage and displacement of Tamil communities. Despite these concerns, government organizations support the project, which has been ongoing since 2015. Other controversial developments include wind power, sea cucumber farming, and land acquisitions (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

### **The deadline to return firearms and ammunition**

The Ministry of Defence has extended a deadline for former MPs, provincial councillors, political leaders, and government officers to return firearms issued for personal protection by December 30, 2024. The firearms, including pistols and revolvers, will be surrendered to the nearest police station, with the Police facilitating the return process (Ada Derana, 2024).

### **Petition against the appointment of Deshabandu Tennakoon**

The Sri Lankan Supreme Court has allowed President Anura Kumara Dissanayake to present his stance on the appointment of Deshabandu Tennakoon as the new Inspector General of Police. The hearing is scheduled for February 2025 to address Fundamental Rights petitions, including one filed by Archbishop Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith (Newswire, 2024).

### **President pledges justice for the killing of Thajudeen, Lasantha and Ekneligoda**

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake pledged to investigate and bring justice for Wasim Thajudeen, Lasantha Wickramatunga, and Pradeep Ekneligoda's murders, emphasizing the importance of individual life and creating a safe environment, highlighting the lack of accountability (Siriwardana, 2024).

### **Exiled Tamil journalist's family targeted by Police**

Plainclothes Police have visited the home of exiled Tamil journalist Punniyamoorthy Sasikaran, interrogating his elderly father for over an hour. The interrogation is believed to be linked to a court case involving journalists who reported on a protest against former president Ranil Wickremesinghe. Sasikaran, a well-known Tamil journalist, has long been a target of intimidation due to his reporting on sensitive political issues in Sri Lanka. Faced with persistent threats, Sasikaran was forced to leave the country in order to escape further



danger (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

### **Kuliyapitiya Chief Police Inspector remanded over alleged misuse of authority**

The Kuliyapitiya Additional District Judge has ordered the remand of Kuliyapitiya Headquarters Chief Police Inspector Vajira Indrajith. The officer surrendered to the court in connection with allegations of misconduct during an investigation. The case stems from an incident involving a conflict with the Officer in Charge (OIC) of the Kuliyapitiya Police Divisional Children and Women's Bureau over a family dispute. According to court proceedings, the accused allegedly acted abusively while present at the bureau. Evidence presented by the Senior Superintendent of Police highlighted the Chief Police Inspector's misconduct, while defence lawyers argued that such behaviour was inappropriate for a public official in the given circumstances. The Chief Police Inspector has been remanded until December 22 (Dhanan, 2024).



Kuliyapitiya Headquarters Chief Police Inspector Vajira Indrajith is being placed in remand. Source: Tamil Guardian.

### **Chief Magistrate criticises CID for Procedural Failures in Arjun Aloysius case**

The Chief Magistrate criticised the CID for failing to follow proper legal procedures in the case against Arjun Aloysius. When the suspect was brought to court, the CID did not submit a B report, provide additional documentation or make a proper oral presentation. Later, the CID filed a motion to record a statement from the suspect inside prison after he had already been granted bail and was no longer present in court. This was seen as a serious procedural lapse. The CID apologized for the mistakes, but the Magistrate found the apology insufficient given the seriousness of the errors and stressed the importance of the CID acting more responsibly in handling such cases (Ananda, 2024).

### **Vavuniya High Court Orders Release of Three Tamil Suspects Detained Under PTA**

Three Tamil suspects, arrested and detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) in 2019 for possessing six claymore bombs, were acquitted and released by the Vavuniya High Court. The Judge ordered their release, citing that the case was not being properly pursued by the Attorney General's Department. The suspects Sirisubramaniam Krisa, Kandappu Gajendran, and Kakaisingham Kandaruban had been granted bail earlier and were ultimately acquitted and released (Rathugamage, 2024).

### **Muslim Marriage Law reforms**

Minister Vijitha Herath, serving as the Cabinet Spokesperson, affirmed that the government has not decided to modify the Muslim Marriage Act or any other religious legislation. He underscored that any potential legal reforms will occur only following discussions with religious leaders (Gamage, 2024).

