

# Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka

August 2014



A mob led by Buddhist Monks, which invaded the meeting of families of the disappeared on 14 August in Colombo. They shouted hateful slogans, made unfounded accusations, and behaved threateningly towards the families of the disappeared. (© Malani Manel Perera)

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## Issues Covered

- A. **Death Threats, harassment, intimidation and restrictions of those who have and could criticize and challenge the government**
- B. **Interrogation of human rights defenders**
- C. **Violations of Freedom of Expression**
- D. **Violations of Freedom of Assembly**
- E. **Violations of Freedom of Association (Intimidation & Restrictions on NGOs)**
- F. **Repression of Student Activists**
- G. **Repression of Opposition Political Parties**

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

## Summary:

August 30<sup>th</sup> is the International Day of victims of Enforced Disappearances, but in Sri Lanka, it was a month when families of disappeared persons and those supporting them faced threats, intimidations, restrictions and false accusations by Buddhist Monks led mobs, Police and the state media. Police blocked a peaceful march on the International Day of victims of Enforced Disappearances in the Northern town of Vavuniya. Tamil families of disappeared in Mannar were intimidated, urging them not to testify to the Presidential Commission looking into Missing Persons. At the beginning of August, a Buddhist Monk led mob stormed a private meeting of families disappeared persons at a Church run centre in Colombo. The organizers called the Police, but the Police refused to guarantee security for the meeting and participants. The Police insisted that the meeting be stopped and participants from North are sent home. Initially, the Police also refused to disperse the mob, and only did so at the strong insistence of the organizers and participants. This event led to a chain of events, with Sinhalese newspapers and the mob making a variety of false allegations against participants and organizers, including accusing them of being linked to terrorism. One of the human rights defenders present, Rev. Fr. Sathivel, faced a series of threatening incidents. The Ministry of External Affairs warned diplomats about attending such events, but didn't condemn the disruption of the meeting by the Buddhist Monk led mob.

A Deputy Inspector General of Police who had refused to release suspects of anti-Muslim riots in June 2014 faced death threats. A school teacher who had filed a lawsuit against a government politician also faced death threats. A Tamil Provincial Councillor from the North, who had been prominent in human rights campaigns, also complained about surveillance and threats.

Freedom of Expression has continued to be violated. A Tamil journalist in Vavuniya received death threats, and the Coordinator of the Jaffna Press Club was interrogated by the Police and accused of being a part of the LTTE by Sinhalese newspaper. An Indian academic-activist attending an international symposium on post war developments was also interrogated, and was detained when he tried to visit the Eastern Province prior to the symposium. There were reports of Muslim journalists being branded as "anti-Sinhalese and anti-Buddhist Jihadists. A New York Times reporter complained that his visa had been put on hold since June. Journalists were prevented from covering court hearings when the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence was being cross examined. An inquiry was ordered for singing the National Anthem in Tamil at a school in Colombo.

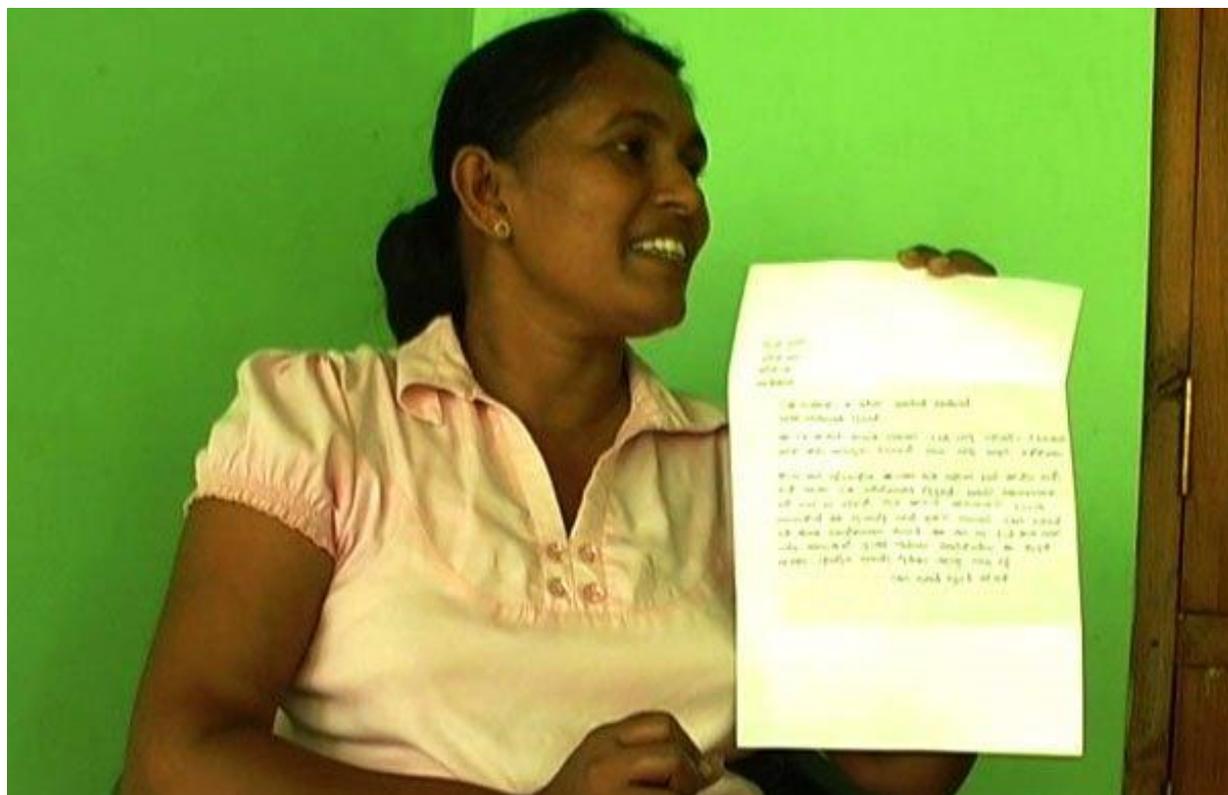
Freedom of Assembly and Association was also under attack. The National Peace Council (NPC) reported that 4 inter-religious reconciliation events were subjected to surveillance. Two events of the NPC in Southern and Central Provinces were subjected to monitoring by Police and two events in the East by the Military. Trade Union meetings and actions also faced obstacles. Senior government officials said NGOs pose a threat to security and that new laws will be brought into monitor and control foundations and non-profit organizations.

