

Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka

1st November -31st December 2020



Relatives of prison inmates plead to authorities to save their relatives in the Mahara Prison Complex in the suburbs of Colombo, Sri Lanka. 11 inmates died and more than 100 were wounded after security personnel shot at the prisoners. The shooting occurred during a protest demanding PCR testing and safety measures for COVID-19 in the overcrowded prison. Photo Courtesy: [New York Post](#)

INFORM

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Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka in November-December 2020.

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

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1. Executive Summary

This report provides some general trends and details of some significant incidents related to the repression of dissent in Sri Lanka in the months of November and December, based on 67 incidents mainly reported in mainstream and social media.

Context: The Supreme Court rejected the fundamental rights (FR) petitions against mandatory cremation of COVID-19 victims, while Muslims and civil society groups protested, demanding both burial and cremation. Three deaths in detention and custody were reported. Prison guards or military officials shot and killed 11 individuals and injured more than 100 more during a prison protest for health rights. Reports were published indicating that more than 50 individuals have been arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), subjected to harassment, and forced to sign pre-prepared statements. In late November and early December, many people in the North and East remembered the Tamil militants who died. These remembrance events faced severe restrictions. Several ex-military personnel were appointed to key civil portfolios in the government. Several protests were held in the North and East against alleged land grabbing by the military and the forest department. Conversely, in other areas, some politicians seemingly attempted to release forest lands to villagers' use, despite assertions from other officials that this was illegal. A court case declared the 2012 resettlement of Muslim internally displaced people (IDPs) in a forest illegal, and a former minister was held accountable and asked to pay for the cost of replantation of the forest. The controversial Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCoI) on Political Victimization submitted its report to the President¹.

Updates of previous cases: The arrest of poet Ahnaf Jazeem under the PTA on 15th May came to light in November. He was arrested for allegedly promoting extremism through his poetry, after copies of his book were found at a Muslim school investigated in relation to a case against human rights lawyer Hijaaz Hizbullah. In mid-December, Hizbullah was allowed confidential access to his lawyers for the first time since his arrest in April. Former Criminal Investigation Department (CID) head Shani Abeysekera's bail application was rejected. Subsequently, he filed a new FR petition seeking a declaration that his arrest and detention is illegal due to a lack of evidence against him. Abeysekera contracted COVID-19, and transferred to another prison a few days before the Mahara prison protests. The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) intervened to provide him with proper healthcare. A contempt of court case against Ranjan Ramanayake was postponed to January. A Magistrate Court case about the assassination of Lasantha Wickramatunga was postponed to 4th June 2021.

¹ While the report of the PCoI on political victimisation was not officially released to the public, a leaked copy of the report was shared online in January 2021. As reported, its recommendations included acquittal of perpetrators of emblematic cases of gross human rights violations, and key corruption cases in Sri Lanka during the war and postwar periods, and taking action against investigation officials and witnesses¹. In January, cabinet approval was granted to implement the recommendations of the report ². Subsequently, another commission was appointed to implement the recommendations ³. The main opposition party, SJB, stated that it will oppose the recommendations at the Supreme Court, and also criticized the commission report at the Parliament ⁴. Intellectuals stated that implementation of said recommendations will have a strong negative effect on the independence of the judiciary and its justice-seeking function ⁵. A group of lawyers filed a written submission to the Chief Justice calling for an inquiry on the final report for its alleged contempt of court ⁶. A group of senior lawyers of the Bar Association wrote to the President's secretariat requesting a copy of the report, and also stated that they "have serious concerns that the contents of the report may undermine the rule of law in the country, impair the independence of the Judiciary, and erode the impartial and efficient functioning of the Attorney General's Department" ⁷. In March, leftist political party JVP, and SJB MP Field Marshal Sarath Fonseka filed writ applications requesting that the Court of Appeals overturn the recommendations of the PCoI ^{8,9}.

Statistical analysis: Thirty-five percent of the incidents were reported from the Northern and Eastern Provinces, while 14% were reported from the Western Province. The victims of 32% of the incidents were ethnic minority Tamil individuals, while only 26% of incidents were related to ethnic majority Sinhalese individuals. The majority of the victims were male. In 24% of the incidents, the victims were state officials. In 15% of incidents, the victims were journalists, while victims in another 15% were participants in memorialization events. Victims in 10% of the incidents were other protestors. One incident of abduction and 3 incidents of killings and suspicious deaths were reported. Additionally, 15% of incidents involved physical attacks, 10% involved verbal threats, 15% were related to court orders and summons, and 18% pertained to legal, institutional and policy actions. In 84% of the incidents, the alleged perpetrating party was government agents, politicians, the military or police, courts and other judicial bodies, and other state institutions and officials.

Summary of the incidents

Repression of media workers: Three incidents of physical attacks were reported. Two of them were incidents in which journalists were attacked while reporting on non-implementation of COVID-19 health regulations. Another journalist was attacked when reporting on an alleged illegal construction in a site known for ongoing ethnic tension. A journalist was questioned by police and PCol after former President Sirisena accused him of publishing a distorted and edited version of the interview he provided regarding the Easter Sunday bombing. A journalist in Batticaloa was questioned for reporting on military assisted settlements. During the interrogation, he was asked to provide information about the websites publishing his articles and their connections to the Tamil diaspora. Injunction orders were issued against 2 journalists banning them from participating in remembrance activities. Another journalist in Eastern province was arrested under the PTA for allegedly publishing photos of the LTTE leader who died in 2009. A Jaffna-based newspaper, *Uthayan*, also faced similar charges under PTA. In Northern Province, government officers were asked to disclose information if they are working as part-time employees in the media sector. In the Western Province, a gazette was issued banning government employees from providing information to the public.

Repression of memorialization: Mahaveerar Naal (Heroes' Day) to remember former Tamil militants was met with severe repression. Several court orders were issued banning memorial events in Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Mannar, and Trincomalee. Both COVID-19 and national security were cited as reasons for the ban. Though activists filed motions to challenge the court decisions, the courts upheld their decisions on the basis that LTTE is a proscribed organization in Sri Lanka. In Batticaloa, 19 persons were arrested for allegedly publishing birthday wishes for the deceased LTTE leader's birthday. It was reported that police have been investigating an additional 55 persons for allegedly posting "terrorist related content." A Tamil woman in Batticaloa demanded the release of her husband, who had been arrested for allegedly posting a photograph of the late LTTE leader on social media. She had not been provided with information about where he was detained. A local politician was interrogated for hours at a roadside in Mullaitivu. Four persons in a Tamil nationalist organization were interrogated by Mannar Police for conducting a press conference on Mahaveerar Naal. Volunteers who were clearing a cemetery for fallen LTTE militants were interrupted and their names were taken down by the Kilinochchi Police. The military pressured shop owners who had closed in observance of Mahaveerar Naal to re-open their shops. Though the court did not ban private remembrance events, police and military visited and intimidated individuals who organized such events. Police arrested a university student for lighting a lamp.

Repressive legal, policy, and institutional actions and problematic statements: Opposition politicians and activists raised concerns after strong political allies of the current government were appointed to HRCSL. The chairperson of the controversial PCol on Political Victimization was appointed as the chairperson of the Office of Missing Persons (OMP). A minister speaking to the media labelled 10 key human rights cases as a conspiracy to imprison intelligence officers by some police officers, NGOs, and western diplomats. As detainees have been protesting for their health rights, the Prisons commissioner made a statement that strict legal action will be taken against protesting prisoners. State counsel during a court hearing alleged that the lawyers representing victims of the Mahara prison protest were representing “NGO interests,” in an attempt to deny them justice. A newspaper published two news reports in November and December claiming that the government is planning to introduce new laws to regulate NGOs. A police spokesperson told the PCol on the Easter Sunday Bombing that a PTA suspect should be detained for at least a year, at the discretion of a senior police officer rather than a court. The Presidential Secretariat issued gazettes making port related services an essential service, in the context of trade unions protesting a controversial business deal that privatizes the port. The mass media minister stated that all social media users should be registered. The National Associations of Sports regulations amended time to file an appeal to one week, making it almost impossible to make appeals. Several cabinet ministers stated that online cabinet meetings have been limited to the speeches of the leaders, and important decisions are made without any discussion, without allowing any dissenting opinions. As in previous months, gazettes were issued calling for the armed forces to provide more power for the military to intervene in civilian affairs.

Repression of state employees: A minister verbally threatened the wildlife officers in a national park in Polonnaruwa for disagreeing with his opinion on allowing villagers to use forests for grazing. In Monaragala district, another forest officer complained to the Police that he was threatened by a person allegedly linked to a top politician. A week later, a group of other forest officers were threatened, physically assaulted and detained by illegal loggers. In early December, the medical doctor of Mahara Prison was subjected to fake news and a hate speech campaign, after a minister made an indirect reference accusing him of being involved in a conspiracy to cause the alleged “riot” at the prison. A COVID-19 patient spat in the face of a Public Health Inspector in Kalutara district. A coroner was threatened with death by several persons for not releasing a dead body without a PCR test. The deputy mayor in Galle allegedly threatened the medical officer of the Municipal Council, and later apologised to the medical officer. A group of persons who came to admit a patient to a hospital in Kurunegala district assaulted the security officers. A Police Constable died after being run over by a tipper truck belonging to illegal sand miners. Another police officer was hospitalized after being assaulted by a suspect. A former minister's son was arrested for allegedly threatening a police officer who was providing security at the home of a judge. A PS member in Galle district allegedly threatened and attempted to attack the technical officer of PS, demanding payment for a business contract. A death threat was allegedly made to a village officer for reportedly not including a villager in the beneficiaries list of a government subsidy programme.

Repression of politicians: Five opposition MPs were summoned to the PCol into Political Victimization, as retribution for a complaint to the Allegations of Bribery and Corruption Commission against the PCol for its alleged misuse of public funds and undue influences on the justice process. An opposition MP was summoned by the CID and questioned for hours regarding custodial deaths and the security of suspects and witnesses. Since he advocated for the security of the wife of the mastermind behind the Easter Sunday attacks, social media circles were flooded with claims linking him to the Easter Sunday bombing. A local council member was assaulted by

its temporary workers when he went to search for information about those workers being employed at a private garden of the PS chairperson for several days. A member of Puttalam PS was assaulted by a person who demanded to open the spillway of the tank. The chairperson of Valachchanai PS was allegedly assaulted by other members during the annual budget presentation. Others claimed the chairperson was attempting to pass the budget undemocratically by denying opposition members access to the council premises. A member of Ruwanwella PS also stated that he was abducted to prevent him from voting against the budget.

Other incidents: Authorities reportedly responded to a prisoners' protest demanding health rights with excessive force, resulting in 11 deaths and injuries to 107 inmates. A few days later, a court order was issued against a prisoner's rights organization preventing them from protesting the use of force, citing COVID-19. In Batticaloa, police officers threatened to force families of the disappeared into a quarantine centre if they continued to protest. In Mullaitivu, police officers attempted to disrupt a Tamil protest against state land seizures. Officers were filmed attempting to pull down banners and clashing with protestors. A pavement vendor who had protested against the Moratuwa mayor in Colombo district was arrested, and released on bail. He was accused of unlawful assembly and other charges. A village officer in Mannar district, an advocate against illegal sand mining, was murdered. A local politician of Negombo Municipal Council in Gampaha district was arrested for allegedly assaulting a villager who had refused to participate in a protest. The politician was later released on bail.

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 months of November and December 2020.

This report was prepared mainly based on 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, challenges against, questioning or attempting to record rights violations and social injustices at the hands of state or non-state apparatuses, 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 repression of dissent because of its potential to erode rights. We have also included government officials who faced reprisals when trying to do their duties.

The report is based on 67 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 the report. Section 3, Context, describes the socio-political context and some trends relating to the 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 incidents 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 narrative analysis of the incidents, while Section 7 includes a table describing each incident used in the analysis.

3. Context

Compulsory cremation of COVID-19 infected bodies was a topic of debate for more than 6 months. While initial guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health (MoH) on 27th March allowed both burial and cremation, this provision was changed in the guidelines issued 31st March 2020. Later, [an extraordinary gazette](#) was issued in April ordering compulsory cremation. Subsequently, a Fundamental Rights (FR) petition was filed at the Supreme Court challenging the compulsory cremation in May.² The Supreme Court rejected these petitions against COVID-19 cremation on 1st December.³ On 12th November, the UN Resident Coordinator in Sri Lanka, writing to the Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa on the issue of mandatory cremation, stated that compulsory cremation could have “a negative effect on social cohesion, [and] also adversely impact the measures for containing the spread of the virus as it may discourage people to access medical care.”⁴ Much controversy occurred after the government cremated the body of a deceased 20-day-old child without the consent of the child’s Muslim parents, after an antigen test identified the deceased child as COVID-19 positive.⁵ Hundreds of people engaged in a silent protest by tying white handkerchiefs to the iron fence of the Colombo cemetery, which authorities removed.⁶



Participants in the ‘White handkerchief protest’: pieces of white cloth were tied to the fence of Borella cemetery in protest of forced cremations. Photo courtesy: Vikalpa

² [Petitions challenge Sri Lankan government’s compulsory cremation rule](#). The Hindu. published 14th May 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

³ [Sri Lanka SC rejects petitions against COVID-19 cremation](#) The Hindu. published 2nd December 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

⁴ [UN Resident Coordinator writes to PM on burying COVID-19 victims](#). Colombo page. published 12th Nov 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

⁵ [Sri Lanka govt cremates a 20 day old infant without the consent of Muslim parents](#). Sri Lanka Brief. Published 10th Dec 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

⁶ [Afraid of a symbolic protest, Sri Lanka the Govt removes the white handkerchiefs tied to the cemetery fence](#). Sri Lanka Brief. Published 14th Dec 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

An inmate was killed at the Moneragala Prison on 3rd November after being assaulted by jail guards.⁷ Another inmate died in Bogambara prison on 17th November in an alleged attempt to escape.⁸ On 28th December, another suspect died in police custody in an alleged attempt to escape.⁹

Protests were held at several prisons due to rising COVID-19 cases in overcrowded and unhealthy conditions. According to the Prison Reforms Minister, protests were held at Boosa, Bogambara, Welikada, Kalutara, Negombo and Weerawila prisons¹⁰ in November. On 29th November, a protest in Mahara prison was suppressed with excessive force, resulting in the deaths of 11 inmates and injuries to 107 other inmates. Since March 2020, civil society organizations have submitted letters to the President and relevant authorities demanding that they address COVID-19 related health risks in overcrowded prisons in Sri Lanka, despite the authorities claiming they did not know about the situation.¹¹ Though some government politicians initially attempted to cover up the Mahara incident with a claim that the prisoners killed each other after consuming a psychiatric drug, post-mortem examinations and other evidence disproved this. All the prisoners died from being shot by the prison guards and/or riot control officers.



Prisoners of Bogambara Prison protesting on the prison roof, demanding PCR testing, Photo courtesy [Ada Derana](#) on 12th Nov 2020.

