

# Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka

1<sup>st</sup> -31<sup>st</sup> October 2020



*Two Tamil Guardian correspondents were assaulted while investigating an alleged timber trafficking operation in a forest reserve in Mullaitivu district. Photo courtesy: Tamil guardian.*

## INFORM

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Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka in October 2020.

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

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## 1. Executive Summary

This report provides some general trends and details of some significant incidents related to the repression of dissent in Sri Lanka in the month of October, based on 21 incidents mainly reported in mainstream and social media.

**Context:** Rapid increase of covid19 cases in Sri Lanka was reported in October, reporting more than 200% increase. Restrictions were imposed on public gatherings, and curfew was imposed in selected areas time to time. Towards the end of the month, entire Western Province was under lock-down. Militarization of COVID19 response was strongly evident throughout the month. Military was employed in carrying out temperature checks on Colombo streets, transporting people for quarantine and also running quarantine facilities. A group of female garment employees accused the military of degrading inhuman treatment during quarantine process. A Nurses trade union also alleged that their family members have been forcefully taken away by military for quarantining without ensuring adequate standards required for health and safety. An incident of a military officer threatening a medical doctor with racist comments was also reported. At least 3 custodial deaths were reported. The death of alleged underworld gang leader Madush became a major controversy since earlier statements by Police said that investigations revealed Madush's alleged connections with some politicians. During parliamentary debates, opposition accused that he was murdered in an attempt to cover the politicians involved in alleged crimes. Several courts were temporarily closed due to COVID19 risks. A group of MPs signed and submitted a petition to the President requesting pardon for a murder convict. Ministry of Justice published a gazette inviting public proposals for drafting the new constitution.

**Updates of previous cases:** Hearings of the court case of disappeared journalist Prageeth Ekneligoda at the special three-bench Trial at Bar in Colombo scheduled for October 26 and 27 were postponed because the area where the Court is located was subjected to COVID-19 related curfew. On October 28, detained lawyer Hejaaz Hizbullah's hearings were postponed due to restrictions on court functioning during COVID-19 curfew. The next hearing was scheduled for February 24, 2021. Blogger Ramzy Razeek published his reflections about imprisonment because of facebook comment after about a month of being released on bail. Razeek concluded his commentary by saying that he is subjecting himself to self-censorship as the case against him is still being heard in courts. Hearing of the case against MP Ranjan Ramanayake on contempt of court was fixed for 6<sup>th</sup> of November, where further clarifications will be made. Both prosecution and respondent parties have already concluded testifying evidence in connection with this case.

**Statistical trends:** There were only 21 incidents reported in this month. Types of violations included 33% of physical attacks, 19% related to problematic verbal statements and media reports, 14% of incidents relating to censorship and restrictions on mainstream media. As usual, the highest percentage of incidents from a single district: 29% were reported from Colombo. 10% were reported from North and East, while another 29% were reported from other areas. 33% of victims were journalists. In 24% of victims were state officials. 14% of victims were civil society activists and NGOs. In 19% of incidents, alleged perpetrator or responsible party was Government institutions or state officials. In another 14% of incidents, they were military or Police. In another 10% alleged responsible party was the President or the central government. In another 24% of cases, other politicians were allegedly responsible.

## Summary of the incidents

**Repression of Free expression:** A journalist working in a private TV channel was assaulted by sand miners while covering an alleged illegal sand mining operation in Moneragala district. Another journalist in Trincomalee district was assaulted while reporting an accident. His camera was also lost in the attack. Two correspondents of Tamil Guardian website were verbally threatened and physically assaulted while investigating an alleged timber trafficking operation in a forest reserve in Mullaitivu district. The attackers have also wiped the footage that were in memory chips of cameras. A journalist in Ratnapura district has been allegedly subjected attempted assault and death threats by the staff of a hydroelectric power station in Hapugoda area in Kalawana, when he was doing an investigative reporting on the environmental damage and the difficulties to villagers caused by the power station. A journalist in Puttalam district has been forcefully removed from Wennappuwa Pradeshiya Sabha meeting premises by the chairman of Pradeshiya Sabha, when a controversial decision made by the chairman was being discussed at the premises. Journalists who went to cover proceedings of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Easter bombings were reported to have been chased away from the premises by an official when journalists were waiting outside the premises where the hearings were being held. Previously the journalists have been provided with waiting facilities during the closed door hearings, though such facilities were not available this time. According to media reports, the decision to bar journalists from the November 3 parliamentary hearings was made at a party leaders' meeting, after a journalist who had covered parliamentary hearings found tested positive for COVID19. The Commander of the Army, who also heads the COVID-19 prevention center, made threatening statements after facing criticism in the media and complaints to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) for the Army's alleged mistreatment of apparel workers suspected of having COVID-19. The Commander termed the allegations "unfounded and fabricated" and stated that "all those intentional fabrications bear the hallmarks of a precursor to a bigger future machination the interested elements are now mapping out in order to tarnish or ridicule the role of the troops". Police are reported to have arrested a woman on or around October 18 for uploading a video on Facebook with content that is alleged to have hateful content against the Catholic Archbishop of Colombo. While an official from the church issued a statement saying that the video released on social media had false, unfounded, insulting and misleading content, a lawyer who had examined the video had said the police should not be involved in the matter and if the content is interpreted as defamatory, the targeted individual may have a remedy in civil courts.

**Repression of state officials:** Former President giving before a Presidential Commission of Inquiry alleged that appointing a family member of a deceased Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) cadre to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) caused numerous issues during his presidency. He has also said that due to the complaints lodged by the HRCSL, Sri Lankan military and Police officers had lost the opportunity to join the UN Peacekeeping Forces, which was a major source of earning foreign exchange for Sri Lanka. Few days later, a newspaper report indicated that alleged official in the HRCSL has submitted 300 false reports to Human Rights office in Geneva. The former Chairperson of HRCSL responding strongly refuted former President Sirisena's claims and also said she had never heard of that particular allegation before. The whole saga seemed as an attempt to cause harassment and vilification towards the independent institution and its former leadership, which had been critical of the

former and present government. Similarly a suspect arrested in connection with abduction of journalist Ekneligoda stated that undue influences were made by former investigator and head of CID Shani Abeysekera and other officials of CID made undue influences, while another military officer claimed that because of investigations (into killings and abductions of journalists and other human rights violations) state intelligence was weakened. Jayaruwan Bandara who served as the Acting Director of the Medical Research Institute (MRI) was removed from his post in early October, with the Health minister explaining that his removal was done according to due procedures. However Bandara giving an interview to a web journalist, stated that he considering to retire from state service due to increased undue influences he has been facing. He also said that he has been banned from participating at press briefings and conferences despite his then position as the spokesperson at the ministry. In Galle district, Waduramba Police arrested a person who has allegedly assaulted a Police officer and a witness during an investigation. The (acting) secretary of the Rambewa Pradeshiya Sabha in Anuradhapura district complained to Police that she has been allegedly assaulted by the Chairman of the Pradeshiya Sabha for her refusal to issue some machines belonging to Pradeshiya Sabha disregarding the proper procedure