Student activists were arrested and suspended in two universities. When student activists protested against the arrest and detention of two Tamil university students under anti-terror laws (one was arrested after he had been injured during an assault by a mob), the Minister for Higher Education accused the main Student Union of inciting racial disharmony. Opposition political parties faced continuous and systematic intimidation and attacks in the lead up to the Uva Provincial Council elections.

In a number of incidents, Police, Military, and government politicians appeared to be directly responsible in repressing dissent. When dissent was being crushed by non-state parties, the Police appeared to side with the perpetrators, rather than enforce the law.

## A. Death Threats, Harassment, Intimidation and Restrictions of Those Who Have and Could Criticize and Challenge the Government

### 1. Death threat to a teacher who filed a lawsuit against a government politician



Susila Herath, a school teacher of Navagattegama Navodya Vidyalaya showing the death threatening letter she received (Photo: Ada Derana)

Mrs. Susila Herath, a school teacher of Navagattegama Navodya Vidyalaya who won a lawsuit against ex-Provincial Council member Ananda Sarath Kumara (from the ruling party – United Peoples Freedom Alliance - UPFA), had reported received a letter threatening to rape and kill her on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2014. Mrs. Herath has told media that the lives of her and her family members are now in danger with the posted letter she received. “I killed the witness...I will rape and kill you. You ruined my political career....,” the letter was reported to have said.

<http://www.adaderana.lk/news/-death-threat-on-navagattegama-teacher> (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

### 2. Threats and harassment to Tamil Councillors in North

Northern Provincial Councillor, Ms Ananthi Sasitharan, has lodged a complaint with Vaddukkoaddai Police complaining that white van (vehicles believed to be responsible for abductions) and motorbike squads were chasing her round the clock, monitoring all her movements. The Police was reported to have said that that there were no reports of white van or motorbike squads in the area where she resides. It was also reported that the Defence Ministry was behind the recent withdrawal of police protection that was provided to some of Northern Provincial Council (NPC) members, according to NPC Chairman Mr. C. V. K. Sivagnanam.

<http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=79&artid=37330> (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

### 3. Threats to Tamil families of disappeared persons around Mannar

According to media reports, Sri Lankan Police and Intelligence operatives of the Military in Mannar (Northern Sri Lanka) had threatened and harassed the relatives and families of missing persons, who wanted to appear in front of the Sri Lankan Presidential Commission on Missing Persons, when it held hearings between 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> August in the Mannar district. The Chairman of Mannar Citizens Committee had told media that Sri Lankan military intelligence officers had even gone to the extent of telling the people that there will be no use in appearing in front of the Commission.