In November, the Human Rights of Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL), writing to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) regarding the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) detainees, stated that many detainees had complained of being pressured to provide self-incriminating statements. Alleged pressure tactics include frequent trips to police headquarters where pre-prepared statements are proffered to detainees in Sinhala for their signature, inducements such as promises of release if statements are

⁷ [Inmate Killed in Clash With Jailors](#), Ceylon Today, published 4th November 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021. ; [CPRP seeks impartial probe](#), Ceylon Today, published 5th November 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

⁸ [One dies in Bogambara Prison escape bid](#), Ceylon Today, published 19th November 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

⁹ [Civil society demands end to deaths in police custody](#), Island, published 30th Dec 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

¹⁰ Statement of Dr. Sudarshini Fernandopulle: the State Minister of Prison Reforms and Prisoners' Rehabilitation. [Parliament Hanzard records:30th Nov 2020](#), pp 1145-1146. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

¹¹ [Sri Lanka's overcrowded jails tense over COVID 19](#), Economy next, published 27th March 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021; [Letter on Prison Reforms in the wake of COVID19. Joint statement of civil society organizations](#), published 26th March 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021

signed, and threats such as charges based on falsehoods if they are not signed.¹² A considerable number of PTA detainees are ethnic Tamils who are unable to understand the Sinhalese language. Sri Lanka Brief reported that 18 young people from Kattankudy, Eastern province were arrested and detained under PTA in the last week of November 2020. Arresting officers told their families that they were arrested for being connected with a social media group in India, based on information received from Indian intelligence. According to Sri Lanka Brief, there has been no credible evidence to support that the suspects are linked to terrorism or any illegal activities.¹³ TNA MP Shanakiya Rasamanickam, speaking at the Parliament, stated that more than 50 Tamil youth in the North and East have been arrested. He also revealed that a 29-year-old government servant was arrested under the PTA simply for being tagged in someone else's Facebook post.¹⁴ Meanwhile, an opposition MP alleged that police are planning to arrest 200 persons who are critical of the government, including journalists.¹⁵

In November, Tamil people in the Northern and Eastern areas celebrated Maaveerar Naal (the Great Heroes Day) in remembrance of the LTTE militants who died during the civil war. This was met with severe restrictions. Tamil politicians and activists in the North and East organized remembrance events. On 3rd December, speaking at the Parliament, the Minister of Public Security, Rear Admiral (retired) Sarath Weerasekara stated that it was a big mistake not to ban the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) after winning the war in 2009, and alleged that the TNA is the 'political voice' of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.¹⁶ Meanwhile, the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) published a list of complaints and information regarding missing and disappeared persons.¹⁷ Most of these victims disappeared during the civil war (1983-2009), while some also disappeared in the post-war period.

On 8th December, the report of the controversial Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCoI) into Political Victimization was handed over to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.¹⁸ The Political Victimization PCoI has been heavily criticized by human rights activists, opposition politicians and others for its undue interference into ongoing legal cases.^{19 20}

There were military appointments to several key government positions. Major General (Retd.) Jagath Alwis was appointed Secretary to the Ministry of Public Security.²¹ Major General (Retd.) Kamal Gunaratna was appointed Secretary to the state Ministry of National Security, Home Affairs and Disaster Management. Major General (Retd.) W. P. Palitha Fernando was appointed secretary to the State Ministry of Wildlife Protection.²² Further, Major General Dr. Sanjeeva Munasinghe, Secretary, Ministry of Health, and General Shavendra Silva, Commander, Sri Lankan Army and Head of the COVID – 19 Task Force, were appointed as members of the Presidential Task Force for National Deployment

¹² [HRCSL writes to IGP on Detentions under the Prevention of Terrorism Act](#). HRCSL. published 24th Nov 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

¹³ [Sri Lanka: 18 Young men and women from Eastern Province arrested and detained under PTA](#). Sri Lanka Brief. published 17th Dec 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2020.

¹⁴ ["Youth arrested bec someone tagged him in a Facebook post about Prabakaran" TNA MP Shanakiya \(Video\)](#). Newswire. published 5th Dec 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2020.

¹⁵ Statement of MP Bakeer Markar. [Parliament Hanzard records:20th Nov 2020](#). p534. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

¹⁶ [Not banning TNA a big mistake – Weerasekara](#). Ceylon Today. published 4th Dec 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

¹⁷ [The Office on Missing Persons \(OMP\) publishes a list of complaints and information regarding missing and disappeared persons](#). Sri Lanka Brief. published 26th Nove 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

¹⁸ [Report of the Commission to Investigate Political Victimization handed over to President](#). Official website of the President. published 8th Dec 2020. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

¹⁹ [Five SJB MPs Ordered to Appear Before Commission](#). Ceylon Today. published 9th Nov 2020. Last accessed 2nd March 2021.

²⁰ [Amnesty International Letter to Secretary Pompeo Regarding His Oct. 27 Visit to Sri Lanka](#). Amnesty International. published 19th Oct 2020. Last accessed 2nd March 2021.

²¹ [Appointments by the President: Extra ordinary gazette 2206/14](#). GoSL. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

²² [Appointments by the President: Extra ordinary Gazette 2205/15](#). GoSL. Last accessed 5th March 2021

and Vaccination Plan for COVID-19 Vaccine.²³ Palitha Fernando, who was appointed Secretary of Wildlife Protection, is one key suspect in the infamous Avant Garde Floating Armoury case.²⁴

Local communities in the North and East protested, accusing the government of recent seizures of their farmland for military constructions and forest conservation activities. Protests were held in Mandaitivu village in Jaffna,²⁵ Venavil village in Puthukkudiyiruppu in Mullaitivu District,²⁶ Mylanthanaimadu, and Periya Maadhavanai in Batticaloa district.^{27 28} However, it seemed that the opposite of this trend occurred in other parts of the country. *Anidda* newspaper reports that a circular 2020/1 issued by the Secretary of the Ministry of Wildlife and Forest conservation on 14th November giving powers to district secretaries to use 'residual forests (අවශේෂ වනාන්තර)' for economically or otherwise beneficial purposes has led to increased forest clearing. While 'residual forests' is not a legally defined term, environmentalists accuse this circular of attempting to provide lands to political supporters. This situation has made it difficult for forest officers to protect the forests that are illegally cleared by residents for chena cultivation. Meanwhile, speaking at the Parliament, C.B. Rathnayake, Minister of Wildlife and Forest Conservation, stated that at least 10 deaths of wildlife and forest conservation staff occur each year, due to illegal activities that occur in the forests.²⁹ There were several incidents of alleged damage to forests³⁰ with the alleged involvement of politicians, including the incident of Flood Plains National Park in Polonnaruwa, discussed in this report. Meanwhile, the case on the deforestation of Wilpattu forest for the purpose of resettlement of Muslim IDPs in 2012 was decided in November.³¹ The case was filed by an environmental group against a former minister and other respondents. The court declared that while resettlement of IDPs was necessary, it was done in violation of existing law in this instance. Therefore, the minister who was instrumental in releasing the land was asked to pay the expenses for the replantation of the forest. The judgement did not indicate anything regarding the fate of IDPs, who could again become displaced.

²³ [Appointments by the President. Extra ordinary gazette 2208-33](#), GoSL. Last accessed 5th March 2021

²⁴ [Avant-garde CEO and Major Gen Palitha Fernando indicted](#), Newsfirst. published 12th Sep 2018. Last accessed 6th Mar 2021.; අධිවේදනාලාභී පාලිත ජරනාන්ද අමාත්‍යාංශ ලේකම් ධුරයට. *Anidda*. published 21st Dec 2020. Last accessed 6th Mar 2021.

²⁵ [Tamil politicians and locals in Jaffna protest against Sri Lankan navy land grab efforts](#). Tamil Guardian.

²⁶ [Tamils in Mullaitivu step up protest for land and take to the streets](#). Tamil Guardian.

²⁷ [Sinhala colonisation steps up in Batticaloa as farmers encroach land in Mylanthanaimadu](#). Tamil Guardian.

²⁸ [TNA pledges to file lawsuit against Sinhala land grabbers in Batticaloa](#). Tamil Guardian.

²⁹ [Parliament Hanzard records: 7th Dec 2020](#). page 2464. GoSL. Last accessed 5th March 2021.

³⁰ [Sri Lanka: Veddah Chief to file a lawsuit against the destruction in the forest reserve](#). Sri Lanka Brief. published 18th Dec 2020. Last accessed 7th March 2021.

³¹ [CEJ wins -Wilpattu judgment issued](#). Centre for Environmental Justice. published 16th Nov 2020. Last accessed 5th Mar 2020.

4. Updates of previous cases

The arrest of 25-year-old poet Ahnaf Jazeem, aka Mannaaramudhu Ahnaf, from Mannar, under the PTA came to light in December 2020, 6 months after his arrest. He has been detained since May 15th, 2020, after copies of his book of poetry were found at the premises of a school (named the School of Excellence) in Madurankuliya, Puttalam. This school shares funding sources with, and has thus been linked to, the Save the Pearl charity organization, in which human rights Attorney-at-Law (AAL) Hejaaz Hizbullah played a key role. The CID has claimed that this book, which they allege is an “extremist” text, strengthens the allegations against Hejaaz Hizbullah.³² Jazeem’s family has filed a complaint with the HRCSL regarding his arrest.³³ As of the end of the year 2020, he has spent 7 months and 17 days (231 days) in detention.



Poet Ahnaf Jazeem, Courtesy: Daily FT



Lawyer Hizbullah, courtesy: Daily Mirror

The Law Association for Asia & the Pacific made a statement expressing grave concern over "the arbitrary and unlawful arrest, and prolonged detention of prominent human rights lawyer, Hejaaz Hizbullah."³⁴ On December 5th, Hizbullah was allowed to meet with his first child, 3 weeks after the child's birth.³⁵ On December 10th, when Hizbullah’s petition requesting confidential access to his lawyers was taken up at the court of appeal, one of the two judges withdrew from hearing the petition, citing unexplained personal reasons.³⁶ On 15th December, the Sri Lankan Attorney General agreed to grant Hizbullah confidential access to his lawyers for the first time since his arrest in April. Previously, he had been given access to lawyers several times (before September), only in the presence of CID officers.³⁷ Hizbullah was arrested on 14th April 2020. By the end of the year 2020, he had spent 8 months and 18 days (262 days) in detention.

³² [Ahnaf Jazeem: A young poet in detention for six months without trial in Sri Lanka](#). Sri Lanka Brief. published 8th Dec 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021.

³³ [Complaint Lodged With HRCSL Over Poet Ahnaf Jazeem Detained Under PTA](#). Colombo Telegraph. published 31st Dec 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021.

³⁴ [Tweet](#). @ViranCorea. published 17th Nov 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021.

³⁵ [Tweet](#). @Justice4Hejaaz. published 6th Dec 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021.

³⁶ [Judge recuses from considering Hejaaz Hizbullah petition](#). Newsfirst. published 10th Dec 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021.

³⁷ [Tweet](#). @Justice4Hejaaz. published 15th Dec 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021.

Shani Abeysekera is the former head of CID of Police and a well-known detective who led major investigations into high profile legal cases involving military and police personnel and politicians who were then in opposition, but are now in power. He was arrested in July 2020 for charges of alleged fabrication of evidence in relation to the murder case of a millionaire, in which a top police official and 5 others were sentenced to death.³⁸ Abeysekera's family believes that he is being targeted for exposing human rights abuses implicating top politicians.³⁹ When he was diagnosed with COVID-19 while in detention in Mahara prison, HRCSL intervened to ensure that he had been provided with proper healthcare.⁴⁰ Abeysekera's bail application was refused on 9th December at the Gampaha High Court.⁴¹ On the 10th of December, he filed a new fundamental rights petition seeking a declaration that his arrest and remand is illegal, naming the Inspector General of Police, Director of the Colombo Crimes Division, former CID Inspector Nishantha De Silva, Senior DIG Deshabandu Tennakoon and the Attorney General as respondents. His petition also highlighted his poor health condition, and the lack of evidence for his arrest and detention. As an interim measure, he requested an order to the IGP to provide adequate security if he is taken out of the prison for investigations, including weapons searches while in remand custody. He requested that the court order the respondents to pay compensation of 3 million rupees.⁴²

Three suspects in the assault on two Tamil journalists in October in Mullaitivu were granted bail on 17th November. Two suspects had been granted bail previously. *Tamil Guardian* correspondents Shanmugam Thavaseelan and Kanapathipillai Kumanan were assaulted while reporting on illegal deforestation. The journalists had captured the suspects illegally smuggling timber on video. Additional reports were submitted to the court by the Police and the Forest Department. The next court hearing will be on 2nd February, 2021.⁴³

The murder case of journalist Lasantha Wickramatunga was taken before the Mount Lavinia Magistrate Udesh Ranatunga on 4th December 2020. Though officers from the CID were present in the court, there was no representation from the Attorney General's Department. The case is postponed to the 4th of June 2021.⁴⁴

The contempt of court case against MP Ranjan Ramanayake was taken before the Supreme Court (SC) on 17th November and 18th December. Since the presentation of evidence and oral submissions had been completed, SC decided to convene the hearing to resolve the issues arising during the trial, and to clarify certain matters which had been revealed during the examination of evidence. The court hearings were postponed a few times due to the COVID-19 situation. This case is related to a media statement made by then-Minister MP Ramanayake on August 21, 2017, claiming that the majority of judges and lawyers in the country were corrupt. Subsequently, a Buddhist monk and a former military official filed a complaint against Ramanayake accusing him of insulting and undermining the public's trust in the judiciary, and requested that the SC try him for contempt of court and impose appropriate punishment. The SC postponed the case to the 12th of January 2021.⁴⁵

³⁸ [Siyam murder: Vass Gunawardena, son and 4 others found guilty](#), Ada Derana, published 27th Nov 2015. last accessed 6th March 2021.

³⁹ [Former Police investigator jailed with COVID-19](#), Amnesty, published 27th Nov 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021.

⁴⁰ [HRCSL letter to Prisons commissioner](#), Letter dated 25th Nov 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021.

⁴¹ [Shani Abeysekera's bail application rejected](#), Newsfirst, published 9th Dec 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021.

⁴² [Ex-CID director Shani Abeysekera files fundamental rights petition against his arrest and remand](#), Colombo page, published 10th Dec 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021.

⁴³ [Journalist attack suspects released on bail](#), Tamil Guardian, published 18th Nov 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021.

⁴⁴ [Lasantha Wickrematunge homicide case is postponed](#), Newsfirst, published 04 Dec, 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021.

⁴⁵ [Contempt of Court case against former minister Ranjan Ramanayake to be taken up on December 08](#), Colombo Page, published 17th Nov 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021.; [Supreme Court postpones the case filed against MP Ranjan Ramanayake](#), Newsfirst, published 18th Dec 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021.;

5. Statistical Analysis

This analysis is based on 67 incidents.⁴⁶ Due to the diversity of the incidents, statistical analysis is done based on the number of incidents. The detailed list of the incidents is presented in Section 7: Table of incidents.

It is difficult to divide these incidents according to the number of victims. Some incidents included multiple individuals as victims. For example, an arrest of 19 individuals⁴⁷ was considered a single incident. At times, it was difficult to estimate how many individuals would be affected, particularly for incidents relating to legal, policy and institutional actions. In at least two instances, two incidents relating to one victim were included as separate incidents.⁴⁸

Geographical Area	Number	Percentage
Colombo (in Western Province)	7	10%
Gampaha and Kalutara and Western Province	7	10%
Northern and Eastern provinces	24	35%
Other areas	12	18%
Online	3	4%
Not Applicable	14	21%
Total	67	100%

Table 1: Geographical location of the incidents

When geographical location is analyzed, 35% of the incidents were reported from the Northern and Eastern Provinces, former civil war zones. Western Province reported 20% of the total incidents, including 10% of incidents from Colombo district, where the country's capital is located. Only 18% of incidents were reported from other areas in the country. Four percent of incidents were reported online. Twenty-one percent of incidents were considered not applicable, as they were legal, policy, and/or institutional actions affecting more than one specific geographical area in the country.