**Other incidents:** In early October, when a group of youth went to Police to report an incident of police assault on them, the Police had allegedly refused to accept the complaint, assaulted them again, and arrested them. According to what Police have told the parents, the youth have allegedly assaulted the Police. Sinhala language Divaina newspaper published an article titled 'national security and NGOs intervening politics.' It claimed that NGO heads making a serious threat by intervening into internal affairs. It also accused that 'NGOs in Colombo provide information to ambassadors from USA, Canada, UK, Germany, France and Norway', and called for strict regulation of NGOs to prevent this treacherous act. Further it called to bring a ban on NGOs from intervening with national security and internal affairs of the country. In early October, a discussion was scheduled to be held in a church in Colombo district about 20th Amendment. The Police had visited the church several times and had called the organizers to discourage the meeting citing Covid19, despite of no publicly announced COVID19 restrictions to organize such events at the time. President issued the gazette calling for armed forces same as in the previous months. The 20th Amendment (20A) to the Constitution Bill was passed in Parliament. As pointed out by media unions, trade unions and various civil society groups, this amendment would have a strong negative impact on freedom of dissent, and other aspects concerning democracy. Several leading politicians linked to the main opposition political party SJB have stated that they are going to expel the MPs who voted in favour of 20A constitutional amendment. A monk residing in Badulla district has been allegedly assaulted after opposing a person who was making an unplanned drainage that could drain wastewater into several lands of the neighbours around the temple.

## 2. Methodology

This report provides some general trends and details of some significant incidents related to the repression of dissent in Sri Lanka in the month of October.

This report was prepared mainly based on the information reported in mainstream and social media. Incidents of repression mentioned in this report include arrests, threats, intimidation, investigations against human rights defenders (HRDs) etc. and potential threats such as new repressive laws, appointments, policy decisions etc., which may have a negative impact on freedom of expression, assembly, association and dissent in the future.

In this report, “dissent” is broadly defined to include acts of protest, resistance, defiance, challenge against, question or attempt to record rights violations, social injustice at the hands of state or non-state apparatus, including police, armed forces, religious groups, and politicians among others. “Repression” is defined as any attempt by the above state or non-state actors to suppress the acts of dissent. Any rhetoric decrying human rights has also been considered as repression of dissent because of its potential to erode rights. We have also included government officials who had faced reprisals when trying to do their duties.

The report is based on 21 incidents related to repression of dissent in Sri Lanka. Section 1 includes the Executive summary and analysis of incidents. Section 2 describes the methodology including the structure of report. Section 3 context describes the socio-political context and some trends relating to human rights situation in Sri Lanka during the month. Section 4 provides updates about ongoing legal cases related to dissent. Section 5 provides a statistical analysis of the incident included in the report looking at geographical location, ethnicity and gender of the victims, types of violation, category of victims, and perpetrators. Section 6 includes a table describing the incidents used in the analysis.



### 3. Context



*A Sri Lankan soldier checks the body temperature of a woman in Colombo on October 29, 2020, after a three-day curfew was announced from October 30 to contain the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus. (Photo by ISHARA S. KODIKARA / AFP via Getty Images)*

A rapid increase of COVID19 cases in Sri Lanka was reported in the month of October. Total number of confirmed cases that were 3,380 at the beginning of the month<sup>1</sup> increased up to 10,424 by the end of the month,<sup>2</sup> reporting more than 200% increase. In early October, a female employee of a leading garment factory network was diagnosed with COVID19 in a random test conducted at a provincial hospital in Gampaha district<sup>3</sup>. Following it, 567 employees were tested positive for COVID19 out of 1394 tests conducted amongst her workplace staff,<sup>4</sup> which led to the identification of a new COVID19 cluster. The female employee first recognized was subjected to negative media reporting and vilification in both in mainstream and social media. On 6<sup>th</sup> of October, Sri Lanka banned all public gatherings<sup>5</sup>. Subsequently curfew was imposed in selected areas in the Western Province, mostly in Gampaha District<sup>6</sup> and a blanket curfew on western province was imposed on 29<sup>th</sup> October, and travelling outside and through Western Province was prohibited<sup>7</sup>. On 1<sup>st</sup> November, Police told the media that 1633 persons have been arrested and 253 vehicles have been seized for violating quarantine curfew<sup>8</sup>. Later, 550 people who travelled outside Western

<sup>1</sup> [COVID-19 Daily Report](#). Epidemiological Unit of MoH, GoSL. Published on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>2</sup> [COVID-19 Daily report](#). Epidemiological Unit of MoH, GoSL. Published 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>3</sup> [Divulapitiya factory worker tests positive for COVID-19](#). Ceylon Today. Published 4<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>4</sup> [BRANDIX official statement on Minuwangoda COVID-19 cluster](#). Newsfirst. Published 6<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020

<sup>5</sup> [Sri Lanka imposes ban on all public gatherings amid COVID-19 resurgence](#). EconomyNext. Published 6<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Curfew was imposed at multiple times between 4<sup>th</sup> October and 25<sup>th</sup> of October. (1) [Veyangoda](#), (2) [Gampaha Police Division](#), (3) [4 police areas in Gampaha District](#): Gampaha, Minuwangoda, Divulapitiya & Veyangoda, (4) [Gampaha, Ja Ela, and Kandana](#) (5) [Seeduwa](#) (6) [Katunayake](#) (7) [entire Gampaha District](#) (8) [5 Police areas in Colombo](#): Mattakuliya, Modara, Wellampitiya, Bloemendhal and Grandpass (9) [Kotahena](#) (10) [Selected areas in Colombo and Kalutara districts](#): in Dematagoda, Maradana & in Payagala, Beruwala, Aluthgama (11) [56 Police areas under curfew](#) (12) [curfew in Fort, Pettah, Borella and Welikada in Colombo District](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Press Release on Quarantine curfew](#). Dep. of Gov. Information. Published 28<sup>th</sup> Oct 2020. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>8</sup> [1,633 curfew violators arrested so far](#). Ceylon Today. Published 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.