<http://tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=37339> (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

### 4. Following of Bar Association president by intelligence officers

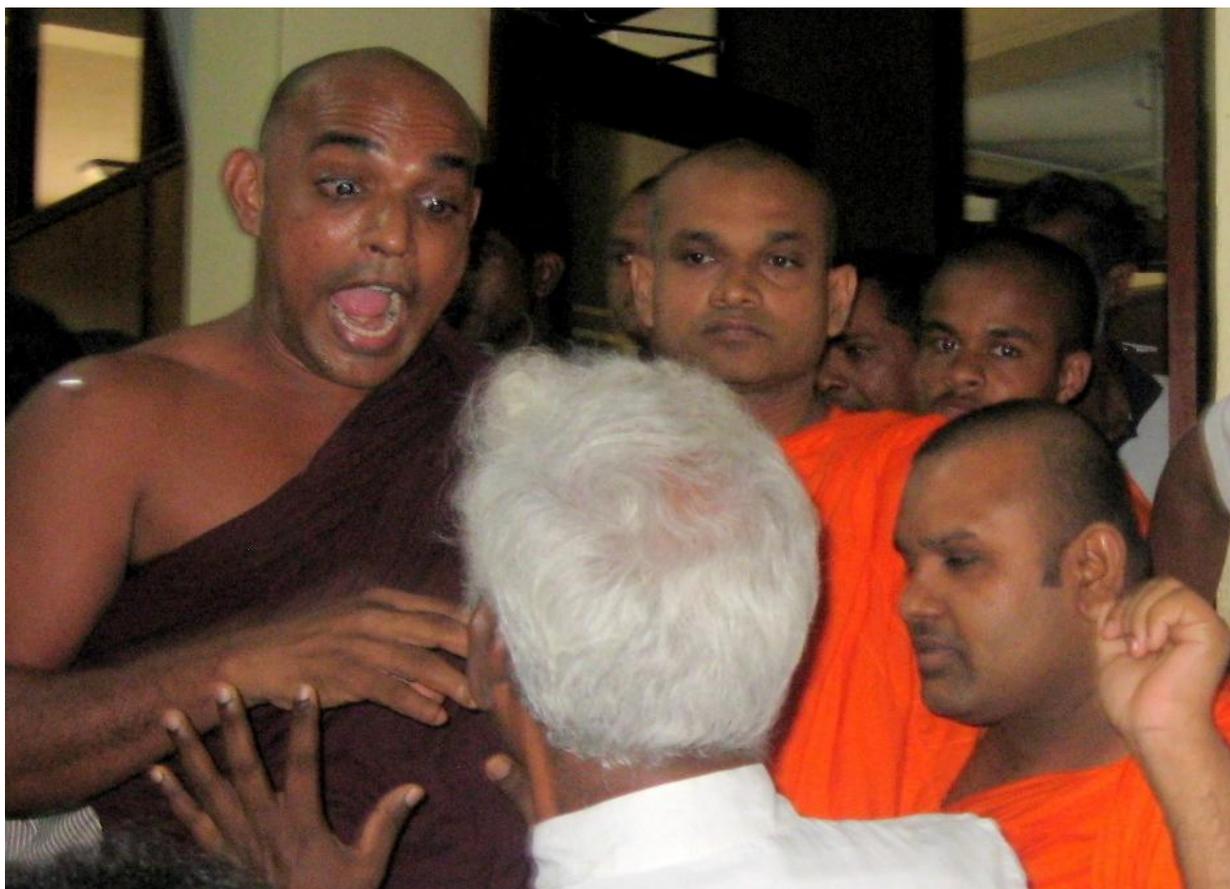
When the case of the security of Mr. Upul Jayasuriya, President of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka, was taken up in courts, Western Province Senior Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG), Mr. Anura Senanayake had told the court that intelligence officers had been deployed to ensure the security Mr. Jayasuriya. Lawyers who appeared on behalf of Jayasuriya urged the Police to reveal their identity, in order to clear misunderstandings over the matter.

<http://www.asianmirror.lk/news/item/2649-senior-dig-says-27-intelligence-officers-are-behind-basl-president>

(Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

### 5. Intimidation of activist priest

Rev. Fr. Sathivel, a Tamil Anglican Priest and a well-known human rights defender, faced a series of suspicious and intimidatory incidents in August 2014. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of August, while Fr. Sathivel was travelling by bus from Colombo to his Church in Weyangoda, a man got into the bus and sat next to Fr. Sathivel although there were plenty of vacant seats in that bus. Later he started to intimidate Fr. Sathivel by pressuring him, making his hand hit Fr. Sathivel's body etc. Fr. Sathivel realized that this is an attempt to provoke him and moved on to a next seat. When the bus stopped in a bus halt, Fr. Sathivel got off from that bus and took a different bus to go to Weyangoda. Fr. Sathivel was told by a Church member that she had seen couple of suspicious men waking in the church premises on that day. Another person had reported that on 9<sup>th</sup> August night, when he was in the washroom at the church around 8pm, someone had tried to video him from a mobile phone. On 14<sup>th</sup> August, a white van with fully tinted windows (this type of vans are known to be responsible for abductions) was noticed to have been parked in front of the church gate, and when another Priest had gone closer to it, the van had sped away. On 16<sup>th</sup> August, Fr. Sathivel had gone to his Church in Weyanogada to discuss the nature and danger of the government's recently proposed 'Seed and Plantation Act' with the farmers. But he was asked to go back to Colombo by his superiors, who had received news that Fr. Sathivel maybe subjected to some harm. On 22<sup>nd</sup> August, when Fr. Sathivel had gone jogging in the morning around 6 o'clock at Viharamahadevi Park in Colombo, an army soldier had videoed Fr. Sathivel for about 3 minutes time by his phone. These threats had come after Fr. Sathivel was accused of having being chased away from his Church and that he has no place to stay, by a Buddhist Monk who had led mobs to invade a meeting of Tamil families of disappeared persons in Colombo on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2014. Fr. Sathivel was also at the meeting, and took a leading role in stopping the mob from entering to the meeting room. He had demanded for the Police to remove the mob from the premises.