Ethnicity of the victim	Number	Percentage
Sinhala	18	27%
Tamil	22	33%
Muslim	3	4%
Incidents impacting more than one ethnic group	17	25%
Ethnicity not mentioned	7	10%
Total	67	100%

Table 2: Ethnicity of the victims

⁴⁶ The incidents No. 37 and 38 in the table were considered two incidents each, as they included issuance of two gazette notifications in each incident. Therefore, the statistical analysis includes 67 incidents, while the table includes 66 incidents.

⁴⁷ Incident No 21. Arresting 19 individuals in Batticaloa for allegedly publishing Birthday wishes to the late LTTE leader on social media.

⁴⁸ Incidents 5 and 6, relating to journalist Shirley Upul Kumara, and incidents 53 and 54, relating to MP Eran Wickramaratne.

When the incidents were analyzed in relation to the ethnicity of the victims, the highest percentage (33%) of incidents were related to the ethnic minority Tamil individuals. Second, 27% of incidents were related to ethnic majority Sinhalese individuals. Third, 4% of incidents were related to Muslim individuals. These figures indicate a large deviation from the general ethnic composition in the country.⁴⁹ This shows systematic discrimination and targeting of the country's ethnic minorities, especially of Tamil individuals. 25% of incidents were related to victims of more than one ethnic group, while in 10% of incidents, we were unable to find the ethnicity of the victims.

Gender of the victim	Number	Percentage
Male	33	49%
Female	2	3%
Both	23	34%
Not Applicable	4	6%
Not mentioned	5	7%
Total	67	100%

Table 3: Gender of the victims

When the incidents were analyzed in relation to the gender of the victims, the majority (49%) of the victims were male. Only 3% of the incidents related to women. In 6% of incidents, gender was considered not applicable, as the incidents involved institutions or organizations. In 7% of incidents, we were unable to find the gender of the victim(s).

Type of victims	Number	Percentage
Journalists	10	15%
Victims and witnesses	4	6%
Participants in memorialization events	10	15%
Other protestors	7	10%
Civil society organizations and activists	3	4%
State officials	15	22%
Politicians	9	13%
Others	9	13%
Total	67	100%

Table 4: Category of victims

Fifteen percent of incidents were related to repression of journalists and media workers. Another 15% of incidents involved repression of memorialization events organized in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Two incidents (3%) reported above under the category of

⁴⁹ According to the national census conducted in Sri Lanka in 2012, approximately 75% of the population are Sinhalese, 15% are Tamil, and 9.5% are Muslim.

victims and witnesses included other protests conducted by victims in the North and East. Ten percent of incidents involving other protestors were also reported. They were mainly from the Western Province, related to prisoners' rights, a labour strike in the port, and a local vendor's protest. Therefore, at least 28% of incidents were related to freedom of assembly.

In another 22% of incidents, victims were state officials. These mainly included state officials who faced reprisals at the hands of politicians and provincial level state employees prohibited from issuing information to the media, as well as police, health officials, and forest officers who faced physical attacks.

In 13% of incidents, victims were politicians. Victims in 4% of incidents were civil society organizations and activists. Thirteen percent of incidents involved other types of victims.

Type of violation	Number	Percentage
Abduction	1	1%
Killings and suspicious deaths	3	4%
Physical attacks	10	15%
Attempted physical attack	2	3%
Verbal threats	7	10%
Fake news and hate speech	2	3%
Arrests	4	6%
Court orders or summons	10	15%
Military/police questioning	5	7%
Intimidation	5	7%
Legal, institutional, and policy actions	11	16%
Problematic statements	5	7%
Other	2	3%
Total	67	100%

Table 5: Types of violations

There was one incident (1%) of an alleged abduction, while 4% of incidents (3 incidents) were related to killings and suspicious deaths. Among the killings, 11 prisoners were shot dead during a protest demanding their health rights, one environmental rights advocate against illegal sand mining was killed in a suspicious manner, and a police officer was killed by being run over by a truck belonging to illegal sand miners. Sixteen percent of incidents (11 incidents) involved physical attacks and attempted physical attacks. Victims of these incidents included 3 journalists, 5 state officials, 3 local politicians and 1 person who refused to participate in a protest. Verbal threats were made in 7 incidents (10%). Victims in 6 out of these 7 incidents were state officials. In 4 of these incidents, the alleged verbal threats were made by politicians.

There were 4 incidents (6%) of arrests. Three out of these four were related to memorialization, and allegedly publishing content in support of "terrorism." In one incident, 19 individuals were arrested.

Fifteen percent of incidents were related to court orders and summons. This included 8 court orders and 2 summons by PCols. Seven out of eight court orders were related to memorialization.

Police or military interrogated individuals in 5 incidents (7%). These included 2 journalists and 2 opposition politicians. There were 5 incidents related to intimidation. 4 of these incidents were related to intimidating participants of memorialization events by police and military.

There were also 12 incidents (15%) of legal, institutional, and policy actions, and 5 incidents (7%) of problematic statements by politicians and key state officials that could result in possible repression of dissent.

Alleged Responsible party	Number	Percentage
President or central government	10	15%
Other Politicians	12	18%
Military or Police	17	25%
Court	7	10%
Judicial bodies	3	4%
Other Government Institutions and officers	4	6%
Illegal business persons	3	4%
Others	10	15%
Unknown	1	1%
Total	67	100%

Table 6: Alleged responsible party to the incidents

As in previous reports, the alleged responsible party in the majority of incidents were government institutions, officials, politicians, and other government agents. The President and/or the central government were allegedly responsible for 15% of incidents, while other politicians were responsible for 18% of incidents.

In 25% of incidents, the alleged responsible party were military or police. Courts and other judiciary bodies were allegedly responsible for 14% of incidents. In 6% of incidents, other government institutions and officials were responsible.

Four percent of incidents were related to people conducting illegal businesses, particularly ones that cause damage to the environment such as illegal sand mining and forest logging. In ten percent of incidents, other parties were responsible. In 1 incident, the alleged responsible party is unknown, though a nationalist group in the North was accused.

6. Analysis of the incidents

6.1 Repression of Media workers

Physical attacks: In November, a journalist in Jaffna was attacked by an unidentified group. On the day before the attack, he was threatened by a nationalist organization engaged in relief activities for criticizing them on social media for not following COVID-19 regulations on social distancing. A journalist working at the newspaper *Mawbima* also faced an attempted physical attack while reporting on a Public Health Inspectors (PHIs) inspection visit in Welekade in Badulla. Both of these physical attacks are likely connected to incidents in which journalists faced reprisals for criticizing lack of implementation of COVID-19 regulations by non-state actors. A journalist in Mawanella in Kegalle district also stated that he was physically assaulted and subjected to death threats, and his camera was damaged, by a group of persons while reporting an incident of alleged illegal construction in the controversial Devanagala archeological site where ethnic tensions exist.

Questioning, Arrests, and other legal cases against journalists



Jaffna-based newspaper *Uthayan* was charged under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) for publishing a photo of late LTTE leader Prabhakaran on his birthday. Photo courtesy: [Tamil Guardian](#)

On 24th November, a police division attached to the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCoI) on the Easter Sunday bombings recorded a verbal statement from BBC journalist Shirley Upul Kumara, after former President Maithreepala Sirisena accused him of publishing an edited and distorted version of Sirisena's original interview with the BBC. On 11th December, Kumara was questioned on the same matter by the PCoI again. In both instances, he denied the allegations and presented evidence of the friendly relationship he had with the President after the interview.

Batticaloa police officers interrogated Batticaloa Press Club (BPC) Secretary and journalist Selvakumar Nilanthan for nearly two hours for reporting critically on the military-assisted Sinhala settlements in Batticaloa, citing its negative economic consequences on cattle farmers in the area. During his interrogation, the police reportedly asked him to reveal the names of colleagues who were assigned to the story and the websites that publish his articles, and questioned whether those sites are linked with the Tamil diaspora. Jaffna Koppay police filed for injunctions at the Jaffna Magistrate's Court against two Jaffna-based journalists, T Premananth and T Kandeepan, alleging that they were involved in planning Maaveerar Naal activities. A Tamil journalist, a photographer and a member of the Batticaloa Press Club named Gokulan, was arrested by the Sri Lankan Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) in connection with allegations that he had published pictures of the LTTE on Facebook. The police charged the Jaffna-based newspaper *Uthayan* with violating the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) by publishing images and quotes of Velupillai Prabhakaran, the late leader of the LTTE, on his birthday, November 26. *Uthayan's* publisher, while speaking to the media, stated that these charges were filed as retribution by the police because the newspaper had previously published the derogatory comments of the Jaffna police Headquarters Inspector, which caused an uproar on social media. The newspaper and its staff have been a target for violence for many years.

Repressive legal and policy actions

8. No Employee or Officer of Provincial Council Public Service shall release Official Information to the Mass Media.

(1) The Head of the Institution may use his discretion subjected to the approval of the Secretary of the Ministry, in supplying to the Mass Media or the Public, information regarding activities of the Provincial Council coming within his purview, which may be of interest and value to the public.

(2) Such information should normally be channeled to the Mass Media through the Director of Government Information. However in the event the Head of the Institution deems it is necessary to issue any information directly, subjected to the approval of the Secretary of the Ministry, he may issue such information directly

(3) The information issued in terms of Sub-section (1) above shall in all cases be confined to facts, statistics, etc. And on no account shall any expression of opinion be proffered

Extraordinary Gazette No No. 2203/27, Western Province Provincial Council, Rules made under Section 32 of the Provincial Councils Act, No. 42 of 1987

In the Northern Province, government officers were asked to disclose information to the government if they are working as part-time employees in the media sector. In the Western province, "Rules of Disciplinary Procedure of the Public Service" were gazetted, preventing government employees from providing information to the mass media and public. As gazetted, such information will ordinarily be provided through the Director of Government Information. The institutional head may also decide to provide information, subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Ministry. These actions will severely restrict the public's right to information.

6.2 Repression of Memorialization

Maaveerar Naal (the Great Heroes day) is an event to remember the deaths of former LTTE militants. Though Tamils face barriers in attempting to memorialize their former rebels, the government has allowed remembrance of former JVP rebels in the south without any restrictions. Many incidents of harassment and prevention of memorialization events were reported in the Northern and Eastern Provinces in the end of November and early December.

Court orders

A number of court orders were passed banning Maaveerar Naal remembrance events in a number of areas in the Northern and Eastern provinces. On 19th November, Mannar court passed a judgement enforcing a ban on commemorative activities in Mannar from 21st to 27th November 2020, based on a request by Mannar Police citing COVID-19 health regulations. However, when a group of activists filed a motion requesting that the commemorations be allowed while following health regulations, this motion was denied on the grounds that the LTTE is a proscribed organization in Sri Lanka. Subsequently, the ban was further extended.



Attorney-at-Law MP Sumanthiran, ITAK youth wing and activist, V.S. Sivakaran in front of the Mannar court. Photo courtesy: Tamil Guardian

On 19th November, Vavuniya magistrate court issued orders banning eight politicians from multiple political parties from taking part in remembrance events in the following week. Mullativu magistrate court banned 46 persons from holding commemoration events. The Kayts Magistrate's Court imposed a ban on observing Maaveerar Naal and other remembrances in Jaffna from November 21 to November 27, citing COVID-19 health regulations. On 26th November, Trincomalee Magistrate Court also issued a similar ban preventing any remembrance events from being held in 7 police divisions of Trincomalee

district for the next 14 days. The court had previously refused to issue such a ban. However, an additional Solicitor General of the Attorney General's Department and a team of senior police officers resubmitted their request to the court. The court inquired about the Police Department's reasons for seeking such an order, when they already have the power to intervene and prevent such events. The AG department responded that direct use of police power could result in conflict between the general public and the police, and use of physical force could be used by LTTE sympathizers and refugees for their advantage. On 24th November, the Jaffna High Court also rejected an appeal against court bans of remembrance events in Mullaitivu and Vavuniya.

Arrests and interrogation

Batticaloa police arrested 19 people for allegedly posting birthday wishes online for Velupillai Prabhakaran, the leader of the LTTE rebels who was killed at the end of the Sri Lankan civil war in 2009. The police also reported that they are investigating another 55 people for allegedly posting "terrorist-related" content online. On 22nd November, a local politician in the Thunukkai Divisional Council in Mullaitivu, S. Sujansan, was interrogated for over three hours in connection with an alleged plan to organize a remembrance event for the victims of a Claymore⁵⁰ attack in 2007 during the civil war. The Sri Lankan police in Mannar interrogated four people, including the head of a Tamil nationalist organisation, who conducted a press conference following the ban on observing Maaveerar Naal. A Tamil woman in Batticaloa demanded the release of her husband, who was arrested by the authorities under the PTA after allegedly posting an image of LTTE leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran on his Facebook page. She alleged that her husband has been detained in solitary confinement without receiving a court hearing, and that she has not been informed of his whereabouts.

Other incidents



Kilinochchi Police recorded the names of individuals clearing a cemetery in preparation for Maaveerar Naal (the Great Heroes day). Photo courtesy: Tamil Guardian

⁵⁰ A Claymore is a remote-controlled mine that is fired and detonated or can be activated by a tripwire. Eleven individuals, including 7 students between the ages of 13 and 22, died in the Claymore attack on November 27, 2007 in Iyankulam in the Mullaitivu District.

Kilinochchi Police interrupted individuals who were clearing the grounds of a destroyed LTTE cemetery in preparation for Maaveerar Naal and recorded the names of volunteers, citing COVID-19 health concerns, despite the group having followed safety regulations.

CCTV footage in Chavakachcheri in Jaffna showed armed Sri Lankan police and army personnel surrounding a home in an apparent act of intimidation, as part of a crackdown against remembrance events across the North-East. The residents of the home were holding a small private ceremony to mark the day.

The Army reportedly demanded that business owners in Mullaitivu reopen their shops after they closed them in observance of Maaveerar Naal. Shop owners also reported receiving intimidating calls from intelligence officers.

Though the court orders allowed private remembrance events, individuals who lit candles in their own homes were allegedly visited by the military and police and asked to report to the local police station. Private homes that organized remembrance events were surrounded by the military.

Police arrested a Jaffna University student for lighting a lamp for the Tamil Hindu festival of Karthika Vilakkeedu (Festival of Lights), due to the festival's proximity to Maaveerar Naal. Police reported that they received information that the student was attempting to pay tribute to fallen LTTE fighters. The Police and military also smashed lamps and destroyed banana trees and festival decorations, and threatened residents who celebrated this festival both at private residences and temples.

6.3 Repressive legal, policy and institutional actions and problematic statements



A new Chairperson and Commissioners to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka were appointed by the President on 10th December. Photo Courtesy: HRCSL

Opposition politicians and activists raised questions about the independence of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL), after a former Minister and Governor under the previous Mahinda Rajapakse administration was appointed as its chairman. His son also serves as a minister in the current government. In addition, a fact sheet published by Sri Lanka Brief revealed that other new members of HRCSL had political connections to the ruling government. It also found that at least 4 out of the 5 members appointed had no human rights background, including its chairman.