Province on 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> were traced and asked to be quarantined for two weeks and Police also told that they will be prosecuted<sup>9</sup>.

Militarization of covid19 response was strongly seen throughout the month. Several women activists made a complaint to the HRCSL against Army commander General Shavendra Silva for cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment during quarantining process of female garment employees. On 11<sup>th</sup> night, and 12<sup>th</sup> early morning, the military has allegedly rounded-up 98 female garment employees, and transported them in buses to quarantine centres without providing food and water for around 12 hours. After that, they have been detained in 'quarantine centres' where adequate health and sanitary facilities were not available<sup>10</sup>.

On 16<sup>th</sup> of October, chief secretary of All Ceylon Nurses' Union S.B. Mediwatta has written a letter to the secretary of Health Ministry explaining difficulties faced by the nurses and medical staff members in the quarantining process. Family members of medical staff who have exposed to covid19 patients have been forcefully taken away by the military for quarantining centres without prior information, in some cases in the middle of the night. Also their family members who have been tested negative with PCR tests have been mixed with others who have not been subjected to testing. Letter further explained how this situation could lead to discouragement among healthcare workers to engage in their duties and not provide correct information to the health authorities<sup>11</sup>.

It was also reported that a Brigadier of Sri Lanka Army had allegedly threatened a medical staff in Sampathnuwara hospital in Mullaitivu district with a racist death threat saying "Bloody Tamil, I will kill you all." The Government Medical Officers' Association has reported the incident to the Minister of Health and the Army Commander Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva on 26<sup>th</sup> October<sup>12</sup>.

At least 3 custodial deaths were reported in the month of October. On 20<sup>th</sup> October, the suspected drug kingpin Samarasinghe Arachchige Madush Lakshitha, alias 'Makandure Madush' was shot dead. According to the Police his death occurred during a cross fire between the police officials of the Colombo Crime Division (CCD) and suspected gang members, when they attempted to free him from Police custody, while he had been accompanied by the CCD officers to an apartment complex in Maligawatta on a police operation to find a haul of narcotics. The incident was discussed in the parliament and many opposition MPs told that his death was suspicious. Opposition MP Vijitha Herath speaking at the parliament said that Neth FM Balumgala radio programme on 28<sup>th</sup> January broadcasted some of the call recordings of Makandure Madush<sup>13</sup> that confirmed his alleged connections with some politicians, that was reconfirmed by a police media spokesperson who had said that Madush's alleged connections with 80 politicians have been traced during the investigations.<sup>14</sup> Several MPs including Herath accused that Madush was

<sup>9</sup> [Quarantine order violators will be prosecuted – DIG](#), Daily News, 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2020. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>10</sup> [Sri Lanka: A complaint logged against General Shavendra Silva for cruel, inhumane & degrading treatment in quarantining FTZ workers](#), Sri Lanka Brief, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Last accessed 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>11</sup> [කොවිඩ් යුද්ධකරණය: සෞඛ්‍ය සේවා නිලධාරීන්ගේ නිර්දේශ අහිමිවන ආරක්ෂක අංශ කට්ටියාත්මක වෙනවා! – සමස්ත ලංකා හෙද සංගමය](#), Sri Lanka Brief, Published 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2020. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>12</sup> [Sri Lankan Brigadier threatens medical staff in Sampathnuwara, Mullaitivu : "Bloody Tamil, I will kill you all."](#) Sri Lanka Brief, Published 28<sup>th</sup> Oct 2020. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>13</sup> [Neth Fm Balumgala | මාකදුරේ මධුස් සියල්ල ලික් කරයි \(විශේෂ හඬපට සහිතයි.\)](#), NethFM [youtube], 28<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020. Last accessed 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>14</sup> [දේශපාලන බලවතුන් අසූචි මධුස් ඵක්ක ජාවාරම්වල – පරීක්ෂණවලදී හෙළිවෙයි](#), LankaCNews, 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2019. Last accessed 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020

allegedly killed in order to stop his alleged connections with politicians from being revealed<sup>15</sup>. In addition to this, two others were killed in the custody in this month. On 31<sup>st</sup> of October, a suspect in custody of Nawagamuwa police station in Colombo district died inside the detention cell which Police claimed as a suicide by hanging, while the family members suspected as a murder. One of the family members told the media that the deceased was severely beaten, and showed his scars on the back, before his death occurred. On 11<sup>th</sup> October, another suspect named Gayan Pushpakumara arrested for a mistaken identity was killed due to police torture in Pugoda police station in Gampaha district<sup>16</sup>.



Image: Death of alleged drug kingpin Makandure Madush was widely criticized as a means of hiding Madush's alleged connections in drug business with the politicians. Cartoon by Namal Amarasinghe

In courts temporarily halted their work due to Covid-19 situation in Matara<sup>17</sup>, Galle<sup>18</sup>, Moratuwa<sup>19</sup>, Panadura<sup>20</sup> and Balangoda.<sup>21</sup> In general, Covid situation resulted increased delays in court hearings which is also a general pattern in justice system in Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile government MPs and several opposition MPs signed a petition, requesting President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to pardon murder convict former MP Duminda Silva, who was convicted for the murder of politician Bharatha Lakshman Premachandra.<sup>22 23</sup>

<sup>15</sup> [Parliamentary Hanzard report. Vol 278 \(9\)](#). Sri Lanka parliament. 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Last accessed 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>16</sup> [The OIC of Pugoda Police Station kicked to Gayan's Stomach three times – Said by relatives](#). Right2life. Published 14<sup>th</sup> October. Last accessed 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>17</sup> [මාතර නීතිඥ සංගමය වෘත්තීය කටයුතුවලින් ඉවත් වෙයි](#). Lankadeepa. Published 26<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>18</sup> [ගාල්ල අධිකරණ සංකීර්ණයේ අධිකරණවල නඩු කල් දමයි](#). Lankadeepa. Published 26<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>19</sup> [මොරටුව අධිකරණයේ කටයුතු 1 වැනිදා තෙක් නවත්වයි](#). Lankadeepa. Published 27<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>20</sup> [පානදුර අධිකරණයේ නඩුකටයුතු තාවකාලිකව නවතී](#). Lankadeepa. Published 27<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>21</sup> [බලන්ගොඩ නීතිඥ සංගමය සතියක් කටයුතුවලින් ඉවත්වෙයි](#). Lankadeepa. Published 27<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>22</sup> [Petition seeking pardon for murder convict Duminda Silva signed by a group of Opposition MPs?](#) Lankanewsweb. Published 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>23</sup> [Govt MPs sign petition requesting President to pardon murder convict former MP Duminda Silva – Sunday Times](#). Newswire. Published 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

Ministry of Justice published a gazette inviting public proposals for drafting a new constitution<sup>24</sup>. A similar initiative under the previous regime gathered public proposals for a new constitution and published a report in May 2016.<sup>25</sup> However the former constitution building process failed due to disagreements and power struggles between then Prime Minister and the President.