Buddhist Monks shouted at Fr. Sathivel at CSR meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2014 (© Melani Manel Perera)

#### **6. False allegations against families of disappeared and anti-disappearance activists**

After the “Dead and Missing Person’s Parents Front” had disrupted a meeting of Tamil families of disappeared from the North on 4<sup>th</sup> August, the next day (5<sup>th</sup> August), they held a press conference, making false allegations and discrediting families of disappeared and anti-disappearance activists. Most of the persons mentioned – Bishop Rayappu Joseph (Catholic Bishop of Mannar), Fr. Sebamalei (President of the Mannar Citizens Committee), Fr. Sathivel, Dr. Nimalka Fernando, Brito Fernando and Ruki Fernando – are persons who have been supporting families of disappeared persons in their struggles for truth and justice. Amongst the allegations made were:

- Nimalka Fernando and Brito Fernando are amongst those who had worked against the sovereignty of the country;
- Ruki Fernando had recently given protection to LTTE cadres who were spearheading the re-emergence of the LTTE in the country;
- Fr. M. Sathivel has been driven out from the Christian Church and has no place to stay and that he had tried to assault some of the Buddhist monks at CSR and that he was mainly responsible for the situation to get heated;
- The Peratugami political party has, from its inception been pro-LTTE and pro-Tamil diaspora;
- Bishop Rajappu Joseph has supported the LTTE for decades and that he and his assistant Fr. Sebamalei were involved in coordinating these events and sending people to attend such events;
- Lawyer J. C. Weliamuna is a traitor that always betrays his profession.

The Buddhist Monk also demanded that all the participants from the North should be questioned.

<http://groundviews.org/2014/08/07/mob-disrupts-meeting-of-families-of-disappeared-police-government-hound-participants/>

(Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

### **7. “Shoot human rights defenders and throw them for the foxes to eat” – newspaper article**

In a hard hitting article, the Sinhala language daily Divaina of 10<sup>th</sup> August 2014 had said that NGO buffoons who have “jackal mentality” should be shot and throw to the forest for the foxes to eat”. It further said that "this wretched group have pasted a 'Human rights activist' label on the loin cloth meant to cover their nakedness and hung it round their necks. The naked foolery played by them as Non-Governmental Organizations with an eye on foreign dollar bags should not be taken lightly." The article accused Mr. Dayabaran, the Coordinator of the Jaffna Press Club, of being a terrorist. It also accused him of being responsible for a bombing incident which killed 5 persons (the Jaffna Press Club had co-organized a training for Tamil journalists in July 2014, which was disrupted by a mob. They issued public statements about the situation of freedom of expression in Jaffna and the North). The article also focused on discrediting human rights defender Dr. (Ms.) Nimalka Fernando and accused several other human rights defenders such as Attorney-at-Law J. C. Weliamuna, Ruki Fernando, Britto Fernando and Fr. Sathayavail of sending information to Geneva. The article further accused the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights of being honoured by LTTE terrorists and the American Centre, American Embassy and some other embassies in Colombo of working to topple the Rajapakse government by giving money “dollars” to NGOs.

<http://srilankabrief.org/2014/08/sri-lanka-shoot-ngo-traitors-and-throw-them-foxes-to-eat/> (English translation of the Sinhalese article) Original article in Sinhalese available at

<http://www.divaina.com/2014/08/10/feature21.html> (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

### **8. Media training aimed at discrediting the country – newspaper**

A news item in the Sinhalese daily newspaper “Rivira” on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014, reported that the Collective to build National Harmony had alleged that media trainings in Jaffna are organized by the Tamil diaspora and that foreign embassies are supporting these, in order to get Tamil youth to discredit Sri Lanka by sending information about human rights violations to foreign countries. The news item also alleged that Mr. Dayabaran (Coordinator of the Jaffna Press Club), who had attended such events was a member of the “Tigers” (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam – LTTE) and that he had worked for websites of the “Tigers”.