In a letter addressed to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Sandaya Ekneligoda, the wife of the abducted and disappeared journalist Prageeth Ekneligoda, said that the appointment of Upali Abeyrathne as the chairperson of the Office of Missing Persons (OMP), given his background and conduct, is a “direct insult and an act of violence” against families of the disappeared. Retired Justice Upali Abeyrathne is the former chairperson of the controversial Presidential Commission on Political Victimization. The commission has provided the space for suspects in legal cases, including those accused of enforced disappearances, to raise complaints before the commission, “effectively undermining ongoing judicial processes and intimidating victims and witnesses,” according to Ekneligoda. State Minister Jayantha Samaraweera, speaking to the media, alleged that “several witnesses are ready to reveal how a group of former and incumbent MPs, representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), some officers of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) and certain representatives of Western diplomatic missions hatched a conspiracy to file

10 cases, based on false charges, to imprison around 100 intelligence officers.”⁵¹ He also accused former Director of the CID, Shani Abeysekara,⁵² and other police investigation officers, Nishantha Candappa⁵³ and Tissera, for allegedly “exerting undue influence in filing false charges against ‘war heroes’ attached to the Intelligence Services in order to put them behind bars.” The 10 cases highlighted in his statement refer to major investigations against the military as well as the politicians then in opposition, but now in power, in relation to crimes such as killings and abductions of journalists, politicians and others.⁵⁴ His statement as a minister, as well as the recent controversial conduct of institutions such as PCol on Political Victimization, seem to discourage investigation officers from conducting their duties, create fear that they may face reprisal in the future, and have an overall negative impact on the process of justice and accountability.

In the context of prisoners’ demands for PCR tests for all detainees to ensure their health in overcrowded prisons where COVID-19 cases were rapidly increasing, Prisons Commissioner Thushara Upuldeniya stated that “if a detainee engages in protest or another illegal activity, maximum punishments under the prison laws, regulations, and quarantine act will be given.” This statement of the Prisons Commissioner seems to be an attempt to threaten and intimidate prisoners to dissuade them from engaging in peaceful protests demanding their health rights. During the Mahara prison court hearing, Nishara Jayaratne, the state counsel and the Coordinating Officer of Attorney General (AG) reportedly stated that cases can't be heard based on the instructions of NGOs, in an attempt to label attorneys appearing on behalf of the victims of the Mahara Prison protest as representing “NGO interests.” The following day, a group of lawyers representing the victims of the Mahara prison protest made a joint complaint to the Chief Justice and the AG requesting that they conduct an inquiry over her comments.

On 25th November, *Divaina* newspaper reported that a draft law to regulate NGOs will be presented to the Parliament in the coming two months. This law will be introduced to regulate “NGOs that receive millions of dollar funds,” according to the newspaper. On 24th December 2020, another similar article appeared in the same newspaper with the title “New laws will be introduced to regulate NGOs in the next year.” The newspaper alleged that “NGOs pose a threat to national security.” It also revealed that the draft act is being prepared by Dr. Susantha Goonatilake and will be presented to the government in the next year. The new act will require NGOs to reveal their funds to the government.

A police spokesman, Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Ajith Rohana, told the PCol probing the Easter Sunday attacks that the power to issue detention orders for suspects arrested for terrorism-related activities should be granted to a DIG instead of a court of law. He also said that bail should not be granted to those arrested for terrorism-related charges for at least a year. Handing over such powers to DIGs could lead to abuses of power and

⁵¹ This incident occurred on 31st of October. Since we could not include it in the October report, we have included it in this report.

⁵² Shani Abeysekara is currently held in detention, see section 4: Updates on Previous Legal Cases.

⁵³ Nishantha Candappa alias Nishantha Silva is currently seeking asylum.

⁵⁴ These 10 cases include (1) the abduction of Journalist Prageeth Eknaligoda, (2) the murder of Editor Lasantha Wickrematunge, (3) the assault of Journalist Keith Noyahr, (4) the assault of Editor Upali Tennakoon, (5) the abduction of four youths in buses, (6) the abduction of 11 youths in Trincomalee, (7) the murder of former MP Joseph Pararajasingham, (8) the murder of former MP Nadarajah Raviraj, and (9) the murder of rugby player Wasim Thajudeen.

increases in the torture of suspects while in detention. Such a power could also easily undermine dissent, as many journalists and HRDs have been falsely charged under the PTA.

The Presidential Secretariat issued two extraordinary gazettes on 16th and 30th of December, declaring the Sri Lanka Ports Authority and its services as Essential Public Services. This was issued in the context of port workers and trade unions protesting against a controversial joint business venture in the Eastern port with an Indian company. Declaring as “essential services” provides powers to suspend employees who are not attending the work. This has been a known tactic to stop protests and trade union actions in the government sector in Sri Lanka.

While speaking to the media, Minister of Mass Media Keheliya Rambukwella said that all social media users should be registered with the government. “We are in the opinion that inappropriate content in social media must be regulated. We are preparing a system [for] social media users, including the Facebook users, to be registered under our ministry,” he said. After many social media users and opposition politicians criticized his statement, he made a correction, stating that the government is only considering the registration of “foreign digital operators,” contradicting his previous statement. However, the following day, an interview he gave was published in a state-owned newspaper claiming that the ministry is planning to “register social media pages and sites that provide information to the public.” He further clarified, “we introduce registration because that will give some responsibility to any social media page or site that provides information. They cannot just publish some hearsay and later deny it. We need to document it all.”

On 23rd December, the National Associations of Sports Regulations were amended to reduce the time to appeal any decision or action of a registered National Association of Sports from two weeks to one week. This could make it practically impossible to file appeals against the National Association of Sports.

In December, *Anidda* newspaper reported that several cabinet ministers stated that time to express their opinions has been severely limited in online meetings. They alleged that online cabinet meetings have been limited to only listening and responding to speeches made by leaders, often resulting in the approval of cabinet papers without proper discussion.

Monthly gazettes calling on the armed forces to maintain public order were reissued in November and December. Similar gazettes have been issued for more than a year. These gazettes grant additional powers to the military to intervene in civilian affairs. Human rights defenders, the families of victims, and survivors of violations fear that this may lead to more intimidation and surveillance of them and restrictions on activities that may be perceived as dissent.

6.4 Repression of state employees

Wildlife and forest officers: On 25th November, the State Minister of Wildlife verbally threatened several forest officers of Flood Plains National Park in Polonnaruwa when they refused and criticized the Minister's request to allow villagers to grass feed their cattle at the national park. These officers later had a media conference and explained their opinions, and said that the minister was exerting undue influence on them to violate the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance. Later, the State Minister of Land Management, State Enterprises Land and Property Development Roshan Ranasinghe, speaking at the Parliament, said the "behaviour of these officers is disgusting. They did a media show. So legal action should be taken against this type of 'rascal' (thakkadi) officers." The behaviour of the ministers was heavily criticized on social media. On 23rd December, Monaragala District Forest officer D.M.B.M. Bandara made a complaint to the police alleging that the coordinating secretary of State Minister Shashindra Rajapaksha, Dhammika Vithanage, has been obstructing his duties and threatening him in order to prevent him from taking legal action against illegal loggers. On 27th November, a few forest officers of Vandama in Wellawaya Forest Office in Monaragala district were threatened, physically assaulted, and detained by a group of illegal loggers when they attempted to arrest them.

Health workers: In early December, the medical doctor of Mahara Prison, the site of the controversial prison protest, was subjected to fake news and a hate speech campaign after a minister indirectly referenced him allegedly providing psychiatric drugs to prisoners and labelled him a member of an opposition political party. The Sri Lanka College of Psychiatrists rejected the scientific possibility of his claims. Following this statement, a family photo of the medical doctor, Indrajith Panawenna, was shared online, with the title 'suspect JVP medical doctor who gave intoxication tablets to the prisoners.' Panawenna was subjected to various hate speech comments as a result of this fake media campaign, with an obvious political link. JVP stated that Panawenna is not a member of JVP, though they are not aware of his political views.

A COVID-19 patient spat in the face of a Public Health Inspector in Atalugama in Kalutara district. The suspect was arrested two days later, and was brought before the Magistrate of Panadura, where he was ordered to be remanded further.⁵⁵ A coroner was threatened with death by several persons, for refusing to release a dead body without a PCR test. Later test results confirmed that the corpse was COVID-19 positive. This occurred in the context of mandatory cremation practices for COVID-19 deaths and suspected deaths in Sri Lanka, including when family and friends of the deceased did not want the body to be cremated. The police have launched an inquiry into this. Galle Deputy Mayor Fows Niyaz allegedly verbally abused and threatened the medical officer of the Municipal Council. Later, Niyas apologised to the medical officer. On 28th November, a group of persons accompanying a new patient at the Dambadeniya Hospital in Kurunegala district assaulted hospital security officers when the officers attempted to screen the persons according to COVID-19 health regulations. Later, the police reported that 5 suspects were arrested.

⁵⁵ The incident occurred when the PHI attempted to take the patient into a treatment centre. Later, in January 2021 he was sentenced to 6 years in prison.



The vehicle, used for illegal sand mining, fatally struck a police officer and was abandoned on a roadside in Kuliyaipitiya. This is at least the third similar death of a police officer since July. Photo Courtesy: [Ada Derana](#).

Police officers: On 29th Nov 2020, a police constable died after being run over by a tipper truck during a sting operation conducted to investigate illegal sand mining in Kobeigane in Kurunegala district. According to the police, a five-member police team had attempted to stop a tipper truck after they received a tip about it, but the vehicle ran over the police constable and fled the area. The injured officer died after being admitted to the Nikaweratiya Hospital. The suspect was later arrested. Several similar incidents have been reported in recent months.⁵⁶ A police officer was hospitalized after being assaulted by a suspect at the North Kalutara Police Station. According to the police, the arrested suspect punched the police officer in the face, causing the officer's head to strike a nearby wall. Subsequently, the officer was hospitalized. A former minister's son was arrested for allegedly threatening a police officer who had been providing security at the home of a judge. When the police constable asked him not to park the vehicle near the judge's house, he allegedly blamed and threatened the police constable.

Other state officers: On 25th November, a member of Habaraduwa Pradeshiya Sabha (local council) in Galle district allegedly verbally abused, threatened, and attempted to physically attack the technical officer of Pradeshiya Sabha, demanding payment for a third-party business contract that was allegedly unfulfilled or fulfilled incorrectly. In early November, a death threat was allegedly made to a Gramaseva (village) officer in Alubomulla in Panadura South in Kalutara district for allegedly not including a villager in the beneficiaries list for a Rs.5000 government subsidy programme.

⁵⁶ Similar incidents have been reported. In July, a police officer in Hungama, Hambantota district was killed by a tipper driver. See [Tipper mows cops in Hungama, one dead, two injured](#), 15th July 2020. Daily News. Last accessed 8th Mar 2021. In August another similar incident occurred. [Another cop injured in Hakmana tipper truck hit-and-run case dies](#). Published 20th August 2020. Ada Derana. Last accessed 8th Mar 2021.

6.5 Repression of Politicians

On 9th November, five opposition MPs of Samagi Jana Balawegaya were summoned to the controversial Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCoI) into Political Victimization for their alleged derogatory statements regarding the Commission. The opposition MPs had made a complaint to the Allegations of Bribery and Corruption Commission against the PCoI for alleged misuse of public funds and exerting undue influence on the justice process in the country. Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) Parliamentarian Eran Wickramaratne was summoned by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and questioned for four hours in relation to a statement he made at a recent press conference regarding custodial deaths of suspects and witnesses. Since he advocated for security for the wife of the mastermind behind the Easter Sunday attacks, Zaharan Hashim, social media circles were flooded with claims linking MP Eran Wickremaratne to the attacks.



Vijitha Thero receiving treatment at the hospital. Photo courtesy: Divaina

Mahiyangana Pradeshia Sabha (PS) member Ven. Watareka Vijitha Thero was assaulted by its temporary workers when he sought information about those workers being employed at a private garden of the PS chairperson for several days. An individual assaulted Puttalam PS member MHM Rashmi, a representative of the Muslim Congress, stating that the road to his home was flooded with water and demanding that the spillway of the tank be opened. The employees of PS protested against this incident.

Sobha Jeyaranjanjith, a representative of Tamil Peoples Liberation Tigers (TMVP) and the Chairperson of Valachchanai PS, was allegedly assaulted by the PS's Vice Chairperson and another member, due to an argument during an annual budget presentation. However, a group of opposition politicians and the Vice Chairperson claimed Jeyaranjanjith was attempting to pass the budget by using force. According to those opposition members, Jeyaranjith did not allow the Vice Chairperson to enter the council premises, as Jeyaranjith suspected him of supporting opposition members' position regarding the budget. A clash erupted over this, during which the Chairperson claimed that he was assaulted. A member of Ruwanwella PS was also allegedly abducted and assaulted just before the voting for the new budget of the PS began. Nevertheless, the member was able to attend the council and vote against the budget. He stated that he was abducted to prevent him from voting against the budget, and such attempts could not intimidate him.

6.6 Other incidents

Mahara prison protest: A protest in Mahara Remand Prison demanding safety measures for COVID-19 was met with excessive force, resulting in 11 deaths and injuries to 107 inmates. Eight inmates who died tested positive for COVID-19, while 70 out of the 107 injured also tested positive. A government-appointed committee inquiring about the incident found the protest justifiable, since the prison was overcrowded, and fever and COVID-19 were spreading among the prisoners. The prisoners demanded urgent action to ensure their safety and health. This finding suggested that excessive force was used against the protesting prisoners. On 3rd December, a court order was issued against leaders of the Committee for Protecting Rights of Prisoners (CPRP), Senaka Perera and Nandimal Silva, preventing them from protesting in front of Welikada Prison to demand a proper investigation into the Mahara prison protest. The court cited COVID-19 regulations as the reason for disallowing the protest. Police also called the CPRP leaders, advising them not to have the protest.


Protests in North and East: In December, Sri Lankan police officers threatened to force families of the disappeared in Batticaloa into a quarantine centre if they continued with their protest. Additional police officers arrived at the protest site in Batticaloa, where they were seen noting down the details of the protestors' identities. In Mullaitivu, police officers attempted to disrupt a Tamil protest against state land seizures. Officers were filmed attempting to pull down banners and clashing with protestors.

Other incidents: In late December, a pavement vendor who had protested against the Moratuwa mayor in Colombo district was arrested, presented before a magistrate and released on bail. He was accused of unlawful assembly and other charges. This protest started after the police forcefully removed pavement vendors and seized their goods in an attempt to prevent them from engaging in business on the pavements.


In early November, Vijayendran, a Grama Niladhari (village) officer and an advocate against illegal sand mining in Manthai West Divisional Secretariat Division in Mannar district was murdered.


A local politician in the Negombo Municipal Council in Gampaha district was arrested for allegedly assaulting a villager who had refused to participate in a protest against mandatory cremation of COVID-19 dead bodies. Though all other villagers took part in this protest, one declined to participate in public. Subsequently, the suspect allegedly assaulted the victim with a metal pole, causing serious injuries. The suspect was later released on bail.