Later on, 18 Muslim civil society organisations and 135 civil citizens jointly sent an open letter to the President and the Prime Minister calling for them to declare their position on the amendment to the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act before the general election. The letter states that the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act, which includes the 'Kathi System', is a violation of Article 12 of the Constitution. It further states that since the 'card system' is maintained by taxpayers' money, it is the government's responsibility to address this issue. Also highlighted that the President was voted for based on the belief that he would bring about structural changes through constitutional reforms and amend all laws that discriminate against women, children, and the marginalized (Fernando, 2024).

### **Court exonerates Dr Shafi of all charges**

The Kurunegala Magistrate's Court has acquitted Senior House Officer Dr. Shafi Shihabdeen of charges related to his 2019 arrest, including unauthorised sterilisation surgeries, illicit wealth amassing, and terrorist links, following insufficient evidence and the Attorney General's advice (Daily FT, 2024).

In 2019, he was arrested after allegations from patients at the Kurunegala and Dambulla hospitals claimed complications from his treatments, including infertility following caesarean deliveries (The Morning, 2024).

### **Dr Shafi files a complaint against false charges**

Dr Shafi Sihabdeen, a doctor at Kurunegala Teaching Hospital, has filed a complaint with the Ministry of Public Security about his 2019 arrest and detention, alleging false allegations for political reasons. He claims the accusations were part of a conspiracy to create community discord. After his acquittal, Dr Sihabdeen is seeking accountability for the false accusations and aims to prevent similar injustices in the future (Ada Derana, 2024; Fernando, 2024).

### **Court calls for a progress report on investigations into the death of *Makandure Madush***

Colombo Magistrate's Court seeks to transfer investigations into Makandure Madush's death, allegedly due to a crossfire between police and suspected underworld figures, to the Criminal Investigations Department (Ada Derana, 2024).

### **Easter attacks: SC orders to recall defence over acquittal of ex-IGP and Defense Secretary**

The Supreme Court has ordered the High Court to summon former Police Inspector General Pujith Jayasundara and Defense Secretary Hemasiri Fernando after they were acquitted in a case related to the 2019 Easter Sunday terrorist attacks. The court ruled that the High Court erred in acquitting the defendants without calling their defence counsel (Ada Derana, 2024; Divaina Online, 2024; Medagedara, 2024).

### **Case of clashes in the Magazine Prison in 2012**

The Colombo High Court granted anticipatory bail to 24 of 43 defendants in a 2012 case involving an illegal assembly, damaging prison property, and assaulting Nihal Gunawardena. The defendants were ordered to pay Rs. 300,000 in compensation and Rs. 52.4 million for prison damage, with mandatory prison sentences for non-payment. Two defendants evading court proceedings and two others not pleading guilty will continue legal action (Ada Derana, 2024; Jayaweera, 2024; Mawbima, 2024).

### **Johnston Fernando's writ petition withdrawn**

Former Minister Johnston Fernando withdrew a writ petition related to an unregistered BMW car found at a Colombo hotel, stating he had already been granted bail. The Appellate Court accepted the withdrawal and dismissed the case (Ada Derana, 2024).

### **Johnston Fernando gets released on bail in Sathosa employee case**

The Colombo High Court recalled the arrest warrant issued against former Minister Johnston Fernando after he appeared in court. The warrant had been issued on October 23 for his failure to attend a previous hearing related to a corruption case filed by the Bribery Commission. Fernando's defence explained he had missed the hearing to give a statement to the CID, as part of an undertaking to the Court of Appeal. The court granted him bail with a cash amount of Rs. 25,000 and a surety of one million rupees. The case involves allegations that Fernando, along with former CWE Chairman Eraj Fernando and his Private Secretary Raj Mohideen Mohammad Sakeer, caused a loss to the government by using *Sathosa* employees for election work (Nanayakkara, 2024).