<http://www.rivira.lk/epaper/daily/fri/2014/08/01/index.html#3/z> (Sinhalese) (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

### **9. Warning to diplomats from the Ministry of External Affairs and a Buddhist Monk**

Several diplomats had attended the meeting with Northern Tamil families of disappeared in Colombo on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2014, which was disrupted by a Buddhist Monk led mob. Several of the embassies issued public statements condemning the incident. In an official press release, the Sri Lankan Ministry of External Affairs refrained from condemning the incident, but accused certain sections of the diplomatic community of being “involved in a manner lacking objectivity in events organized for a particular region or community” which

has led to “potentially volatile situations giving rise to perpetuation of mistrust amongst communities at a sensitive juncture in the country’s history”. The Ministry appeared to be warning the diplomatic community not to support victims of human rights violations and human rights defenders, saying “The Ministry wish to urge the diplomatic community to be more conscious of local sensitivities when attending events of an emotive nature”. A Buddhist Monk that led the mob that stormed the meeting demanded that the diplomats present should be questioned.

<http://www.mea.gov.lk/index.php/en/component/content/article/1-latest-news/5065-external-affairs-ministry-statement-on-the-meeting-at-csr-on-4th-august> (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

<http://groundviews.org/2014/08/07/mob-disrupts-meeting-of-families-of-disappeared-police-government-hound-participants/>  
(Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)



## 10. Extremist Buddhist groups oppose Pope’s visit

Pope Francis is scheduled to visit Sri Lanka in January 2015, and some extremist Buddhist groups have voiced opposition. This is believed to be due to the possibility that the Pope may show solidarity with victims of human rights violations, and express concerns about human rights situation in the country, including killings, disappearances, threats and attacks on Catholic leaders active in human rights work.

<http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/world-news/detail/articolo/sri-lanka-sri-lanka-sri-lanka-35681/>

(Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

## 11. Death threats to Senior Police officer for not releasing riot suspects

BBC Sinhala service reported that Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG), Mr. V. Indran, who had refused to release the 13 Sinhalese suspects arrested over the Aluthgama anti- Muslim riots in June 2014, was facing serious threats to his life. DIG V. Indran who was in in-charge of Kalutara and Panadura Police areas was transferred with immediate effect as the DIG in-charge of welfare activities at Police headquarters in early August, after the riots.

<http://srilankabrief.org/2014/08/dig-who-opposed-releasing-anti-muslim-rioters-received-death-threats/>

(Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

## 12. Intimidation of two prominent human rights defenders through a poster campaign

Posters for selling puppies were pasted near the Fort Railway Station area which included contact numbers of two prominent Human Rights Defenders, Dr. (Ms.) Nimalka Fernando and Mr. Sunil Jayasekara. Dr. Nimalka Fernando is the President of Japan based International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) and Mr. Jayasekara is the Convener of the media freedom watch dog, the Free Media Movement. Both are well known and outspoken human rights defenders in Sri Lanka and both of them have come under numerous threats and discrediting campaigns in recent times for their activism.

<http://srilankabrief.org/2014/08/puppies-for-sale-poster-campaign-to-intimidate-hrds/> (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)



Mobile Phone number of two HRDs Nimalka Fernando and Sunil Jayasekara were given in a poster for selling puppies  
(Photo: SriLanka Brief)

## B. Interrogation of Human Rights Defenders

### 13. Interrogation of participant of an international symposium on Post War developments

The Terrorist Investigation Department (TID) of the Police had detained and interrogated an Indian academic – activist who was visiting the Batticaloa district in the Eastern Province. He was first stopped on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2014, when he was visiting a village and he was again questioned on 29<sup>th</sup> August in Batticaloa and then brought to Colombo and questioned till 30<sup>th</sup> August. The academic had come to attend a Symposium on Post War developments and had an official visa for this and had visited Batticaloa to learn about Post War realities before the symposium. A local activist who was assisting him in Batticaloa was also visited at his house and questioned by Police officers about his work.

### 14. Interrogation of the Coordinator of the Jaffna Press Club

On 4<sup>th</sup> August 2014, Mr. Dayabaran, the Coordinator of the Jaffna Press Club was questioned by the Defence Ministry officials. The Jaffna Press Club and Mr Dayabaran had been instrumental in organizing a

training for a workshop for Tamil journalists in Colombo during July 2014, which had to be cancelled due to threats by a mob. Mr Dayabaran had also been involved in organizing a protest against these mob threats in Jaffna. The issues he was questioned regarding included:

- The cancelled media workshop in Colombo
- An incident at a Military checkpoint where he and other journalists were stopped by the Military and Police
- The protest for media freedom held in Jaffna on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2014
- A bomb blast that had happened in Jaffna in 1998

## C. Violations of Freedom of Expression

### 15. Six journalists named as Jihadists

Media has reported about an unnamed email “doing the rounds”, naming six journalists in Sri Lanka as “anti-Sinhala and anti-Buddhist Jihadists”, posing themselves as “respectable journalists and writers”. All the journalists named are reported to be Muslims, and includes female journalists working for leading English newspapers “Daily Mirror” and “Ceylon Today” and a lawyer. The media report claimed the email has alleged that “they (the journalists) are hiding uncomfortable truths and uttering lies they even go to the length of taking upon the role of Kangaroo Court judges, passing judgment on Sinhala people, Buddhists and the organizations that represent the Sinhalese and Buddhists and their leaders. The methodology adopted by these people is to let only the things they desire of to go to the people, repeat it often so that it becomes a truth (reinforcement through repetition is the notorious propaganda method employed by Nazi Media minister Joseph Gobbels very successfully...”