7. List of incidents


	Date	District	Repression of Media workers	Source
1	4th Nov 2020	online	A derogatory article was published online accusing the head of a media rights organization of being pro-LTTE, and acting on behalf of a popular actress for alleged financial gain. Around October, a journalist based in Bandarawela captured video footage of the actress and crew without their consent while they were staying at a hotel, accusing them of alleged violation of COVID-19 health regulations. Since the mainstream media did not publish this footage, the journalist published it online. When the head of the media rights organization intervened to request that the journalist remove this problematic content from social media platforms, the two argued. Subsequently, a news article was published online accusing the media activist of being "pro-LTTE," depending on "NGO funding," and intervening for financial gain. While the article did not name the media activist or journalist involved, publishing derogatory, defamatory content attacking media rights activists has an overall negative impact. The article also mentions that the media activist has faced threats from a previous government administration.	(1) INFORM (2) කොටින්ට් කඩේ ගිය මාධ්‍ය සංගමයක ලොක්කක් ගැනි තාරකාගේ දෙපතල ලෙව් කයි - දර්ශන දුන් මාධ්‍යවේදියාට තර්ජන කරයි. SLNewsMirror. published 4th November 2020. Last accessed 17th Feb 2021.
2	11th Nov 2020	Jaffna	A Tamil journalist, S. Mukunthan, was attacked by an unidentified group of individuals who broke into his home. The day before the attack, Mukunthan had posted on Facebook that the organisation Tamil Kodi (Tamil Flag) had failed to follow social distancing measures during relief activities and urged local authorities to take action. Members of Tamil Kodi allegedly threatened Mukunthan to delete his post, and it is suspected that Mukunthan was attacked for not complying with these demands. Three individuals have been arrested in connection with this incident, and the investigation is ongoing.	Another Tamil journalist attacked in Jaffna. Tamil Guardian. published 12th November 2020. Last accessed 17th Feb 2021
3	11th Nov 2020	Batticaloa	Sri Lankan police officers interrogated journalist Selvakumar Nilanthan, <i>Tamil Guardian's</i> Batticaloa correspondent and Batticaloa Press Club (BPC) Secretary, at his home for nearly two hours for highlighting the military-assisted Sinhala settlements on Tamil cattle farmers' land in Batticaloa (Mylanthanaimadu and Periya Maadhavanai). Nilanthan wrote that Tamil cattle farmers were "facing grave economic problems" as a result. During his interrogation, police asked him to reveal the names of colleagues who were assigned to the story and websites that publish his articles, and questioned whether those sites have links with the Tamil diaspora. 	Sri Lanka: Police interrogate Tamil journalist for reporting of Sinhala settlements on Tamil cattle farmers' land. Sri Lanka Brief. published 24th Nov 2020. Last accessed 17th Feb 2021 Sri Lankan police interrogate Tamil journalist for reporting of Sinhala settlements on Tamil cattle farmers' land. Tamil Guardian. Published 20th November 2020. Last accessed 17th Feb 2021

journalist Selvakumar Nilanthan, Photo courtesy: Tamil Guardian


4	24th Nov 2020	Badulla	A journalist working at the newspaper <i>Mawbima</i> faced an attempted physical attack while reporting on a Public Health Inspectors (PHIs) inspection visit in Welekade, Badulla. The incident occurred when the PHIs were speaking to an individual who was not wearing a face mask in a public place, a required COVID-19 precaution. After arguing with the PHIs, the individual also attempted to assault the journalist. However, we note that some incidents have been reported in which journalists violated the privacy of individuals when reporting on violations of COVID-19 regulations.	නිරෝධායන නීති කැඩී දූෂයක් 'මව්බිම' මාධ්‍යවේදියාට පහර දෙනුන් ගිහිණි . Mawbima. published 24th Nov 2020. Last accessed 17th Feb 2021.
5	24th Nov 2020	N/A	A police division attached to the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCol) on the Easter Sunday bombings recorded a verbal statement from BBC journalist Shirley Upul Kumara, after former President Maithreepala Sirisena accused him of publishing an edited and distorted version of Sirisena's original interview with the BBC. The journalist was questioned by the Police for two hours. He denied distorting the former President's views. Kumara noted that even though the former President appeared uneasy when asked about the bombings, he did not express displeasure regarding the question. The journalist also presented photographs he took with Mr. Sirisena on two separate occasions: one soon after ending the interview, and another taken at the parliament a few months later. As reported, these photographs evince friendly interactions between the journalist and the former President and reveal no resentment.	මෙන්නරිපාල සිරිසේන BBC මාධ්‍යවේදියාට වරද පටවලා: මාධ්‍යවේදියාගෙන් පොලීසිය ජර්ශන කරයි . Mawbima. published 24th November 2020. Last accessed 18th Feb 2020.
6	11th Dec 2020	N/A	On 11th December, the BBC journalist Shirley Upul Kumara was questioned for around 2 hours by the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCol) on the Easter Sunday bombings regarding the aforementioned incident, where he provided the same response that he had given to the Police division of the PCol.	BBC journalist testifies . Ceylon Today. published 14th December 2020. Last accessed 18th Feb 2020.
			 <p>Journalist Shirley Kumara entering the premises of PCol on Easter Sunday bomb attack. Photo Courtesy: Ceylon Today</p>	මෙන්නරිගේ ඩිබ්ලි සංවාදය: මාධ්‍යවේදී ෂර්ලි උපුල් කුමාරගෙන් ජනපති කොමිසම ජර්ශන කරයි . published 12th December 2020. Last accessed 18th Feb 2020.
7	24th Nov 2020 or earlier	Jaffna	Koppay police filed for injunctions at the Jaffna Magistrate's Court against two Jaffna-based journalists, T Premananth and T Kandeepan, alleging that they were involved in planning Maaveerar Naal activities. <i>Tamil Guardian</i> also notes that a number of similar injunctions have been granted against others in the North-East, preventing them from organising commemorations for Maaveerar Naal. See next section on Memorialization.	Tamil journalists targeted in crackdown via restraining order . Tamil Guardian. published 24th November 2020. Last accessed 18th Feb 2021.

8	29th Nov 2020	Batticaloa	<p>A Tamil journalist, a photographer with the Batticaloa Press Club, was arrested by the Sri Lankan Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) in connection with allegations that he had published pictures of the LTTE on Facebook. The journalist, identified locally as Gokulan, was arrested at his home in Batticaloa. He was transferred to Colombo after his arrest, reportedly to the fourth floor of the CID headquarters, an infamous torture site. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its Sri Lankan affiliates, the Federation of Media Employees' Trade Union (FMETU) and the Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association (SLWJA), have issued a statement urging authorities to withdraw the case.</p>  <p><i>Journalist Gokulan. Photo Courtesy: Sri Lanka Brief and IFJ.</i></p>	<p>Sri Lanka: Tamil journalist arrested for social media posts. Sri Lanka Brief. published 3rd December 2020. Last accessed 18th Feb 2021.</p> <p>Sri Lanka: Tamil journalist arrested for social media posts. International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). published 3rd December 2020. Last accessed 18th Feb 2021.</p>
9	30th Nov 2020	Kegalle	<p>Journalist Saman Vijaya Bandara stated that he was physically assaulted and subjected to death threats and his camera was damaged by a group of persons while reporting an incident of alleged illegal construction in the controversial Devanagala archeological site, where both Muslims and Buddhists have been residing. This incident occurred when a group of residents came to meet the chief priest of the temple who claimed to have received information about an alleged plan for an illegal construction. The journalist who attempted to video record this gathering was assaulted by the group. Central Province Media collective issued a statement condemning the incident. The journalist also made a complaint to the Mawanella police regarding the incident on 30th November under the complaint number CB 06/363. While this incident is included in this report as an attack against a journalist, we are also concerned about the history of Buddhist-Muslim controversy at the Devanagala archeological site, and the issues relating to islamophobia in the country, along with some incidents of unethical media behaviour in reporting about ethnic minorities.</p> <p><i>To learn about the history of the issue, see (1) Silva K. Tudor, Niwas A, & Wickramasinghe WMKB. 2017. ලංකාවේ බෞද්ධ ඉස්ලාමීය අන්තර්ජාතික සහයෝගිතා සහ ආරවුල්. pp 9-20. International Centre for Ethnic Studies. Colombo Sri Lanka. (2) Colombo Telegraph. 12th Dec 2013. “The Ruthless BBS Went To Devenagala To Remove Muslims”. Last accessed 17th Feb 2020.</i></p>	<p>මාවනැල්ල මාධ්‍යවේදී සමන් විජේබණ්ඩාරට එල්ල කළ මාර ජර්නලය හෙළ දකිමු! මධ්‍යම පළාත් මාධ්‍ය එකමුතුව!. Kandy Prime News. published 1st Dec 2020. Last accessed 17th Feb 2020.</p> <p>දෙවනගල ප්‍රදේශීය සිද්ධිය වාර්තා කිරීමට ගිය මාධ්‍යවේදියාට ගහලා. Mawbima. 2nd Dec 2020. Last accessed 17th Feb 2021.</p> <p>මාධ්‍යවේදී සමන්ට පහරදීමට එරෙහි විරෝධතාව අද මාවනැල්ලේදී. Mawbima. 4th Dec 2020. Last accessed 17th Feb 2021.</p>

10	27th Dec 2020	Jaffna	Sri Lankan police charged the Jaffna-based newspaper <i>Uthayan</i> with violating the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) by publishing images and quotes of Velupillai Prabhakaran, leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), on his birthday, November 26. The paper's publisher and former MP, E Saravanapavan, said that the case was filed as retribution by Sri Lankan police because the newspaper had published previous derogatory comments made by the Jaffna police Headquarters Inspector, which caused an uproar in social media. Further, Saravanapavan also pointed out the newspaper's history as a target for repression, criticizing Sri Lankan police for failing to investigate <i>Uthayan's</i> complaints over the years, including regarding the killings and attacks on its journalists.	Police charge Udayan Newspaper for allegedly publishing Prabhakaran's photograph. Lankanewsweb. published 27 December 2020. Last accessed 17th Feb 2021. Sri Lankan police file PTA case against Uthayan newspaper over LTTE leader photos. Tamil Guardian. published 24 December 2020. Last accessed 17th Feb 2021.
11	9th Dec 2020	Northern Province	Sri Lanka's Northern Province Chief Secretary, A. Pathinathan, sent a letter demanding civil servants working in the media sector across the Northern Province to disclose 'relevant information' to the government. The letter also encouraged taking action under the employee 'establishments code' against those who refuse to comply. The Establishments Code, which 'provides conditions of work, conditions of employment as well as rights and duties of public servants,' has allegedly been used to prevent public officers from working as part-time journalists.	Sri Lanka's NPC demands media personnel to disclose 'relevant' personal information. Tamil Guardian. Published 10 December 2020. Last accessed 17th Feb 2021.
12	26th Nov 2020	Western Province	The Governor's Office of the Western Province issued an extraordinary gazette entitled "Rules of Disciplinary Procedure of the Public Service," preventing employees of the Western Provincial Council from providing information to the mass media and public. The rules also mentioned that the head of the institution may decide whether to issue information subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Ministry. Such information is usually provided through the Director of Government Information. This change may result in a situation where public officials are unable to comment on the ongoing activities of the provincial council, and the Minister or the ruling government controls information on the council's activities. Thus, the public may lose access to controversial information. This could result in a serious infringement of the right to information recognized by the Sri Lankan constitution.	Extra Ordinary Gazette 2203/27 [pp 4-6]. Rules made under Section 32 of the Provincial Councils Act, No. 42 of 1987. published 26th Nov 2020. Last accessed 17th Feb 2021.

	Date	District	Repression of Memorialization	Source
13	15th Nov 2020	Kilinochchi	<p>Sri Lankan police interrupted Tamil individuals who were clearing the Kanagapuram thuyilum illam- LTTE cemetery in preparation for Maaveerar Naal and recorded the names of volunteers, citing covid19 health concerns. An individual who was present reported that safety protocols (mask wearing and social distancing) were being followed. Police officers interrogated and took statements from the former members of the Provincial Council, Kurukularajah and Pasupathipillai Karaichi Pradeshiya Sabha members. Maaveerar Naal (the Great Heroes day) is an event to remember the deaths of former LTTE militants. Though Tamils face barriers in attempting to memorialize their former rebels, the government has allowed remembrance of former JVP rebels in the south without any restrictions.</p>  <p><i>The Police recorded names of individuals clearing the land in preparation for Maaveerar Naal (the Great Heroes day). Photo courtesy: Tamil Guardian</i></p>	<p>Sri Lankan police disrupt Maaveerar Naal preparation in Kilinochchi. published 16th Nov 2020. Last accessed 17th Feb 2021.</p>
14	19th Nov 2020	Mannar	<p>Mannar court passed a judgement enforcing a ban on commemorative activities in Mannar from 21st to 27th November 2020, after Mannar Police filed a case requesting Maaveerar Naal remembrances to be prohibited, citing covid19 health regulations. On 23rd November, Tamil politicians filed a motion challenging the court order. Their lawyers contended that the court had no jurisdiction to issue a ban on Maaveerar Naal and that individuals would adhere to covid19 health and safety guidelines. Despite the assurances, the Magistrate M. Ganesaraja declined to lift the ban on the commemoration and extended it instead. The magistrate explained that the ban was extended because the LTTE is a proscribed organisation within and outside Sri Lanka and that there is a possibility of COVID-19 spreading if people gather in large numbers in public.</p>  <p><i>Attorney-at-Law MP Sumanthiran, ITAK) youth wing and activist, V.S. Sivakaran in front of the Mannar court. photo courtesy: Tamil Guardian</i></p>	<p>Mannar court imposes ban on commemorating Maaveerar Naal as Sri Lankan police push for more bans across North-East districts. Tamil Guardian. Published 20th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.</p> <p>Mannar court upholds and extends ban on Maaveerar Naal commemorations. Tamil Guardian. Published 27th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.</p>

15	19th Nov 2020	Vavuniya	Vavuniya Magistrate Court issued orders to ban eight persons from taking part in Maaveerar Naal commemoration activities the following week. The Vavuniya Police indicated that the order included multiple Tamil politicians from the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and Tamil National People's Front (TNPf), including TNPf parliamentarian and General Secretary Selvarajah Kajendran.	Mannar court imposes ban on commemorating Maaveerar Naal as Sri Lankan police push for more bans across North-East districts. Tamil Guardian. Published 20th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021.
16	25th Nov 2020	Mullaitivu	The Mullaitivu Magistrate Court upheld submissions by the Attorney General's Department and ordered the prohibition of Maaveerar Naal commemoration activities. Accordingly, the Mullaitivu Magistrate's Court extended its ban on 46 persons, preventing them from holding commemoration events in Mullaitivu district until the 30th of November.	Mullaitivu and Jaffna Magistrates extend ban on Mahaviru commemorations. Daily News. Published 26th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021.
17	21st Nov 2020	Jaffna	The Kayts Magistrate's Court imposed a ban on observing Maaveerar Naal and other remembrances in Jaffna from November 21 to November 27 under the Quarantine and Prevention of diseases ordinance. Kayts police filed a claim in court to ban commemoration events, reporting arrangements to observe Maaveerar Naal in Velanani and Pungudutivu. This decision is the latest in a series of court bans across the North-East banning Maaveerar Naal events, and increasing efforts to stifle Tamil activism under the Rajapaksa administration, ostensibly due to concern about coronavirus precautions.	Kayts court imposes ban on Maaveerar Naal commemorations as crackdown intensifies in North-East. Tamil Guardian. Published 21st November 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.
18	24th Nov 2020	Jaffna	The Jaffna High Court rejected an appeal for an injunction against court bans of Maaveerar Naal commemorations in Mullaitivu and Vavuniya. Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP M. A. Sumanthiran specified that public commemorations were banned for "national security" reasons, but that the fallen could still be memorialized "individually at home." The Sri Lankan military has been deployed to prevent preparations for the day of remembrance, and members of the military have reportedly vandalised preparations and interrogated Tamil civilians and politicians.	Jaffna High Court rules 'public Maaveerar Naal commemorations are banned but private ones are allowed'. Tamil Guardian. Published 24th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021.
19	22nd Nov 2020	Mullaitivu	A local politician in the Thunukkai Divisional Council of Mullaitivu, S. Sujansan, was interrogated for over three hours in connection with an alleged plan to organize a remembrance event for the victims of a Claymore attack in 2007 during the civil war. A Claymore is a remote-controlled mine that is fired and detonated or can be activated by a tripwire. Eleven individuals, including 7 students between the ages of 13 and 22, died in the Claymore attack on November 27, 2007 in Iyankulam in the Mullaitivu District. Sujansan reported that he told police that victims' families would remember their children at their place of burial, despite efforts to stop them. He highlighted that police had shown little regard for his position as an elected official by interrogating him on the roadside for hours.	Police interrogate councillor over remembrance of massacre by SL Deep Penetration Unit. Tamil Guardian. Published 22nd November 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.
20	26th Nov 2020	Trincomalee	Trincomalee magistrate Kumari Ratnayake and an additional magistrate issued orders preventing any Maaveerar Naal commemorations from being held in 7 police divisions of Trincomalee district for the next 14 days. Accordingly, orders were issued against 27 persons including Tamil political party members preventing them from holding Maaveerar Naal commemorations in Trincomalee chief police division, Trincomalee port police division, Uppuveli, Kinniya, Pulmudai, Kuchchuvai, and Nilaveli police division areas. The court had previously refused to issue such a ban. However, an additional	කිට් මලේ පොලිස් බල ජර්දේශ 7 ක මහ විරු සැමරුම් උසාවියෙන් තහනම් කරයි. Divaina. Published 27th Nov 2020. Last accessed 24th February 2021.