A Sirasa TV correspondent residing in Mirigema, was assaulted and subsequently hospitalized for several days with injuries to his face and an eye. The incident occurred on October 19 when the journalist was returning home after work. A suspect has been produced before a Magistrate and has been remanded until November 3. The incident has received some media coverage.<sup>26 27</sup> This incident was not included in the list of incidents since it was not clear whether the motive was linked to his professional work as a journalist.

On 21<sup>st</sup> October the Katugastota Police in Kandy district arrested a woman for wearing a Saree with Buddha's images. She has been handed over to Police after the passengers opposed her dress when she was travelling by public transport from Batticaloa to Kandy. Police has told that legal action will be taken against the woman under 'reconciliation act' for alleged committing an act that could lead to a conflict between religions.<sup>28</sup> In a similar incident, in 2014 a British tourist named Naomi Coleman was arrested, detained for few days and then deported since she had a tattoo of Buddha in her upper arm. In 2017, Sri Lankan Supreme Court ruled that her fundamental rights have been violated by the arrest and detention by Sri Lankan authorities and asked to pay her compensation<sup>29</sup>. On 18th May 2019, 47-year-old M. R Mazahima was arrested by police who described the printed motif on her Kaftan as the 'Dharmachakra' wheel symbolising Buddhist teachings which later transpired to be a ship's wheel. Police charged her under the ICCPR Act. She was acquitted of all charges in August 2020<sup>30</sup>. There are also other incidents that persons of ethnic minorities reported to have been harassed by monks and others for similar accusations. Despite of such court rulings and acquittals, it seems that arrests targeting persons of ethnic minorities on similar charges continue. Meanwhile after a local LGBTIQ+ rights organization along with Human Rights Watch published a report on forced anal examinations performed on LGBTIQ+ persons in homosexuality persecutions in Sri Lanka<sup>31</sup>, and the justice Minister responded "If this is occurring, it is indeed a disturbing revelation and must be looked into immediately" and also said "no person should be discriminated... on the basis of their gender, sexual preference or identity"<sup>32</sup> indicating a positive remark on LGBTIQ+ rights.

<sup>24</sup> Extra ordinary Gazette 2198/13. [Drafting a New Constitution for Sri Lanka, Invitation for Public Proposals](#). Ministry of Justice. GoSL. . Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>25</sup> [Public Representations Committee on Constitutional Reform](#), May 2016. GoSL . Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>26</sup> [නිවැසියන්ගේ ගම්පහ ප්‍රදේශීය වාර්තාකරුට ප්‍රහාරයක්](#), Newsfirst. Published 20<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>27</sup> [Newsfirst Gampaha regional correspondent attacked](#). Eththawitthi. Published 21<sup>st</sup> Oct. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>28</sup> [බුදුරුව සහිත සාරියක් ඇන්දූ කාන්තාව අධිකරණය හමුව](#). Divaina. Published 24<sup>th</sup> Oct 2020. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>29</sup> [Compensation for Britisher deported over Buddha tattoo](#). Daily News. Published 16<sup>th</sup> Nov 2017. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>30</sup> [Woman arrested for wearing Dharma chakraya on clothing acquitted](#). Lankasara. Published 19<sup>th</sup> Aug 2020. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>31</sup> [Sri Lanka: Forced Anal Exams in Homosexuality Prosecutions: Police, Judicial Officers Should End Arbitrary Arrests, Torture of LGBT People](#). Human Rights Watch. Published 20<sup>th</sup> Oct 2020. Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>32</sup> [Justice Minister responds to allegations involving forced medical examinations on LGBTIQ people](#). LankaNewsWeb. Published on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

## 4. Updates of previous cases

Hearings of the court case of disappeared journalist Prageeth Eknaligoda at the special three-bench Trial at Bar in Colombo scheduled for October 26 and 27 were postponed because the area where the Court is located was subjected to COVID-19 related curfew<sup>33</sup>. Eknaligoda was disappeared on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2010<sup>34</sup>. In November 2019<sup>35</sup>, indictments were finally served on nine army officials in connection with “kidnapping and conspiracy to murder” Prageeth Eknaligoda<sup>36</sup>.

On October 28, detained lawyer Hejaaz Hizbullah’s hearings were postponed due to restrictions on court functioning during COVID-19 curfew. The next hearing was scheduled for February 24, 2021<sup>37</sup>. Earlier in October, a new three-month Detention Order was issued for Hizbullah<sup>38</sup>. He has been held for more than six months without being produced before a magistrate, having meaningful access to lawyers or a fair trial. Hizbullah’s detention is likely a reprisal against his legal practice and outspoken views and advocacy on minority rights.

After about one month after being released on bail, blogger Ramzy Razeek published reflections in Tamil<sup>39</sup> and Sinhalese<sup>40</sup> about his imprisonment because of a Facebook comment. In his commentary, Razeek stated that his overestimation of the right to freedom of expression led to his arrest and detention. Razeek concluded his commentary by saying that he is subjecting himself to self-censorship as the case against him is still being heard in courts. He was first arrested on April 9, 2020. After many delays in court hearings and five months of detention in difficult conditions during which his health deteriorated, he was released on bail on September 17. The judge who ordered his release on bail emphasized the right to freedom of expression and criticism<sup>41</sup>.