<http://www.nation.lk/edition/lens/item/31677-the-jihadi-journalists-of-sri-lanka.html> (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

### 16. Death threat against Tamil journalist in Vavuniya

According to media reports, death threats were issued via telephone to a journalist in Vavuniya, Mr. Navarathinam Kapilanath, on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2014. The call gave a warning that he would be killed, as well as fellow journalists based in Jaffna. “You do not know us. Do you not wish to live after complaining about us to the police”, the anonymous caller told Kapilanath after he said he would file a complaint with the police.

<http://www.tamilguardian.com/print.asp?articleid=11724>

(Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)



Navarathinam Kapilanath  
(Face book photo)

### 17. Visa on hold for New York Times journalist

A media report of 24<sup>th</sup> August 2014 said that a spokesperson at the External Affairs Ministry had confirmed that a request for visa by the South Asia Correspondent for The New York Times, Gardiner Harris, had been put on hold. Mr Harris has applied to visit Sri Lanka to report on some local incidents including incidents related to Aluthgama (where anti-Muslim riots took place in June 2014). The reason given by the

spokesperson was that “the time is not conducive to approve his visit”. Gardiner had tweeted that he had applied for the visa in June 2014.

<http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2014/08/24/visa-on-hold-for-us-journo/> (Last accessed on 14th Sep 2014)

### **18. Inquiry for singing the National Anthem in Tamil**

Colombo Divisional Secretary has sent a letter to the Colombo Regional Education Director ordering an inquiry and to take necessary steps, after the National Anthem was reported to have been sung in Tamil at the Dematagoda Vipulananda Tamil School. According to Ceylon Teachers' Union (CTU), the singing of the National Anthem has been raised at the area Civil Defence Committee. CTU requested the Minister for National Integration to take steps to stop harassing Tamil school principles for singing the National Anthem in Tamil. The CTU has pointed out that both Sinhalese and Tamil are official languages in Sri Lanka, that Tamil version of the National Anthem is in the constitution and that it has been the practice of the Tamil schools to sing the National Anthem in Tamil.

<http://sinhala.lankanewsweb.net/news/13578-2014-08-24-09-21-41> (Sinhalese) (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

### **19. Press barred from covering court proceedings**

Police sealed off the Mount Lavinia District court to media personnel once again, when the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence (and brother of the President), Mr. Gotabhaya Rajapaksa took the stand. Mr Rajapaksa was there for cross examination, in a defamation suit filed by Mr. Rajapaksa against The Sunday Leader newspaper over an article that exposed details regarding the controversial purchase of MiG 29 by the Ministry of Defence in 2007. Court proceedings are open to the public and media routinely attend courts and cover such hearings. A similar incident had happened In May 2014, when Mr. Rajapakse had testified before on the same case.

<https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/press-barred-again-from-covering-gotabayas-cross-examination-in-court/>

(Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

## **D. Violations of Freedom of Assembly**

### **20. Buddhist Monks led mob invades gathering of the families of the disappeared**

A Buddhist Monk led mob, which later identified themselves as “Dead and Missing Person’s Parents Front” stormed a meeting of Tamil families of the disappeared from the Northern Province, compelling the meeting to be stopped. Although the Police were called, the Police refused to guarantee security for the meeting and participants. The Police initially refused to disperse the invading mob and only did so on insistence of participants and organizers of the meeting. The mob had also hurled abuse and false allegations at the organizers and participants of the meeting, labelling them as LTTE (terrorist) supporters trying to discredit the Government by supporting an international war crimes inquiry. A Buddhist Monk who was in the mob which invaded the CSR gathering asserted that all the families that had come were those of LTTE members who had been killed. He went on assert that those leading and attending the meeting were terrorists and that it was an illegal meeting, held in a secret lair. He then called on citizens to beat and chase away any persons who are against the country. He also said that traitors should not be allowed to

live anywhere and called on the government to take steps to legalize hanging if that was the punishment that should be given to traitors.

<http://groundviews.org/2014/08/07/mob-disrupts-meeting-of-families-of-disappeared-police-government-hound-participants/>

(Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

## 21. Tamil families of disappeared from the North intimidated not to attend meetings in Colombo



Tamil participants from the North were made helpless by the Monks led mob (©Melani Manel Perera)

A mother of the disappeared had complained that on the 3rd of August, she had received a threatening phone call from an unidentified person, who had told her that they (the caller) knew she was going to Colombo for a meeting. Some of the other mothers too had received similar calls from unidentified persons in the days prior to the meeting, and sometimes from callers claiming to be from the Criminal Investigation Division (CID), inquiring after their whereabouts, and insisting that they come meet with the caller at a said location. Another mother of a disappeared person had CID officers standing outside her house a few days before the meeting, and they had threatened her before she left for Colombo. She had also received similar calls from unidentified persons in the days prior to the meeting. One of the Northern based organizers of the event had received a threatening phone call from an unidentified person, also on 3rd August, asking if he was taking families of the disappeared to Colombo that night (3rd) for a meeting. Another mother complained that whilst she was in Colombo on the 4th, the CID had visited her home in the North and asked after her whereabouts. These mothers have been getting such anonymous calls for at least a month preceding this meeting.