			Solicitor General of the Attorney General Department and a team of senior Police officers resubmitted their request to the court. When the court asked why police were seeking a court order given their power to directly intervene to prevent commemorations, the Attorney General department asserted that a court order could prevent conflict between the police and general public. They also alleged that if police had to use physical force, LTTE sympathizers and refugees may use such a situation for their benefit, and argued that the LTTE is a banned organization and a threat to national security and territorial integrity.	
21	26th Nov 2020	Batticaloa	<p>Sri Lankan police in Batticaloa arrested 19 people for allegedly posting birthday wishes online for Velupillai Prabhakaran, the leader of the LTTE rebels who was killed at the end of the Sri Lankan civil war in 2009. Four of these individuals were arrested 26th November by Eravur Police, for allegedly promoting the heroism of LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran. In addition, citing the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), Police have been investigating another 55 people for allegedly posting 'terrorist-related' content online. The police have been monitoring and surveilling all the persons who posted regarding what would have been Prabhakaran's 66th birthday or posted LTTE songs and logos across the Batticaloa district of the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. There has been no information on whether such surveillance was conducted in other districts.</p> <p>Later, a Tamil woman in Batticaloa demanded the release of her husband, who was arrested by the authorities under the PTA after allegedly posting an image of LTTE leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran on his Facebook page. She alleged that her husband has been detained in solitary confinement without receiving a court hearing, and that she has not been informed of his whereabouts.</p>	<p>Sri Lankan police arrest 19 and mark further 55 for posting Prabhakaran birthday messages. Sri Lanka Brief. Published 27th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.</p> <p>Four arrested for banned internet posts. Hiru TV. Published 27th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.</p> <p>'I do not know his whereabouts' – Wife pleads for release of husband arrested over Facebook post. Tamil Guardian. Published 6th December 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021.</p>
22	28th Nov 2020	Jaffna	CCTV footage in Chavakachcheri in Jaffna showed armed Sri Lankan police and army personnel surrounding a home in an apparent act of intimidation, as part of a crackdown across the North-East on Maaveerar Naal. The residents of the home were holding a small private ceremony to mark the day, which pays tribute to fallen LTTE fighters.	<p>Sri Lankan army's Maaveerar Naal crackdown in Jaffna caught on CCTV. Tamil Guardian. Published 28th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021.</p>
23	27th Nov 2020	Mullaitivu	<p>The Sri Lankan Army reportedly demanded that business owners in Mullaitivu reopen after they closed in observance of Maaveerar Naal. Shop owners also reported receiving intimidating calls from intelligence officers insisting that they reopen.</p>  <p><i>Military in front of shops in Mullaitivu. Photo courtesy: Tamil Guardian</i></p>	<p>Sri Lankan army threatens Mullaitivu businesses closed on Maaveerar Naal. Tamil Guardian. Published 27th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.</p>

24	29th Nov 2020	Jaffna	Sri Lankan police arrested a Jaffna University student for lighting a lamp for the Tamil Hindu festival of Karthika Vilakkeedu (festival of lights), amidst scrutiny by police and the Sri Lankan military due to the festival's proximity to Maaveerar Naal. Police reported that they received information that the student was attempting to pay tribute to fallen LTTE fighters. The student was brought to the police station and interrogated and later released after interventions by several individuals (attorney and member of the Jaffna Municipal Council V. Manivannan, Senior Attorney V. Thirukumaran, and Tamil MP Angajan Ramanathan). Manivannan and Thirukumaran appeared at the station on the student's behalf and argued that lighting lamps is an expression of a fundamental right of Hindus. Additional crackdowns of the festival of lights were reported: a Jaffna temple's festival display was reportedly destroyed by police and the Sri Lankan army threatened organisers against lighting lamps, and residents of Mulliviakkal, Udayarkattu South, and Kuravil in Mullaitivu reported that Sri Lankan soldiers and police smashed lamps and destroyed banana trees and festival decorations, and threatened residents.	Jaffna Uni student arrested and further crackdown on Karthikai festival . Tamil Guardian. Published 29th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.
25	November 2020	Northern Province	The Sri Lankan military conducted a crackdown against Maaveerar Naal across the North-East, consisting of arrests, home raids, and intimidation. The Sri Lankan military reportedly blocked access to the destroyed cemeteries where tens of thousands of Tamil fighters were interred, following court orders banning commemorative events from taking place. Though the court orders allowed private events, individuals who lit candles in their own homes were also reportedly visited by the military and police and asked to report to the local police station. In Point Pedro, dozens of Sri Lankan troops surrounded homes in which fallen fighters were being remembered. In some instances the families were photographed, threatened, told to take down their shrines to family members, and told to report to the local police station. Sri Lankan military vehicles blocked access to the Koppay Thuyilum Illam (cemetery), where thousands were buried. In Kilinochchi, armed soldiers stood guard around the Kanagapuram Thuyilum Ilam, where thousands of people gathered in recent years to mark Maaveerar Naal. In Mannar, Sri Lankan police and military were concentrated in former LTTE cemeteries in Adampan and Akkattiveli, purportedly to prevent any disturbances. Forces have also been deployed to Mullaitivu (Iranaipalai and Mulliyavali thuyil illam), Puthukudiyiruppu, and Vavuniya.	Sri Lanka's security forces crack down on Maaveerar Naal . Tamil Guardian. Published 27th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.
26	6th Dec 2020	Mannar	The Sri Lankan police in Mannar interrogated four people, including the head of the Organisation for the Right to Life of Tamil Nation, V.S. Sivakaran, who conducted a press conference following the ban on observing Maaveerar Naal. The Mannar police reportedly undertook this inquiry at the behest of superior officers in Colombo.	Sri Lankan police interrogate Tamils over Maaveerar Naal press conference . Tamil Guardian. Published 6th December 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021.


	Date	District	Repressive legal, policy, and institutional actions and problematic statements	Source
27	31st October 2020	N/A	State Minister Jayantha Samaraweera, while speaking to members of the media, alleged that “several witnesses are ready to reveal how a group of former and incumbent MPs, representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), some officers of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) and certain representatives of Western diplomatic missions hatched a conspiracy to file 10 cases, based on false charges, to imprison around 100 intelligence officers.” He also accused former Director of the CID, Shani Abeysekara, and other police investigation officers, Nishantha Candappa and Tissera, for allegedly “exerting undue influence in filing false charges against ‘war heroes’ attached to the Intelligence Services in order to put them behind bars.” He claimed these 10 cases, including (1) the abduction of Journalist Prageeth Eknaligoda, (2) the murder of Editor Lasantha Wickrematunge, (3) the assault of Journalist Keith Noyahr, (4) the assault of Editor Upali Tennakoon, (5) the abduction of four youths in buses, (6) the abduction of 11 youths in Trincomalee, (7) the murder of former MP Joseph Pararajasingham, (8) the murder of former MP Nadarajah Raviraj, and (9) the murder of rugby player Wasim Thajudeen, were false charges purposefully filed as part of a witch hunt against the war heroes. Samaraweera stated that he would request that the President and Prime Minister review these cases. At least 4 of the cases mentioned are crimes against journalists, directly connected to the freedom of expression and dissent.	Sri Lanka: All cases filed on abducted and murdered journalists are based on false allegations says Minister Jayantha Samaraweera . Sri Lanka Brief. Published 1st Nov 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021. Witnesses ready to reveal conspiracy . Ceylon Today. Published 31st Oct 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.
28	Dec 2020	N/A	In a letter addressed to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Sandaya Eknaligoda, the wife of the abducted and disappeared journalist Prageeth Eknaligoda, said that the appointment of Upali Abeyrathne as the chairperson of the Office of Missing Persons (OMP), given his background and conduct, is a “direct insult and an act of violence” against families of the disappeared. Retired Justice Upali Abeyrathne is the former chairperson of the controversial Presidential Commission on Political Victimization. The commission has provided the space for suspects in legal cases, including those accused of enforced disappearances, to raise complaints before the commission, “effectively undermining ongoing judicial processes and intimidating victims and witnesses,” according to Eknaligoda. In his capacity as chairperson of this commission, per Eknaligoda, Justice Abeyrathne has “been an active participant in enabling this type of violence, labelling and intimidation of victims and witnesses.”	Letter to Michelle Bachelet: Appointment of Justice Abeyrathne to lead the OMP is a direct insult and an act of violence – Sandya Eknaligoda . Sri Lanka Brief. Published 21st December 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.
29	25th Nov 2020	N/A	Prisons Commissioner Thushara Upuldeniya stated that “if a detainee engages in protest or another illegal activity, maximum punishments under the prison laws, regulations, and quarantine act will be given.” He pointed out that protests conducted by detainees climbing onto prison roofs would qualify as an offence and stated that officials are taking action to control the COVID-19 situation. He also pointed out that several such protests were held recently in several prisons in Angunakolapelessa, Welikada Magazine Prison in Colombo, and others. These protesters	විරෝධතා කරන රැඳවියන්ට උපුල්දෙනියා අනතුරු අහවයි . Mawbima. published 25th Nov 2020. Last accessed 6th March 2021. COVID-19 cases at prisons

			<p>demanding PCR tests for all prisoners. On 12th November, the first protest was reported in Bogambara Prison after approximately 30 prisoners tested COVID-19 positive. The protest ended after officials promised to conduct PCR tests for all prisoners. Similar protests were reported in other prisons. By 15th November, more than 400 COVID-19 positive cases were reported from Sri Lankan prisons. By 29th November, this number increased to more than 1000 detainees. This statement of the Prisons Commissioner seemingly attempted to threaten and intimidate prisoners to dissuade them from engaging in peaceful protests demanding their health rights.</p>	<p>top 1000. News First. Published 29th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.</p>
30	25th Nov 2020 and 24th Dec 2020	N/A	<p><i>Divaina</i> newspaper reported that a draft law to regulate NGOs will be presented to the Parliament in the coming two months. This law will be introduced to regulate “NGOs that receive millions of dollar funds,” the article stated. It also claimed that the government will take this step because information revealed that 4 Saudi Arabian and British NGOs provided funds to the Hira Foundation, belonging to former Minister MP M.L.A.M. Hizbullah. It further claimed that the NGOs in Sri Lanka have received more than 5 billion LKR during the last several years, and 1476 NGOs operating in Sri Lanka have not revealed to the government how they spent the money they received.</p> <p>In the following month, another similar article appeared in the same newspaper with the title “New laws will be introduced to regulate NGOs in the next year.” The newspaper alleged that “NGOs pose a threat to national security.” It also revealed that the draft act is being prepared by Dr. Susantha Goonatilake and will be presented to the government in the next year. The new act will require NGOs to reveal their funds to the government.</p>	<p>එන්ටී ඩී හුළං බස්සන කෙටුම්පත ඉදිරි දෙමස තුළ මැතිසබයට. Divaina. published 25th Nov 2020. Last accessed 28th Feb 2021.</p> <p>එන් ඩී ඩී පාලනය කෙරෙන නව පනත ලබන වසරේ රජයට. Divaina. published 25th Nov 2020. Last accessed 28th Feb 2021.</p>
31	30th Nov 2020	N/A	<p>Police spokesman, Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Ajith Rohana, told the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCoI) probing the Easter Sunday attacks that the power to issue detention orders for suspects arrested on terrorism-related activities should be granted to a DIG instead of a court of law. The Police Spokesman indicated that suspects arrested for terrorism and related offences should be questioned for at least six months. Rohana, who served on the committee that provided input for the Counter Terrorism Act (CTA) proposed by the previous administration, was called before the PCoI for his opinions on how to curb terrorism and religious extremism, including recommended changes to existing laws. Rohana opined that trained DIGs in armed camps would be less susceptible to undue influence than Magistrates in unsafe areas and stated that bail should not be granted to those arrested for terrorism-related charges for at least a year. Rohana stated that investigations of extremists in particular areas should be centrally directed by the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) with provincial subdivisions and recommended that laws governing intelligence operations be enacted.</p>	<p>Police spokesman tells PCoI detention of terror suspects should be decided by a DIG instead of court. The Island. Published 30th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.</p>

32	Dec 2020	N/A	Anidda newspaper reported that several cabinet ministers stated that time to express their opinions has been severely limited in online meetings. They alleged that online cabinet meetings have been limited to listening and responding to speeches made by leaders, often resulting in the approval of cabinet papers without proper discussion.	මින්ලයින් කැබිනට් නිසා දඬුවම්වලට බාධාලා Anidda. published 14th Dec 2020. Last accessed 28th Feb 2020.
33	16th Dec 2020	colombo	During the Mahara Prison court hearing, Nishara Jayaratne, the state counsel and Coordinating Officer of the Attorney General (AG), reportedly stated that cases can't be heard based on the instructions of NGOs, in an attempt to label attorneys appearing on behalf of the victims of the Mahara Prison protest as representing "NGO interests." The following day, a group of lawyers representing the victims of the Mahara Prison protest made a joint complaint to the Chief Justice and the AG requesting that they conduct an inquiry over her comments. The complaint stated that the State Counsel had violated legal ethics and acted in a manner that was inimical to her professional dignity. This incident occurred after lawyers representing victims of the Mahara Prison protest requested that the bodies of victims be buried rather than cremated, as they may be required to be exhumed in the future. They pointed out that eyewitness prisoners may reveal further information years later, when they are released from prison. The state counsel, Jayaratne, strongly opposed this request, stating that the country's health regulations only allow mandatory cremation and that allowing burials could have strong negative health consequences on communities. When lawyers representing the victims argued that exceptions can be made, as both burial and cremation are allowed in other countries, Jayaratne responded alleging that the lawyers representing the victims had "NGO interests". The magistrate ordered the cremation of the bodies. According to the autopsies conducted, all victims had died of gunshots, disproving earlier government ministers' claims that the victims died of other causes while fighting with each other.	Lawyers request the Chief Justice to conduct an inquiry over State Counsel Nishara's 'NGO' comments. The Leader. Published 18th December 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021. Court order to cremate the Mahara prison riot victims. Hiru News. Published 16th December 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.
34	22nd Dec 2020	N/A	While speaking to the media, Minister of Mass Media Keheliya Rambukwella said that all social media users should be registered with the government. "We are in the opinion that inappropriate content in social media must be regulated. We are preparing a system [for] social media users including, the Facebook users, to be registered under our ministry," he said (see video). After many social media users and opposition politicians criticized his statement, he made a correction, stating that the government is only considering the registration of "foreign digital operators," contradicting his previous statement. However, the following, an interview he gave was published in a state-owned newspaper claiming that the ministry is planning to "register social media pages and sites that provide information to the public." He further clarified, "we introduce registration because that will give some responsibility to any social media page or site that provides information. They cannot just publish some hearsay and later deny it. We need to document it all."	Social media users in SL to be registered under the Government, says Min. Keheliya. Newsfirst. 20th Dec 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021. Rambukwella does a U-turn on registering social media users. Newsfirst. 21st Dec 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021. We have made headway amid challenges - Mass Media Minister Keheliya Rambukwella. Daily News. Published 22nd December 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.