Hearing of the case against MP Ranjan Ramanayake on contempt of court was fixed for 6<sup>th</sup> of November, where further clarifications will be made. Both prosecution and respondent parties have already concluded testifying evidence in connection with this case. All judges of the Supreme Court had earlier determined to proceed with contempt of court charges against the former Deputy Minister after perusing the transcript of the video footage pertaining to the alleged derogatory statement<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> [October: A Bleak Month for Freedom of Expression in Sri Lanka](#). Ruki Fernando. Sri Lanka Brief. Published on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>34</sup> [Sri Lanka: Prageeth Eknaligoda, journalist & cartoonist disappeared](#). Amnesty International. Published Autumn 2011. Last accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>35</sup> [Eknaligoda trial; Hearing fixed from March 11 to 26](#). Daily Mirror. Published 21 Feb 2020. Last accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>36</sup> [Eknaligoda disappearance – Evidence Examination in March](#). Newsfirst. Published 20 Feb 2020. Last accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>37</sup> Justice4Hejaaz. [Tweet](#). Published 28<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Amnesty International South Asia. [Tweet](#). Published 16<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>39</sup> Ramzy Razeek. [facebook status](#). Published 17<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>40</sup> Ramzy Razeek. [facebook status](#). Published 18<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>41</sup> රමසි රසික් අපදිමේ නඩු තීන්දුව: අත් අඩංගුවට ගැනීමට පොලීසිය දැක්වූ කරුණු ගැටළු සහගතයි; විරෝධතා දැක්වීම අයිතියක් – විනිසුරු. Sri Lanka Brief. Published 20<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

<sup>42</sup> [First contempt of court case against Ranjan Ramanayake fixed for Nov. 6](#). Daily News. 21<sup>st</sup> of October 2020. Last accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2020.

## 5. Statistical analysis

There were only 21 incidents reported in this month, reporting a lower number of incidents in a month, second lowest so far in this year. We believe this was not an actual decline in the number of violations, rather this was result of media dynamics and covid-19 situation. Below is a breakdown of incidents, reported each month.

Month	Number of incidents reported
October	21
September	38
August	18
July	34
June	38
May	31
April	30
March	31
February	29
January	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>
<b>Average per month</b>	<b>30.1</b>

*Table 5.1: Breakdown of incidents reported each month*

When types of violations were looked at 33% were physical attacks. There were another 19% of incidents relating to problematic verbal statements and media reports that could have potential negative impact on freedom of dissent. 14% of incidents were related to censorship and restrictions on mainstream media. Another 10% were related to legal, institutional and policy actions that could negatively impact on freedom of dissent. Other incidents included an arrest, an incident of a visit, inspection and questioning by Police, pressures faced by a state official, a monk who was assaulted by neighbor, and a statement of a political party for expelling their members for voting against the party's position.

Type of violation	Number	Percentage
Physical attacks	7	33%
Censorship / restrictions on media	3	14%
Problematic verbal statements and media reports	4	19%
Attempted physical attack and verbal threats	1	5%
Arrest	1	5%
Visits, inspection and questioning	1	5%
Legal, institutional and policy actions	2	10%
Others	2	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Table 5.2: type of violation*

Same as the previous months, the highest percentage of incidents from a single district: 29% were reported from Colombo. No other incidents were reported from other districts of Western Province. 2 incidents (10%) were reported from North and East, while another 29% were reported from other areas. 33% of incidents could not be limited to a specific geographical area.

Location	Number	Percentage
Colombo	6	29%
North and East	2	10%
Other areas	6	29%
Not Applicable	7	33%
Total	21	100%

*Table 5.3: Geographical location of the incidents according to the district*

33% of victims were journalists. In 24% of victims were state officials. 14% of victims were civil society activists and NGOs. In 10% of victims were other persons, while in another 10% of incidents the category of victims was considered not applicable, since they were actions applying to larger groups.

Type of victims	Number	Percentage
Journalist	7	33%
Civil Society Activist and NGOs	3	14%
state officials	5	24%
Other	2	10%
Not applicable	2	10%
Total	21	100%

*Table 5.4: Type of the victim*

When ethnicity of the victims were considered in 8 incidents victims were Sinhala, in 2 incidents victims were Tamil and Muslim respectively. Ethnicity was not applicable or not mentioned in 10 incidents.

Ethnicity of the victim	Number
Sinhala	8
Tamil	1
Muslim	1
Other	1

*Table 5.5: Ethnicity of the victim*



In 10 the incidents, victims were male, while in 3 of the incidents victims were female. In 8 incidents gender was not applicable.

Gender of the victim	Number
Male	10
Female	3
Not Applicable	8
Total	21


*Table 5.6: gender of the victim*


In 19% of incidents, alleged perpetrator or responsible party was Government institutions or state officials. In 14% of incidents, they were military or Police. In 10% (two incidents) alleged responsible party was the President or the central government. In 24% of cases, other politicians were allegedly responsible. In 14% of other cases, persons involved in problematic businesses that cause environmental damage including illegal sand mining, and logging were allegedly responsible. In 1 incident (5%), a newspaper published a problematic content. In another 14% of incidents, alleged perpetrators' profession was not clearly identifiable.

Perpetrator/ Responsible party	Number	Percentage
Government Institutions and officers	4	19%
Military or Police	3	14%
President or central government	2	10%
Other Politicians	5	24%
Business persons	3	14%
Newspapers	1	5%
Others	3	14%
Total	21	100%

*Table 5.7: Alleged perpetrator/ responsible party*

## 6. List of incidents

	Date	District	Repression of Free expression	Source
01	3 <sup>rd</sup> October	Moneragala	<p>Derana TV journalist Indunil Wijenayake was assaulted by sand miners while covering an alleged illegal sand mining operation near Kumbukkan oya in Moneragala district. He was admitted to the Moneragala District Hospital. His camera was damaged during the attack. Indunil mentioned that two persons had been arrested and later released on bail.</p>  <p><i>Journalist Indunil Wijenayake, Photo courtesy: Sri Lanka Brief</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Sri Lanka: Another journalist assaulted; FMM calls for justice!</a> Sri Lanka Brief. Published 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2020. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.</p>
02	8 <sup>th</sup> October	Puttalam	<p>Prasad Poornimal- a journalist has been forcefully removed from Wennappuwa Pradeshiya Sabha meeting premises by the chairman of Pradeshiya Sabha, while several other members opposed. There has been a critical discussion at the meeting on a controversial decision taken by the chairman with regards to the payment of legal fees of a case against him that was filed by the Justice Minister. Apparently the chairman of PS has taken this action in an attempt to censor what is being discussed at the premises from being reported in the media.</p>	<p><a href="#">වෙනත්පසුව ප්රාදේශීය සභා සභාපතිවරයා රැස්වීම වාර්තා කිරීමට නොදී මාධ්‍යවේදියා දොවට දමයි.</a> Mawbima. Published 12<sup>th</sup> October. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.</p>
03	11 <sup>th</sup> October	Trincomalee	<p>M. H. Yusuf, a provincial correspondent for Independent Television Network (ITN) was assaulted while reporting on an accident in Trincomalee District. During the assault, he also lost his camera. A complaint was lodged with the Agbopura police (complaint no. CIB 132/71). Yusuf mentioned that three persons were arrested and presented before the courts for an identification parade but he was not able to identify them as he had been nervous at the time of the incident and there had been many people.</p>	<p><a href="#">முல்லைத்தீவு. கந்தளாயில் ஊடகவியலாளர்கள் தாக்குதல் - ஸ்ரீலங்கா முஸ்லிம் மீடியா போர்டம் கண்டனம்.</a> Sri Lanka Muslim Media Forum. Published 13<sup>th</sup> October. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.</p>