<http://groundviews.org/2014/08/07/mob-disrupts-meeting-of-families-of-disappeared-police-government-hound-participants>

(Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

## 22. Police surveillance of families of disappeared after dispersal of the meeting

After the dispersal of the above meeting, Police officers had visited the venue of the meeting the night of the same day, to check whether Tamil families of the disappeared from North were still on the premises. They had also inquired from staff of another Church run centre where the Tamil families had planned to stay overnight. However, the Tamil families had decided to go back to their homes that same evening, due to fears for safety.

<http://groundviews.org/2014/08/07/mob-disrupts-meeting-of-families-of-disappeared-police-government-hound-participants/>

(Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

## 23. Police blocks protesters during International Day of victims of Enforced Disappearances

On 30<sup>th</sup> August 2014, Police were reported to have blocked families of disappeared persons, opposition politicians, human rights defenders and clergy from engaging in a march to the office of the Government Agent to hand over a petition. The peaceful march started after a public meeting held at the Vavuniya Urban Council building.

<http://tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=37363> (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)



Police blocked peaceful campaigners on 30th Aug 2014 (© Melani Manel Perera)

## 24. Military surveillance on Inter- religious reconciliation work

Dr. Jehan Perera, the Executive Director of the National Peace Council (NPC) reported that inter-religious reconciliation work conducted by the NPC had been subjected to surveillance by the Military and Police. According to Dr. Perera, two of these events were outside the former war zones of the North and East, which suggests that the practice of surveillance is encompassing the entire country. "in Kandy, where an inter-religious dialogue was being conducted inside a private hall of a reputed civil society organization of

long standing, intelligence personnel had entered the hall in civvies and were recording the discussion. In Galle, where a programme that brought children and their parents together from all communities was held, the local police had also been invited to attend. However, another police team came to investigate the programme. In Addalaichenai in the East, where a youth camp was held, the local police and local government authorities had been informed in advance and took part in the opening ceremony. But despite their presence, uniformed military personnel with weapons had come and questioned the organizers of the programme on three separate occasions over a two day period. This Monday (25<sup>th</sup> August) a programme promoting cultural values by youth held in Batticaloa (also in the East) led to questioning by two army personnel” wrote Dr Perera.

[http://www.island.lk/index.php?page\\_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code\\_title=109117](http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=109117)

(Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

### **25. Warning to parents of protesting Tamil political prisoners**

“Global Tamil News” had reported that parents of three Tamil political prisoners engaged in a hunger strike were not allowed to visit their children and were warned that they (parents) will be able to see only corpses if they (prisoners) die as a result of the hunger strike. The three Tamil political prisoners had been detained in Anuradhapura prison for six years without any charges. They had engaged in a hunger strike demanding that they be transferred to the ward that other Tamil political prisoners are being held. The three detainees had also complained that Sinhalese prisoners are assaulting them and taking away their food rations.

<http://srilankabrief.org/2014/08/parents-told-to-wait-to-see-the-dead-bodies-of-3-tamil-prisoners/#more-19696>

(Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

### **26. Trade Union meeting disrupted by government aligned group**

According to the spokesperson of The Government Press Trade Union Collective, members of pro-government Trade Union Sri Lanka Nidahas Sevaka Sangamaya had disrupted an awareness meeting organized by the Trade Union Collective and assaulted a participant of the meeting, on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2014. According to media reports, the Trade Union Collective members are workers from the opposition Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and United National Party (UNP). They have alleged that Government Printer is a political appointee, and that SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party – the ruling party) Uva Provincial Council election propaganda materials are printed in the Government Press.

<http://www.hirunews.lk/90491/tense-situation-at-government-press> (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

### **27. Enjoining order issued on strike**

The Colombo District Court was reported to have issued an enjoining order on the Para-medics’ strike that affected functions of the government hospitals for four days, on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2014, based on a petition of a patient.

<http://www.hirunews.lk/90700/enjoining-order-issued-on-paramedics-strike> (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

## E. Violations of Freedom of Association (Intimidation & Restrictions on NGOs)

### 28. Government 'notes' threat from NGOs

Mr. P.B. Jayasundara, Secretary to the Finance Ministry, speaking at the Defence Seminar in Colombo had said that Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) which operate in non-regulated environments has become a threat to financial management, inclusive development and law and order itself.