35	23rd Dec 2020	N/A	The National Association of Sports regulations were amended to reduce the time to appeal any decision or action of a registered National Association of Sports from two weeks to one week. This could make it practically impossible to file appeals against the National Association of Sports.	Extra ordinary Gazette. 2207/07 The sports law, No 25 of 1973. published 23rd Dec 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021. Extra ordinary Gazette. 1990/23 The sports law, No 25 of 1973. published 27th Oct 2016. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021.
36	16th Dec 2020 and 30th Dec 2020	N/A	The Presidential Secretariat issued two extraordinary gazettes on 16th and 30th of December, declaring the Sri Lanka Ports Authority and its services Essential Public Services. This was issued in the context of port workers and trade unions protesting against a controversial joint business venture in the Eastern port with an Indian company. Declaring that government services are essential services has been a known tactic to stop protests and trade union actions in the government sector in Sri Lanka. This tactic has been used historically by different Presidents since 1978.	2206/16 extraordinary gazette : Essential Public Services Act, No. 61 of 1979. published 16th December 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021. 2208/12 extraordinary gazette : Essential Public Services Act, No. 61 of 1979. published 30th December 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021. Ports Trade Union protests against handing over Colombo East Terminal to India. The Morning. published 17th Dec 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021.
37	17th Nov 2020 and 17th Dec 2020		Gazettes calling on the armed forces to maintain public order were reissued in November and December, providing the military with additional powers to intervene in civilian affairs. Human rights defenders, families of victims, and survivors of violations fear that this may lead to more intimidation and surveillance of them, and restrictions on activities that may be perceived as dissent.	2202/13 extraordinary gazette : Public Security Ordinance. GoSL. published 17th Nov 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021. 2206/17 extraordinary gazette : Public Security Ordinance. GoSL. published 17th Dec 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021.
38	10th Dec 2020	N/A	Opposition politicians and activists questioned the independence of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL), after a former Minister and Governor of North-Central province under the previous Mahinda Rajapakse administration, a strong political ally of the current Rajapakse government, was appointed as its chairman. MP Rahman stated that the government owed the public an explanation of why former Minister Jagath Balasuriya was named the Chairman of the HRCSL. The new HRCSL Chairperson Balasuriya's son, Tharaka Balasuriya, serves as a minister in the current government, and his wife, Kumari, also served as Governor during Mahinda Rajapaksa's presidency. Later, a fact finding report published by Sri Lanka Brief revealed that, according to SJB MP Mujibur Rahman, Jagath Balasuriya is also the SLPP organiser of the Kegalle district (see video). A fact sheet published by Sri Lanka Brief revealed that other members of HRCSL had political connections to the ruling government, and at least 4 out of 5 members appointed had no human rights background, including the chairman.	Who's Who in the "Independent Commissions" Sri Lanka Brief. published February 2021. last accessed 28th February 2021 SJB flays SLPP over appointments to commissions. Island. published 12th Dec 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021. New Chairperson and Commissioners to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka. Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka. Published 18th December 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.

	Date	District	Repression of state employees	Source
39	25th Nov 2020	Polonnaruwa	The State Minister of Wildlife verbally threatened several forest officers of Flood Plains National Park in Polonnaruwa when they refused and criticized the Minister's request to allow villagers to grass feed their cattle at the national park. The incident occurred when the Minister met with the villagers and forest officers. Video footage shows the Minister telling the forest officers, "we cannot do everything while keeping the legal texts in our mind, allow these people to enter into National Park by giving them some identity document." A forest officer responded that they cannot allow this activity inside a national forest. Then the Minister, pointing his finger at the officer, replied, "I'll say one thing. Don't think I am a baby," in an angry tone. Though the officer attempted to explain that in some incidents cattle owners have shot at leopards in the park, saying that leopards attack the cattle, the Minister refused to listen. He continued responding angrily, "Are you a big man, don't you know how to behave in front of a Minister?" The Minister also said that he had not made a final decision on the matter, and was just proposing this change. The Minister also accused the officers of attempting to create drama before the media in order to get attention. The officers later had a media conference and explained their opinions, and said that the minister is exerting undue influence on them to violate the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance. Later, the State Minister of Land Management, State Enterprises Land and Property Development, Roshan Ranasinghe, speaking at the Parliament, said the "behaviour of these officers is disgusting. They did a media show. So legal action should be taken against this type of 'rascal' (thakkadi) officers."	Watch: "This is a national crime" say Wildlife officials clashing with State Minister over environment dispute. Newswire. published 26th Nov 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021. Wildlife Officers on strike against State Minister's actions. Newsfirst. Published 27th Nov 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021. කොන්ද නොනමා ඇත්ත කනාකළ වනජීවී නිලධාරීන්. Lankadeepa. Published 30th Nov 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021. Derana TV News. Published 27th Nov 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.
40	23rd Dec 202	Monaragala	Monaragala District Forest officer D.M.B.M. Bandara has made a complaint to the police alleging that the coordinating secretary of State Minister Shashindra Rajapaksha, Dhammika Vithanage, has been obstructing his duties and threatening him in order to prevent him from taking legal action against illegal loggers.	ගම්බේරගේ ලේකම්ගෙන් වන නිලධාරියාට තර්ජන. Anidda. published 28th Dec 2020. Last accessed 2nd Mar 2021.
41	27th Nov 2020	Monaragala	A few forest officers of Vandama in Wellawaaya Forest Office were threatened, physically assaulted, and detained by a group of persons who were clearing the forest when the officers attempted to arrest the group. The officers were later saved by army personnel at Kumbukkana Army Camp. A complaint on the incident was filed at the Buttala Police Station.	වන සංරක්ෂණ නිලධාරීන්ට තම දැව්මේ ඇත්තටම වන්දම හේන් ගොවියෝද?. Anidda. Published 14th Dec 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.
42	Early december	gampaha	The medical doctor of Mahara Prison was subjected to fake news and a hate speech campaign, after a minister made an indirect reference to him allegedly providing psychiatric drugs to prisoners. On 30th November, speaking at the Parliament, Minister Wimal Weeransa mentioned that prisoners behaved violently after consuming an overdose of a psychoactive drug named 'sarap' or 'reverse' tablet, according to information he received through intelligence sources. He also said a person linked to an underworld leader had provided psychoactive drugs to prisoners in the Welikada incident. He denied that the protest was a result of the government's failure to ensure social distancing in an overcrowded prison setting, and stated that this assertion is a conspiracy to claim that prisoners were murdered under the current President's rule, in order to tarnish his image	FACT CHECK: මහර බන්ධනාගාරයේ සිරකරුවන් ජීවමානව පවතින බවට වැඩිදුරටත් විමර්ශනය වීසින් ලබාදුන් මන්පෙනි නිසා ද? sri lanka factcrescendo. Published 5th Dec 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021. Parliamentary hanzard Vol 280 (10). Sri Lanka Parliament. published 3rd

			internationally. On 1st December, the Acting Prisons Commissioner also stated that prisoners behaved violently after consuming the psychoactive drugs. Issuing a statement, the Sri Lanka College of Psychiatrists rejected the claim that the Mahara Prison unrest was influenced by psychiatric drugs that induced aggression in the prisoners. They said, "None of these drugs are responsible for violent and aggressive behaviour, and in fact, many of these drugs promote calmness and cause mild drowsiness." On 3rd December, Weeransa indirectly suggested that the prison medical doctor was connected to the incident, and also said that the doctor was a member of the opposition political party JVP. Following this incident, a family photo of the medical doctor, Indrajith Panawenna, was shared online, with the title 'Suspect JVP medical doctor who gave intoxication tablets to the prisoners.' Panawenna was subjected to various hate speech comments as a result of this fake media campaign, with an obvious political link. The JVP stated that Panawenna is not a member of JVP, even though they are not aware of his political views.	Dec 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021. No psychiatric drugs responsible for violent behaviour: Sri Lanka College of Psychiatrists . The morning. published 2nd Dec 2020. Last accessed 30th March 2021.
43	25th Nov 2020	Galle	A member of Habaraduwa Pradeshiya Sabha (local council) verbally abused, threatened, and attempted to physically attack the technical officer of Pradeshiya Sabha, demanding to issue a check payment for a business contract that has some technical weaknesses. The workers of Pradeshiya Sabha protested, demanding an inquiry into the incident.	හබරාදුව ප්‍රජා සභේ විරෝධතාවක්. Lankadeepa. published 26th Nov 2020. Last accessed 2nd Mar 2021.
44	28th Nov 2020	Kurunegala	A group of persons who accompanied a new patient to the Dambadeniya Hospital assaulted the security officers who attempted to screen the group according to COVID-19 health regulations. The hospital staff held a protest demanding urgent action regarding the matter. The police stated that 5 suspects were arrested from the Horombawa area.  <i>Protesting health staff. Photo courtesy: Lankadeepa</i>	දඹදෙනිය රෝහලේ ආරක්ෂකයන්ට පහර දුන් පීටිය අත්අඩංගුවට ගන්නායි කාර්ය මණ්ඩලය උද්ඝෝෂණයක. Mawbima. published 30th Nov 2020. Last accessed 2nd March 2021. දඹදෙනිය රෝහල් කාර්ය මණ්ඩලය විරෝධතාවක්. Lankadeepa. published 29th Nov 2020. Last accessed 2nd March 2021.
45	29th Nov 2020	Kurunegala	A police constable died after being run over by a tipper truck during a sting operation conducted to investigate illegal sand mining in the Haathalawa area in Kobeigane. According to police, a five- member police team attempted to stop a tipper truck coming from the Deduru-Oya on a tip, but the vehicle ran over the police constable and fled the area. The injured officer died after being admitted to the Nikaweratiya Hospital. A suspect was later arrested.	Police Constable run over by tipper truck during sting operation dies. Newswire. published 29th Nov 2020. Last accessed 2nd Mar 2021. Tipper driver who intentionally ran over PC arrested. Daily News. published 30th Nov 2020. Last accessed 2nd Mar 2021.

46	2nd Dec 2020	kalutara	A COVID-19 patient in Atalugama spat in the face of a Public Health Inspector (PHI) who wanted to move the patient to a treatment centre. The PHI had arrived at the patient's home along with an ambulance to take him to a treatment centre. The patient has refused to move to the treatment centre, and blamed the officials. He had also spat the PHI sitting inside the vehicle, and told "you should also get infected with corona" as reported by the media. However, no explanation from the side of the patient was published in the media. The suspect was arrested two days later, and has been brought before the Magistrate of Panadura, where he was ordered to be remanded further. The incident occurred when the PHI attempted to take the patient into a treatment centre. Later, in January 2021, the suspect was convicted and sentenced to 6 years in prison.	සෞඛ්‍ය නිලධාරීන්ට කෙළ ගැසීමෙන් අපද්‍රවම පී.සී.ආර්. පරීක්ෂණ නවතී. Lankadeepa. published 2nd Dec 2020. Last accessed 2nd March 2021. COVID-19 patient who spat on PHI's face, arrested and remanded. Newsfirst. published 4th Dec 2020. Last accessed 2nd March 2021. Individual who spat at PHI to serve 6 years in prison. Ceylon Today. published 21 Jan 2021. Last accessed 2nd March 2021.
47	16th Dec 2020 or earlier	kalutara	Several persons threatened a coroner with death s for refusing to release a dead body without a PCR test. Later test results confirmed that the corpse was COVID-19 positive. This occurred in the context of mandatory cremation practices for COVID-19 deaths and suspected deaths in Sri Lanka, including when family and friends of the deceased did not want the body to be cremated. The police have launched an inquiry into this. In March 2021, GoSL revised the mandatory cremation of covid-19 bodies, a policy that was subjected much criticism both locally and internationally.	මියගිය ... කනට කොවිඩ් බව කීවැයි මරණ පරීක්ෂකට මරණ තර්ජන. eethalayanews. published 16 Dec 2020. Last accessed 2nd March 2021. Sri Lanka carries out first burial of Covid victims, ending long-standing dispute. Newswire. published 5th March 2020. Last accessed 2nd March 2021.
48	26th Dec 2020	Galle	Galle Deputy Mayor Fows Niyaz verbally abused and threatened the medical officer of the Municipal Council. Later, Niyas apologised to the medical officer in a letter addressed to the Southern Province Governor and Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA), after other medical officers and GMOA intervened and demanded an apology from the Deputy Mayor.	Galle Deputy Mayor admits guilt. Daily News. published 30th Dec 2020. Last accessed 2nd March 2021
49	17th Dec 2020	kalutara	A police officer has been hospitalized after being assaulted by a suspect at the police station, according to North Kalutara Police. There had been a complaint against the suspect for allegedly assaulting a woman and tearing her ballot paper during the last election. The suspect was apprehended based on a tip. Once he had been brought to the police station, the suspect punched the police officer in the face, causing the officer's head to strike a nearby wall. Subsequently, the officer was hospitalized.	සැකකරු පොලීසියේදීම පොලිස් පරීක්ෂකට පහරදෙයි. Lankadeepa. published 17th Dec 2020. Last accessed 2nd March 2021.
50	21st Nov 2020	colombo	A former minister's son has been arrested for allegedly threatening a police officer who has been providing security at the home of a judge. When the police constable asked him not to park his vehicle near the judge's house, he blamed and threatened the police constable.	හිටපු ඇමැති පුතා අත්අඩංගුවට. Lankadeepa. 21st November 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.
51	10th Nov 2020	Kalutara	A death threat has been made to a Gramaseva (village) officer in Alubomulla in Panadura South in Kalutara district for allegedly not including a villager in the beneficiaries list for Rs.5000 government subsidy programme.	5000 දීමනාව ඉල්ලා ග්රාම නිලධාරීට තර්ජන. Lankadeepa. 10th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.