04	12 <sup>th</sup> October	Mullaitivu	<p>Two Tamil Guardian correspondents, Kanapathipallai Kumanan and Shanmugam Thavaseelan, were verbally threatened and physically attacked while investigating an alleged timber trafficking operation in Murippu forest reserve in Mullaitivu district. The journalists' attackers wiped most of the documentation they had taken of the deforestation and removed their memory cards. After the incident, Kumanan and Thavaseelan were admitted to Mullaitivu Base Hospital for treatment.</p>  <p><i>Journalist Kumanan after the assault. Photo courtesy: Tamil Guardian</i></p>	<p><a href="#">‘Our attackers roamed free despite arrest warrants’ - Assaulted Tamil journalists speak from hospital.</a> Tamil Guardian. Published 13<sup>th</sup> October. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.</p> <p><a href="#">Jaffna Press Club protest in Mullaitivu demanding press freedom.</a> Tamil Guardian. Published 13<sup>th</sup> October. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.</p> <p><a href="#">මාධ්‍යවේදීන්ට පහර දුන් බව කියන එක් සැකකරුවෙකුට ප්‍රමණක් ඇප.</a> Medialk. Published 28<sup>th</sup> October. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.</p>
05	16 <sup>th</sup> October	Ratnapura	<p>A journalist has been allegedly subjected attempted assault and death threats by the staff of a hydroelectric power station in Hapugoda area in Kalawana, when he was doing an investigative reporting on the environmental damage and the difficulties to villagers caused by the power station. The journalist Rohana Samaraweera has been saved from the alleged attempted attack, after some villagers, and the Police have intervened. According to the statement given by the journalist the power station has an improperly planned, insecure water stream that causes flooding in the area, drop of water level of the river, death of fish in some seasons in the year.</p>	<p><a href="#">තොරතුරු සොයන්න ගිය මාධ්‍යවේදියාට මැරයන් පහරදෙන්න ඇවිත්.</a> Mawbima. Published 19<sup>th</sup> October. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.</p>

06	23 <sup>rd</sup> October	Colombo	Journalists who went to cover proceedings of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Easter bombings were reported to have been chased away from the premises by the Chief Executive Officer of the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) where the hearings were being held. This occurred after the journalists were instructed to stay outside during closed-door hearings. The media report indicated that when closed door hearings were held previously, seats were provided for journalists to sit and wait outside the hall where hearings were taking place but that these facilities were not available at this hearing.	<a href="#">පාස්කු කොමිසම ආවරණයට ගිය මාධ්‍යවේදීන් ඵලවයි.</a> Medialk. Published 23 <sup>rd</sup> October. Last accessed 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.
07	29 <sup>th</sup> October	Colombo	Reports indicate that, a decision to bar journalists from the November 3 parliamentary hearings was made at a party leaders' meeting. The decision was allegedly based on the fact that a journalist who had covered parliamentary hearings tested positive for COVID-19.	<a href="#">කොරෝනා නිසා පාර්ලිමේන්තුවේ දොර මාධ්‍යවේදීන්ට වැසෙයි.</a> Medialk. Published 29 <sup>th</sup> October. Last accessed 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.
08	18 <sup>th</sup> October 2020	N/A	The Commander of the Army, who also heads the COVID-19 prevention center, made threatening statements after facing criticism in the media and complaints to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) for the Army's alleged mistreatment of apparel workers suspected of having COVID-19. The complainants to HRCSL had made the Commander a respondent. The Commander termed the allegations "unfounded and fabricated" and stated that "all those intentional fabrications bear the hallmarks of a precursor to a bigger future machination the interested elements are now mapping out in order to tarnish or ridicule the role of the troops".	<a href="#">Army Troops Pooh-pooh Fabricated Attempts to Tarnish COVID-19 Humanitarian Roles by Interested Elements.</a> Media statement. Sri Lanka Army. Published 18 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020. Last accessed 23 <sup>rd</sup> Dec 2020. <a href="#">‘Dragged away like criminals’.</a> Sunday Times. Published 18 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020. Last accessed 23 <sup>rd</sup> Dec 2020. <a href="#">Sri Lanka: A complaint logged against General Shavendra Silva for cruel, inhumane &amp; degrading treatment in quarantining FTZ workers.</a> Sri Lanka Brief. Published 19 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020. Last accessed 23 <sup>rd</sup> Dec 2020.