<http://colombogazette.com/2014/08/18/government-notes-threat-from-ngos/> (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

### 29. Laws to monitor and control Foundations and Non-Profit Organizations

Foundations incorporated through Private Members' bills in Parliament will be monitored by the NGO Secretariat through new laws being drafted by the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development, the Sunday Times reported. The laws will also impose controls on non-profit organisations registered with the Registrar of Companies, trusts and some societies, the report said. Mr. Saman Dissanayake, Director of the National Secretariat for Non-Governmental Organisations has said that "Under the proposed amendments, they will have to register with the Secretariat or lose the right to receive foreign funds and conduct local monetary transactions. They will have to submit reports to us every three months about their activities. They will have to sign standard Memorandums of Understanding with us like NGOs do. The current provision for lifetime registration will be replaced by annually renewable registration."

<http://sundaytimes.lk/140831/news/after-ngos-foundations-to-come-under-watch-115994.html> (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

### 30. Minister accuses international organizations of forcing legalization of prostitution

The Minister of Child Development and Women's Affairs, Mr. Tissa Karaliyadda has been reported as saying that international organizations who are dependent on foreign countries force to legalize prostitution.

<http://www.lankasrinews.com/view.php?22IMM303IOo4e2BmAca25YAdd3Y5fac3mBJe43Oln0236A43> (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)

## F. Repression of Student Activists

### 31. Student Union and Political Party accused of inciting racial disputes

Students for Human Rights (SHR) had said that Higher Education Minister S. B. Dissanayake had accused the Inter University Students' Federation and Frontline Socialist Party for attempting to incite racial disputes among students, over incidents of students from the Sabaragamuwa University being arrested under anti-Terror laws. One of these students was arrested after being attacked by a group of thugs and suffering injuries.

*Source: "Monthly Update on Repression of Students in Sri Lanka – August 2014", by Students for Human Rights*

### 32. Five Students of University of Peradeniya arrested

On the 21st of August 2014 Students of University of Peradeniya started a sit in campaign demanding the establishment of a Faculty of Management. On the 20th of August when the students were engaged in making arrangements for the sit in campaign, Police arrived and asked the students to come to the Police station on the next day and to give an oral statement. On the 21st August, 5 student leaders were informed to come to police station to give an oral statement. On the 22nd August, 3 students went to the police station to give statements and they were arrested and produced in front of the Magistrate of Kandy. The charges against the students were illegal constructions and illegal entrance. The students were ordered to be remanded for 14 days. On the 25th August, 2 more students went to the police station and they too were ordered to be remanded.

Source: "Monthly Update on Repression of Students in Sri Lanka – August 2014", by Students for Human Rights

### 33. Four Open University Student leaders suspended

Four student leaders of the Open University in Colombo has been suspended for leading a protest campaign demanding the right to unionize, on the 12th August 2014 in front of the Open University premises. This has increased the number of Open University students that are suspended to 16.

Source: "Monthly Update on Repression of Students in Sri Lanka – August 2014", by Students for Human Rights

## G. Repression of Opposition Political Parties

### 34. Opposition parties denied level playing field in Uva Provincial elections



Dozens of JVP campaign offices have been attacked and destroyed (Photo: Lanka Truth)

The Uva Provincial Council election was held on 20th September 2014. According to various reports more than 50 opposition campaign party offices were attacked and destroyed. "Opposition offices were set on

fire and gangs are reported to be moving about, armed with guns," Mr. Keerthi Tennekoon, Executive Director of the election monitoring body CaFFE had told media. Tension is heightened by an armed group loitering in the area at nighttime, as alleged by some political parties. It is also alleged that this group was responsible for the damage of a number of opposition political party offices belonging to the United National Party (UNP) Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the Democratic Party (DP)." According to the JVP 30, of their party offices were attacked (as of 12<sup>th</sup> Sep). "The state power has been directly used for such attacks. There have been four instances of shooting. However, no one was arrested" the JVP was quoted as saying. According to the CaFFE, "Election Department has given permission to operate 219 election offices for the ruling United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) in Moneragala district but the party maintains over 970 election offices, most of which are just temporary structures used for campaigning. But due to continuous attacks the UNP and the JVP are not even maintaining the number of authorized offices, which is 163 offices for the UNP and 73 for the JVP".

[http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_14B/Sep08\\_1410153162CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Sep08_1410153162CH.php) (Last accessed on 14th Sep 2014)

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2014-08/27/c\\_133590700.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2014-08/27/c_133590700.htm) (Last accessed on 14th Sep 2014)

<http://cmev.wordpress.com/> (Last accessed on 14th Sep 2014)

[http://www.lankatruth.com/home/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=7591:president-is-the-biggest-obstacle-for-free-and-fair-election--jvp-&catid=36:top-stories&Itemid=124](http://www.lankatruth.com/home/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7591:president-is-the-biggest-obstacle-for-free-and-fair-election--jvp-&catid=36:top-stories&Itemid=124) (Last accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 2014)