### **Court orders probe false report on President published online during the election**

The Colombo Magistrate's Court has ordered the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to investigate a false report published online during the recent presidential election, which falsely claimed that incumbent President Anura Kumara Dissanayake was in poor health. Attorney-at-Law Sunil Watagala filed the complaint, prompting the CID to look into the matter, with officials confirming that the investigation is ongoing. The court instructed the CID to arrest the suspects and present them in court (Abeynayake, 2024; Ada Derana, 2024).

## 4. Election Situation

### Election Results

The NPP secured a two-thirds parliamentary majority. Their vote share increased from 42.3% in the presidential election to 61.56%, gaining 159 seats (Wedagedara & Jayasinghe, 2024). The NPP secured a total of 159 seats, comprising 141 district seats and 18 National List seats, thereby becoming the first political party in Sri Lanka to achieve a two-thirds majority through the proportional representation system. The NPP triumphed in 21 out of 22 electoral districts. Notably, a historic total of 21 female Members of Parliament were elected, with 19 of them representing the NPP, signifying a substantial advancement in women's representation. Meanwhile, Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) becomes the main opposition party of the tenth Parliament after polling over 1.9 million votes (17.66%) and thereby obtaining 40 seats including 5 bonus seats (Ada Derana, 2024).

Each of the political parties listed below has obtained a single seat in the recent election: Sri Lanka Labour Party, Jaffna - Independent Group 17, All Ceylon Makkal Congress, All Ceylon Tamil Congress, Democratic Tamil National Alliance, United National Party, and Sarvajana Balaya (Election Commission of Sri Lanka, 2024).

### Violation and Abuse of Election Law

The election campaign period was largely uneventful, primarily due to the exhaustion and resource limitations experienced by candidates, supporters and their respective parties or coalitions, and their supporters (Liyanage, 2024). However, voter turnout was lower than in previous elections, ranging between 60-65% (People's Action for Free and Fair Elections, 2024).

General election day was generally peaceful, there were 310 incidents of varying severity reported across Sri Lanka. The highest number of complaints came from the Western (85), Uva (42), Central (37), Southern (37), and North Western (37) provinces. Specific districts with less secure voting environments included Gampaha (52), Badulla (26), Matara (22), Puttalam (19), Kandy (18), and Kurunegala (18) (Liyanage, 2024).

PAFFREL documented a total of 223 complaints, primarily concerning unlawful election propaganda and efforts to sway voters. Reports of violence and intimidation were noted, especially in regions such as Mahiyanganaya and Kotapola (People's Action for Free and Fair Elections, 2024).

The Center for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) has observed a notable escalation in severe election-related violations, with incidents more than doubling from the presidential election, which recorded 125 incidents, to the parliamentary election, which saw 290 incidents. This increase transpired despite a reduced campaign duration and diminished participation from voters, candidates, and their supporters. Furthermore, the total number of incidents during the parliamentary election reached 2,189, representing more than two and a half times the number recorded during the presidential election (Centre for Monitoring Election Violence, 2024).

<b>Source</b>	<b>Complaints of Violence (Serious Incidents)</b>	<b>Legal Violations (All other incidents)</b>	<b>Total Complaints Received</b>
Election Commission	22	3337	3359
CMEV	290	1899	2189

Source: CMEV, 2024

Over 100 high-level government appointments violated election regulations, and salary increases and special allowances raised concerns about undue influence and bribery, prompting calls for clearer guidelines from the Election Commission (Centre for Monitoring Election Violence, 2024).

Polling cards were unlawfully obtained from post offices in places like Kalkudah, Batticaloa, depriving lawful voters of their rights and raising concerns about impersonation (Centre for Monitoring Election Violence, 2024).

There was a lot of physical and online animosity directed at female candidates. Sasikala Raviraj, one of the candidates, was the target of harassment and attacks. Additionally, the Prime Minister was subjected to ongoing harassment on social media based on her gender, which brought attention to the larger problem of women's delegitimation in politics (Centre for Monitoring Election Violence, 2024).