09	18 <sup>th</sup> October	Colombo	<p>Police are reported to have arrested a woman on or around October 18 for uploading a video on Facebook with content that is alleged to have hateful content against the Catholic Archbishop of Colombo. She has been remanded until November 2 for having committed offences under the Computer Crimes Act and Article 291A of the Penal Code. The Administrative Secretary of the Archdiocese issued a statement saying that the video released on social media had false, unfounded, insulting and misleading content and that complaints had been lodged with relevant institutions. A lawyer who had examined the video had said the police should not be involved in the matter and if the content is interpreted as defamatory, the targeted individual may have a remedy in civil courts.</p>	<p><a href="#">CID arrests woman for posting inter-religious hate video on FB</a>. Colombo Page. Published on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.</p> <p><a href="#">මුහුණු පොත ඔස්සේ කාදිනල්තුමාට අපහාස කළ කාන්තාව රිමාන්ඩ්... මානසික වෛද්‍ය වාර්තාවක් කැඳවීමත් නියෝග</a>. Divaina. Published on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.</p> <p><a href="#">October: A Bleak Month for Freedom of Expression in Sri Lanka</a>. Ruki Fernnado. Sri Lanka Brief. Published on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov. Last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.</p>
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	Date	District	Repression of state officials	Source
10	9 <sup>th</sup> October	Galle	Waduramba Police arrested a person who has allegedly assaulted a Police officer and a witness during an investigation. The officer has visited to investigate a complaint on allegedly cutting a tree located in a land where there is an ongoing partition case. The alleged perpetrator has first assaulted complainant, and then also slapped the Police officer who attempted to intervene. The arrested suspect will be presented before the Baddegama magistrate court, according to the media report.	<a href="#">මානව හිමිකම් නියෝජිතයා පැමිණිලිකරුවන් පහර දෙයි.</a> Lankadeepa. Published 9th Oct. Last accessed 20th Dec 2020.
11	11 <sup>th</sup> October	Anuradhapura	The (acting) secretary of the Rambewa Pradeshiya Sabha has made a complaint to the Police, claiming that she has been allegedly assaulted by the Chairman of the Pradeshiya Sabha. The incident has occurred as a result that she has opposed the members of Pradeshiya Sabha for issuing some machines belonging to Pradeshiya Sabha disregarding the proper procedure. During an argument on this, the Chairman of PS has slapped her at Pradeshiya Sabha premises, on 11 <sup>th</sup> Oct. She has made the Police complaint, next day at Mihintale Police. According to media reports, she has said the Police that she does not intend to go to courts, however asked to provide her with a safe environment to continue with her work. The Police subsequently has summoned the PS President, and advised him.	<a href="#">රඹැව ප්රා. සභාපතිගෙන් වැඩ බලන ලේකම්වරියට කම්මුල් පහරක්.</a> Mawbima. Published 13 <sup>th</sup> October. Last accessed 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.
12	12 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020	Colombo	Appointing a family member of a deceased Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) cadre to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) caused numerous issues during the previous government, former President Maithripala Sirisena has told the Presidential Commission of Inquiry Probing the Easter Sunday Attacks. The former President has also said that due to the complaints lodged by the HRCSL, Sri Lankan military and Police officers had lost the opportunity to join the UN Peacekeeping Forces, which was a major source of earning foreign exchange for Sri Lanka. Few days later Divaina newspaper	<a href="#">Appointing family of dead LTTE cadre to HRCSL caused many issues – former President.</a> Daily News newspaper [web]. 14th Oct 2020.  <a href="#">හමුදාවට එරෙහිව ‘සීනිවා ටොම්පවයාගේ’ පැටිකිරිය හෙළි වෙයි.</a> Divaina Newspaper [web]. 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2020.  <a href="#">Easter Sunday probe: Former HR Chief sets the</a>



			published another news claiming that intelligence have found the relative of LTTE leader who worked in HRCSL and has submitted 300 false reports to Human Rights office in Geneva. The article further alleged this person had connections with TNA, and has resigned from office before the appointment of current government. The former Chairperson of HRCSL had strongly refuted former President Sirisena's claims and had emphasized that she had never heard of that particular allegation before or that she had been summoned by the former President over the alleged inclusion of a member of the dead LTTE cadre's family on the staff.	<a href="#">record straight</a> . Island. Newspaper [web]. 21 <sup>st</sup> October 2020.
13	8 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020	N/A	Jayaruwan Bandara who served as the Acting Director of the Medical Research Institute (MRI) was removed from his post in early October, with the Health minister explaining that his removal was done according to due procedures. Then he was appointed as the spokesperson of the Ministry of Health. Later Jayaruwan Bandara giving an interview to a web journalist, stated that he considering to retire from state service due to increased undue influences he has been facing. He further told that even though he has been the media spokesperson of the Ministry, he has been banned from participating at press briefings and conferences. He further stated his removal as the Director of Medical Research institute was a 'conspiracy that should not have happened to any state official'.	<a href="#">MRI Director removed in keeping with due procedure: Govt.</a> Daily FT. 8 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020. Last accessed 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.  <a href="#">මට එල්ලවන බලපෑම වැඩිවෙනවා.. මා මාධ්‍ය ප්‍රකාශක වුනත් මාධ්‍ය සාකච්ඡා තහනම්.. විශ්‍රාම ගන්න සූදානම්..- ජයරුවන් බණ්ඩාර.</a> LankaCNews. Published 15 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020. Last accessed 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.
14	10 <sup>th</sup> October 2020	N/A	A suspect arrested in connection with the abduction of journalist Prageeth Ekneligoda who complained to the PCoI on political victimization stated that undue influences were made by Shani Abeysekera and other officials of CID. Another official also testifying before the commission stated that because of Shani Abeysekera's investigations state intelligence was weakened.	<a href="#">බොරු සාක්ෂි ගෙන ශානිලාගේ පැටිකිරිය ජනපති කොමිෂමේ දී එළියට.</a> Hiru News. Published 13 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020.  <a href="#">ශානි අබේසේකරගේ ක්‍රියාවන් නිසා යහපාලනයේදී බුද්ධි අංශය අඩපණ වුණා.</a> Newsfirst. 11 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020.

	Date	District	Other incidents	Source
15	5 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020	Colombo	On 5 <sup>th</sup> of October, when a group of 8 youth went to Police to report a previous incident of police assault on two of them on the same day, the Police had allegedly refused to accept the complaint, assaulted them again, and remanded them. One of the fathers of the victims has also been allegedly assaulted by the Police when he has gone to see his son. During the detention, youth have been allegedly subjected to police torture again. After presenting before a judicial medical officer, 6 have been given bail by the Police, and only two of them have been presented before a magistrate. According to what Police have told the parents, the youth have allegedly assaulted the Police.	<a href="#">නුගේගොඩ පොලීසියේදී පහර කෑ තරුණයන්ගේ කතාව</a> . Anidda newspaper [web]. Published 30 <sup>th</sup> October 2020. Last accessed on 18 <sup>th</sup> of December 2020.
16	12 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020	Badulla	A monk residing Bodirajaramaya, in Paalaawatte has been allegedly assaulted after opposing a person who was making an unplanned drainage that takes wastewater into several lands of the neighbours around the temple. The villagers who got to know the news, have also attacked the alleged perpetrator's house.	<a href="#">හිමි නමකට පහරදී පාලාවත්ත උණුසුම් වෙයි</a> . Lankadeepa. Published 12 <sup>th</sup> October 2020. Last accessed 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.
17	24 <sup>th</sup> October	N/A	Sinhala language Divaina newspaper published an article titled ‘national security and NGOs intervening politics.’ It claimed that NGO heads making a serious threat by intervening into internal affairs [of the country]. It also accused that ‘NGOs in Colombo provide information to ambassadors from USA, Canada, UK, Germany, France and Norway’, and called for strict regulation of NGOs to prevent this treacherous act. Further it called to bring a ban on NGOs from intervening with national security and internal affairs of the country.	<a href="#">ජාතික ආරක්ෂාව සහ දේශපාලනයට මැදිහත් වන රාජ්‍ය නොවන සංවිධාන</a> . Divaina. Published 24 <sup>th</sup> October 2020. Last accessed 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.
18	Early October	Colombo	In early October, a discussion was scheduled to be held in a church in Colombo district about 20 <sup>th</sup> Amendment. The Police had visited the church several times and had called the organizers to discourage the meeting citing Covid19. They had also met with the host priest to discourage the event. At the time, there were no publicly announced COVID19 restrictions to organize such events.	INFORM