	Date	District	Repression of Politicians	Source
52	9th Nov 2020	N/A	Five opposition MPs of Samagi Jana Balawegaya were summoned to the controversial Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCol) into Political Victimization on 9th November, for their alleged derogatory statements regarding the Commission. On 6th November, the MPs made a complaint to the Allegations of Bribery and Corruption Commission against the PCol on Political Victimization for alleged misuse of public funds and exerting undue influence on the justice process in the country. The opposition MPs were informed that they will be prosecuted for violating section 105(3) of the Sri Lankan Constitution and section 10 of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry Act. The five MPs included Harin Fernando, Nalin Bandara Jayamaha, J.C. Alawathuwala, Sujith Sanjaya Perera, and Mayantha Dissanayake.	Five SJB MPs Ordered to Appear Before Commission . Ceylon Today. published 9th Nov 2020. Last accessed 2nd March 2021. Five SJB MPs arrive at Political Victimization Commission . Daily Mirror. published 9th Nov 2020. Last accessed 2nd March 2021.
53	16th Nov 2020	Colombo	Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) Parliamentarian Eran Wickramaratne was summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in the evening on November 16th. The Opposition MP was questioned for four hours in relation to a statement he made at a recent press conference regarding custodial deaths of suspects and witnesses. Wickramaratne also questioned the safety of high-profile witnesses, such as the wife of the Easter Sunday Bomber Zahran Hashim and former head of the CID Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shani Abeysekara, who are in custody.	CID grills SJB MP Eran Wickramaratne for four hours . FT. published 17th Nov 2020. Last accessed 25th Feb 2021.
54	around 20th November		Social media circles were flooded with claims linking MP Eran Wickremaratne and the wife of the mastermind behind the Easter Sunday attacks, Zaharan Hashim. MP Eran Wickremaratne has strongly denied the allegations made on social media that Zaharan Hashim's wife had paid him Rs. 5 million and that he admitted this to the CID. Eran Wickramaratne has also lodged a complaint with the CID against these allegations. The CID has not yet released an official statement on this matter. INFORM believes this false social media campaign was a reprisal since he spoke up regarding the security of the key witnesses of the attack, including the wife of Zahran Hashim.	Explained: Social Media Campaign About Links Between Eran Wickramaratne and Zaharan Hashim's Wife . Fact Cresendo. published 24th Nov 2020. Last accessed 25th Feb 2021.
55	28th Nov 2020	Badulla	Mahiyangana Pradeshiya Sabha (PS) member Ven. Watareka Vijitha Thero was assaulted by its temporary workers when he sought information about the workers being employed at the private garden of the PS chairperson for several days. Subsequently, he was admitted to the Mahiyangana Basic Hospital. Three workers have also been admitted to the hospital, claiming that a person accompanying Thero had assaulted them. PS Chairperson Karu Weeraratna stated that Thero's accusations are incorrect, as those workers did not report to work for 3 days, and he privately paid their wages when they were employed at his garden. On November 28th, the Deputy Chairperson of the PS complained to the police that the attendance sheet of the workers had been misplaced from the PS office.	පිරිසකගේ පහරදීමකින් මරිය-ගණු ප්රා. සභා මන්ත්රී හිමිනම රෝහලේ . Mawbimba. published 30th Nov 2020. Last accessed 25th Feb 2021. මරිය-ගණු ප්රා. සභාවේ කාවකාලික සේවකයෝ සභාපතිගේ වත්තේ වැඩ - හොයන්න ගිය විට මට ගැහුවා - වටරැක විජිත හිමියෝ රෝහල්ගත වෙති . Divaina. published 30th Nov 2020. Last accessed 25th Feb 2021.

			 <p><i>Vijitha Thero receiving treatment at the hospital. Photo courtesy: Divaina</i></p>	
56	12/8/2020	Puttalam	<p>A person assaulted Puttalam PS member MHM Rashmi, a representative of the Muslim Congress, stating that the road to his house has been flooded with water and demanding that the spill way of the tank be opened . The employees of the PS protested against this incident.</p>	<p>වැවේ පිටවන කඩන්නයි නාගරික මන්ත්රීගේ කනට ගහලා. Lankadeepa. published 8th Dec 2020. Last accessed 25th Feb 2021.</p>
57	8th Dec 2020 and 11th Dec 2020	Batticaloa	<p>Sobha Jeyaranjanjith, a representative of the Tamil Peoples Liberation Tigers (TMVP) and the Chairperson of Valachchanai PS, was allegedly assaulted by its Vice Chairperson and another member, due to an argument during an annual budget presentation. He was subsequently hospitalized. A group of opposition politicians and the Vice Chairperson claimed Jeyaranjanjith was attempting to pass the budget using force. Members of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) have lodged a complaint with the police that the annual budget for 2021 was passed using force. According to those opposition members, Jeyaranjanjith prevented the Vice Chairperson from entering the council premises because Jeyaranjanjith suspected him of supporting Opposition members' position regarding the budget. A clash erupted over this, during which the chairperson claimed that he was assaulted. TMVP is a former paramilitary group linked with LTTE, which is currently in support of the government.</p>	<p>වැව්වේන ජරාදේශීය සභාපතිවරයාට පහර දෙනවා. Lankadeepa. published 9th Dec 2020. Last accessed 25th Feb 2021.</p> <p>Valaichchenai PS passes budget sans TNA. Ceylon Today. published 12th Dec 2020. Last accessed 3rd March 2021.</p>
58	28th Dec 2020	Kegalle	<p>A member of Ruwanwella PS was allegedly abducted and assaulted just before the voting for the new budget of the PS began. In spite of this, the member, Chulanga Priya Adhikari, representing SLFP (a coalition party to the ruling SLPP), was able to attend the council and vote against the budget. He stated that he was abducted to prevent him from voting against the budget, and that such attempts would not intimidate him.</p>	<p>රුවන්වැල්ල ජරාදේශීය සභාවේ මන්ත්විවරයෙකු පැහැරගෙන ගොස් පහර දීලා. Mawbima. published 29th Dec 2020. Last accessed 3rd March 2021.</p>

	Date	District	Other incidents	Source
59	10th Dec 2020	Batticaloa	Police officers threatened to force families of the disappeared in Batticaloa into a quarantine centre if they continued with their protest. Additional police officers arrived at the protest site in Batticaloa, where they were seen noting down the details of the protestors' identities.	Tamils in Batticaloa brave police intimidation to stage protest . Tamil Guardian. Published 13th Dec 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021. Sri Lankan police threaten to quarantine Tamil families of the disappeared in Batticaloa . Tamil Guardian. Published 10th Dec 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021.
60	10th Dec 2020	Mullaitivu	Police officers attempted to disrupt a Tamil protest against state land seizures in Mullaitivu. Officers were filmed attempting to pull down banners and clashing with protestors. More than 50 families have been divested of their land in Venavil village, under the Puthukkudiyiruppu Divisional Secretariat of the Mullaitivu District. Sixteen of these families are living in huts on the roadside in protest. The Mullaitivu district is highly militarised, with one of the largest Sri Lankan troop deployments in the region.	Sri Lankan police attempt to dismantle Mullaitivu protest . Tamil Guardian. Published 10th December 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.
61	6th Nov 2020	Mannar	Two individuals have been arrested in connection with the murder of a Tamil village officer, S.Vijayendran. The murder shocked many due to its brutality, but the reasons for the killing are still unclear. Locals described Vijayendran as an advocate against illegal sand mining in Manthai West Divisional Secretariat Division, and police investigations are taking into account that he may have been targeted for speaking out regarding these issues.	Two arrested in connection to murdered Tamil village officer . Tamil Guardian. Published 10th November 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021.
62	29th Nov 2020	gampaha	A protest in Mahara Remand Prison demanding safety measures for COVID-19 was suppressed using excessive force, resulting in 11 deaths and injuries to 107 inmates. Eight inmates who died tested positive for COVID-19, while 70 out of the 107 injured inmates also tested positive. A government-appointed committee inquiring about the incident found the protest justifiable, since the prison was overcrowded, and fever and COVID-19 were spreading among the prisoners. The prisoners demanded urgent action to ensure their safety and health. The government-appointed inquiry committee also found that some gangs of prisoners took advantage of the chaotic situation to attack their rival gangs. They set fire to the prison building and the documentation storage room. Though the prisoners used sharp and blunt tools to attack each other, they were not in possession of firearms. Post-mortem examinations after the protest found that all deaths occurred due to gunshots. This clearly suggested that excessive force was used against the protesting prisoners. The government ministers initially suggested that the prisoners behaved violently, after taking overdoses of psychoactive drugs. However, the Psychiatric Association of Sri Lanka pointed out that the drugs used for treating psychiatric disorders do not cause violent behaviour. The Sri Lankan prisoner's rights advocacy group, Committee to Protect the Rights of Prisoners (CPRP), said they have been writing to government authorities since March 2020, requesting that they address prison overcrowding and increased COVID-19 health risks in prisons.	Claim that Mahara detainees turned violent due to medicinal drugs is false- Jayan Mendis . MediaLK. Published 2nd December 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021. Interim Report By Ali Sabry's Committee Justifies Mahara Prisoners' Protest . Colombo Telegraph. Published 10th December 2020. Last accessed 22nd February 2021. Mahara Prisoners Shot as They Asked for Water . Ruki Fernando. Groundbvies. 11th Dec 2020. Last accessed 30th March 2021.

63	3rd Dec 2020	colombo	A court order was issued against members of the Committee to Protect the Rights of Prisoners (CPRP), Senaka Perera and Nandimal Silva, preventing them from protesting in front of Welikada Prison. The court cited COVID-19 regulations as the reason for disallowing the protest. The police also called the members, advising them not to hold the protest. Consequently, the members organized a press conference instead of holding a protest. When Nandimal went to the protest venue to inform journalists of the cancellation of the event, he noticed the presence of a large number of riot control officers at the venue, though there were no protest participants.	INFORM
64	21st Dec 2020	colombo	A pavement vendor who protested against the Moratuwa Mayor has been arrested, presented before a magistrate, and released on bail. He was accused of unlawful assembly and other charges. The protest started after the police forcefully removed pavement vendors and seized their goods in an attempt to prevent them from engaging in business on the pavements. Mayor Saman Lal Fernando said pavement vendors have been allocated space in the daily open-air market in Moratuwa, before prohibiting them from doing business on the roadsides. He also alleged that businesses on pavements have caused traffic accidents, issues with public health as these vendors do not follow health regulations, and loss of business for the tax-paying shop owners in the area.	මොරටුව නගරාධිපතිට එරෙහිව උද්ඝෝෂණය කළ වෙළෙන්දාට ඇප. Mawbima. Published 21st Dec 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021.
65	22nd Dec 2020	gampaha	A local politician was arrested for allegedly assaulting a villager who refused to participate in a protest against mandatory cremation of COVID-19-infected dead bodies. The suspect, Hussein Haris, is a member of the Negombo Municipal Council. He organized the protest in Kochchikade village in Negombo. Though all other villagers took part in this protest, one declined to participate in public. Subsequently, the suspect allegedly assaulted the victim with a metal pole, causing serious injuries.	කොට්ඨ මරණ ආදාහනයට එරෙහිවූ අයට යකඩ පොල්ලෙන් පහර දුන්නැයි විමාන්ඩි භාරයේ සිටි නාගරික මන්තථීරිට ඇප. Divaina. Published 22 Dec 2020. Last accessed 22nd Feb 2021.

List of Acronyms and Key Terms

- 5000 LKR allowance: This was an allowance provided several times by the GoSL for families of vulnerable communities who often lost their livelihoods due to the lockdown and COVID19 measures taken by the government. This was originally meant only to provide for low income families, but it was expanded to other vulnerable persons. The beneficiaries were selected by a village level committee as told by the government. However there were no selection criteria made public. Many low income family members and communities such as estate workers complained that they have not received the benefits. The distribution of the allowance seemed to be politicized, in some cases the politicians and villagers had threatened and assaulted government officers over disagreements on how beneficiaries were selected.
- 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
- COVID-19: Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a coronavirus discovered in 2019 which led to a global pandemic.
- FR/Fundamental Rights: Fundamental Rights are the selected rights guaranteed by Sri Lankan constitution as detailed in the chapter 3 of the constitution. The rights include Freedom of thought, conscience and religion, Freedom from torture, Right to equality, Freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention and punishment, and prohibition of retroactive penal legislation, Freedom of Speech, assembly, association, movement, and Right to information.
- FR Petition: Fundamental Rights Petition is a petition filed at the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka regarding a violation or an imminent violation of fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution.
- IGP: Inspector General of Police (IGP) is the head of the Police and highest ranking officer in the Police.
- GN: Grama Niladhari or the village officer is a Sri Lankan public official appointed by the central government to carry out administrative duties in a Grama Niladhari division: the smallest administrative area for the government.
- 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 a 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.
- HRD: Human Rights Defender is a term used to describe people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights.
- 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. LTTE has been proscribed as a terrorist organization in Sri Lanka, as well as in a number of other countries.
- Maaveerar Naal: Maaveerar Naal (Great Heroes' Day) is a remembrance day observed by Sri Lankan Tamils to remember the deaths of militants who fought for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). It is held each year on 27 November, the date on which the first LTTE cadre, Lt. Shankar (Sathiyathan alias Suresh), is said to have died in combat in 1982. The day before Maaveerar Naal, coincides with the Birthday of LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. Traditionally oil lamps are lit for the three days ending on 27 November and symbols of LTTE are displayed at the ceremonies though such symbols may not be

allowed in the present context, since LTTE is a proscribed organization. The symbol for Maaveerar Naal is the Flame lily flower (*Gloriosa superba*). Locally, flame lily rhizome has been known as a substance for committing suicide in Sri Lanka, mostly in the past. Lines of red and yellow small flags representing the colour of lily flower, along with lit oil lamps is a common scene at the Maaveerar Naal Remembrance events. Lighting oil lamps is also a common religious practice among Sri Lankans, that may not be limited to this festival.

MP: Member of Parliament

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

OMP: Office of Missing Persons (OMP) is a state institution which is mandated to trace the fate and whereabouts of persons who have gone missing or disappeared in Sri Lanka. It also collects information on missing persons, receives complaints, and makes recommendations to the relevant authorities regarding missing persons. OMP was operationalized in February 2018, based on a parliamentary act passed in August 2016.

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. The President could appoint PCol under the Presidential commission of inquiry Act No 17 of 1948. The mechanism has been established to provide the 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.

PCR Test: Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) Test is a DNA testing method used in molecular biology. It is widely used for covid19 testing at the present.

Pradeshiya Sabha: Pradeshiya Sabhas are a type of legislative bodies under the local government system of Sri Lanka. Local government bodies are usually divided into three types as (1) Municipal councils (2) Urban Councils and (3) Pradeshiya Sabhas. Their members are elected in the local government election. Local government is the third and lowest level of government in Sri Lanka—after the central government and provincial councils. They are known as local authorities responsible for providing a variety of local public services including roads, sanitation, drains, housing, libraries, public parks and recreational facilities at local government level.

PTA: Prevention of Terrorism Act is a draconian law often used to arbitrarily arrest and detain persons of ethnic minorities, journalists and human rights defenders. It provides the police with broad powers to search, arrest, and detain suspects. PTA was first enacted in 1978

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 2016.

TID: Terrorist Investigation Department is a section of Sri Lankan Police that conducts inquiries into terrorism of Sri Lanka. TID has been accused of torture and intimidation of HRDs.

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 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.

WHO: World Health Organization