A strong sense of majoritarianism dominated the political discourse during the election period, frequently ignoring the concerns and voices of marginalized and minority groups. The systematic exclusion of diverse voices from the political sphere was reflected in the media's scant coverage of women (just 7% of news coverage) (Centre for Monitoring Election Violence, 2024).

The CMEV has been advocating for the Election Commission to enhance provisions for voters with special needs and disabilities. It has highlighted the necessity of relocating polling stations

that are not accessible to the elderly and those with health issues, as well as replacing unsuitable venues, such as places of worship, as previously committed. Furthermore, the CMEV is urging legal reforms to enable citizens employed overseas and individuals with demanding work schedules to participate in elections, thereby addressing antiquated and inflexible regulations (Liyanage, 2024).

Violence in elections includes severe harm, physical assault, targeted arrests, threats, intimidation, and unlawful inducements, including private transportation and financial incentives offered by candidates and their supporters (Liyanage, 2024).



## 5. Repression of Media and Journalists

### A Tamil journalist in Bogawantalawa has been attacked

A Tamil journalist, S. Satheeskumar has been attacked with a sharp weapon while covering the 2024 parliamentary elections in Bogawantalawa. He suffered head injuries and was hospitalised at Dickoya Hospital. Satheeskumar alleges the attacker, reportedly intoxicated, is a supporter of a United Democratic Voice candidate in Nuwara Eliya. An official police complaint has been filed (Uthayarasa, 2024).



Tamil journalist S. Satheeskumar is taking treatments in Dikoya hospital. Source: <https://x.com/uthayashalin/>

## 6. Repression of Freedom of assembly and association

### Trade union actions that inconvenience the public will not be allowed

Cabinet Minister Vijitha Herath emphasised that no trade union actions causing public inconvenience for political reasons would be allowed. He was responding to a planned strike by railway station masters, and accused them of acting based on political motives. The Minister acknowledged ongoing promotions and recruitment issues in the railway sector but assured solutions after parliamentary elections, emphasizing people's mandate to alleviate economic pressures and avoid political exploitation (Perera, 2024).

### *Maaveerar Naal* Commemorations



The Minister of Public Security and Parliamentary Affairs, Ananda Wijepala. Making a statement on *Maaveerar Naal* at the parliament. Source: Ada Derana

The Minister of Public Security and Parliamentary Affairs, Ananda Wijepala, emphasised that honoring the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) organization is not permitted, given that the LTTE continues to be classified as a prohibited organisation in Sri Lanka. He clarified that while individuals in the Northern Province can remember their deceased relatives, they are not allowed to hold events celebrating or glorifying LTTE members, nor can they display LTTE symbols or images (Ada Derana, 2024). The prohibition on memorial events, particularly the *Maaveerar Naal* (Great Heroes' Day) traditionally featuring fallen

fighter photographs, has been resisted, with some families have reportedly displayed their loved ones, despite police harassment and disruptions (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

### **Prabhakaran's birthday celebration**



Police officers present at the event, monitoring the celebration of Velupillai Prabhakaran's birthday. Source: Tamil Guardian

The Police instructed the removal of Velupillai Prabhakaran's photograph from a banner at his childhood home in Valvettithurai, where Tamils were marking his 70th birthday. Despite the challenges, attendees, including former Northern Provincial Councillor M Shivajilingham and local residents, continued their celebration. Followed by, at least, six people being interrogated by the Police over this celebration (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

## 7. Other

### **Upcountry Tamil drama group faces threats from Sri Lankan Army and CID**

The Theatermates drama group of the Malayaga Tamil community has allegedly faced harassment and intimidation at the hands of individuals that falsely claim to be linked to the Army and Criminal Investigation Department (CID). The group has filed official complaints with the Bogawantalawa Police regarding these threats, including visits from CID officers and army personnel investigating their members (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

The group has faced harassment, including an incident in February 2024 where a Samurdhi officer claimed to represent the CID. Bogawantalawa Police are investigating the officer's actions. They filed a complaint with the HRCL in 2023 but have not received any action (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

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