19	20 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020	N/A	President issued the gazette calling for armed forces same as in the previous months. The involvement of armed forces in civilian activities is considered with fear by those who have dissenting views and engaged in dissenting actions with the government and critical of militarization.	<a href="#">Extra Ordinary gazette. No 2198/10.</a> Issued by the President GoSL. Issued 20 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020. Last accessed 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.
20	22 <sup>nd</sup> Oct 2020	N/A	The 20th Amendment (20A) to the Constitution Bill was passed in Parliament with 156 MPs voting for the Bill and 65 against. Under 20th Amendment, powers of the president are strengthened, appointments to the independent commissions could be politicized. The President is able to appoint an unlimited number of Ministers and Deputy Ministers, and replace the Prime Minister at his own will which was previously restricted. It also affects the law making process by reducing the time period during which the public has access to Bills before they are passed, and reintroduced the urgent Bill process which was subjected to much criticism previously. As pointed out by media unions, trade unions and various civil society groups, this amendment would have a strong negative impact on freedom of dissent, and other aspects concerning democracy.	<a href="#">“20th Amendment to the Constitution” passed in Parliament.</a> Sri Lanka Parliament. Published 22 <sup>nd</sup> Oct 2020. Last accessed 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.  <a href="#">Sri Lanka’s Media freedom will be threatened by proposed 20th Amendment – FMM.</a> EconomyNext. Published 17 <sup>th</sup> September 2020. Last accessed 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.
21	23 <sup>rd</sup> Oct 2020	N/A	Several leading politicians linked to the main opposition political party SJB have stated that they are going to expel the MPs who voted in favour of 20A constitutional amendment. 7 MPs of SJB voted in favour of 20A amendment. 23 Samagi Jana Balawegaya MPs have also requested its General Secretary Ranjith Madduma Bandara in writing to take disciplinary action against their MPs who voted in favour of the 20th Amendment to the Constitution.	<a href="#">විශ්වව පක්ෂ වූ සමගි බලවේග මන්ත්වීථුර අහෝසි කරයි.</a> Anidida newspaper [web]. Published 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2020. Last accessed 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.  <a href="#">SJB expels eight MPs who voted for 20A.</a> Daily News newspaper [web]. Published 24 <sup>th</sup> October 2020. Last accessed 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2020.

## List of Acronyms and Key Terms

- AG: The Attorney General is the Chief Legal Advisor to the Government. In that capacity he advises the Government, Government Departments, Statutory Boards and Public Corporations in respect of all legal matters. He conducts prosecutions in criminal cases and appears on behalf of the Government, Government Departments, Statutory Boards and Public Corporations in any Court or Tribunal
- CID: The Criminal Investigation Department is the primary investigative arm of the Sri Lanka Police
- IGP: Inspector General of Police (IGP) is the head of the Police and highest ranking officer in the Police.
- GoSL: Government of Sri Lanka
- HRCSL: Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka is an independent statutory body to promote and monitor protection of fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution and ensure compliance by the Sri Lankan State of international human rights standards. Its members are appointed by the constitutional council which consists of multiparty body with some representatives of civil society. The Commission has a broad mandate as well as powers to investigate into any complaints of fundamental rights violations or imminent violations and grant suitable redress, including compensation, and of unfettered access to inspect and monitor any place where a person is deprived of liberty.
- JVP: Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna is a leftist political party with strongholds in Sinhalese majority areas in Sri Lanka. They waged two armed rebellions against GoSL in 1971 and late 1980s. Since 1994, they have been active participants in electoral politics including local government, parliamentary and presidential elections.
- LTTE: Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam also known as Tamil Tigers is a Tamil militant, separatist organization also considered as a terrorist group for their attacks on Civilians. They fought a war with GoSL for around three decades and they were militarily defeated in 2009.
- MP: Member of Parliament
- NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
- PCol: Presidential Commission of Inquiry. A PCol is a major ad-hoc formal public inquiry into a defined issue ordered by the President of Sri Lanka to report findings, give advice and make recommendations. President could appoint PCol under the Presidential commission of inquiry Act No 17 of 1948. The mechanism has been established to provide President with a mechanism of initiating inquiries into the administration of public departments, offices, or agencies on allegations of misconduct of the members of public service. It is not intended as a mechanism to investigate grave human rights violations or crimes. However, the act is broadly worded, containing general clauses such as public safety, welfare, allowing the President to appoint public inquiry into various issues. PCol have rarely resulted in justice, they are usually inquiry bodies with increased political inference. Its members could be changed by the President at any time. The Act does not require Commission reports or recommendations to be made public; whether the inquiry (or any part of the inquiry) is to be made public is subject to presidential discretion.
- PS: Pradeshiya Sabhas or Divisional councils are one of the three types of the local government bodies responsible for providing a variety of local public services including roads, sanitation, drains, housing, libraries, public parks and recreational facilities. Local government is the third and lowest level of government in Sri Lanka – after the central government and provincial councils. Their members are appointed at local government elections. Also see [Pradeshiya Sabhas Act No 15 of 1987](#)
- SLPP: Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (Sri Lanka People's Front) is the ruling political party in Sri Lanka led by the Rajapakses. It was established in year 2016.
- TNA: Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is an alliance of major Tamil political parties based in Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka. TNA and candidates supported by the TNA have won all recent elections held in Northern and Eastern Provinces.
- UNP: United National Party (UNP) is a conservative right wing Sri Lankan political Party, favoring a more neo-liberal market-oriented economy. Founded in 1946, it is one of the oldest political parties in Sri Lanka currently in operation. They are perceived as being more liberal towards ethnic and religious minorities, but some of the worst massacres and attacks on ethnic and religious minorities have happened under the past UNP governments.