

Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka

1st January -31st March 2021



Destroyed Mullivaikkal monument located in the Jaffna University Premises before its destruction by authorities in January 2021. Image courtesy Tamil Guardian.

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Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka in January-March 2021.

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

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Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka

January- March 2021

1. 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 January to March 2021.

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

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

The report is based on 78 incidents related to repression of dissent in Sri Lanka. Section 1 describes the methodology. Section 2 describes the socio-political context and some trends relating to the human rights situation in Sri Lanka during the month. Section 3 provides updates about ongoing legal cases related to dissent. Section 4 provides a statistical analysis of the incident included in the report looking at geographical location, ethnicity and gender of the victims, types of violation, category of victims, and perpetrators. Section 5 provides a thematic summaries of the incidents described in the report. This month’s report is organized under 5 themes: (5.1) repression of journalists and media workers, (5.2) Repression of Freedom of Assembly, (5.3) Repression of environmental Activists, (5.4) Repressive legal and policy actions and (5.5) other incidents. Section 6 includes the list of incidents presented in a table, with a brief description about each incident.

2. Context

UNHRC adopted a resolution on promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka in March 2020. While GoSL did not support the resolution, the foreign minister Gunawardane speaking at the parliament said “move was unhelpful, divisive and went against the principles of the UN Charter”. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 22 in favour, 11 against and 14 abstentions. The Council decided to strengthen the capacity of the Office of the High Commissioner to collect, consolidate, analyse and preserve information and evidence and to develop possible strategies for future accountability processes for gross violations of human rights or serious violations of international humanitarian law in Sri Lanka to advocate for victims and survivors, and to support relevant judicial and other proceedings, including in Member States, with competent jurisdiction¹.

The Report of the Commission of Inquiry to Investigate Allegations of Political Victimization² was tabled in parliament in early March, which was subjected to strong criticisms for its undue implications on the independence of the judiciary, the rule of law and democracy in Sri Lanka³. Civil society groups, lawyers and politicians criticized the report and some went into courts against the implementation of its recommendations⁴. The Controversial Chinese funded Colombo Port City economic commission gazetted in March 2021 was also subjected to strong skepticism for risks of undue geopolitical influences, territorial integrity, money laundering, in addition to already being a debt trap.⁵

Acquittal of suspects: On 13th January, former LTTE member and pro-government politician Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan alias Pillayan and 04 other suspects were acquitted and released in the Joseph Pararajasingham murder case by the Batticaloa High Court, after Attorney General Department withdrew the charges⁶. Pararajasingham is a Tamil MP killed in 2005, while attending a church mass. Amnesty International stated “the collapse of this case marks yet another sorry milestone in the Sri Lankan authorities’ continued failure to ensure justice for crimes committed during the armed conflict⁷.”

On 12th January, Anusha Palpita, a state employee then accused of an ongoing corruption case relating to misuse of state funds, was appointed as the Secretary to the Ministry of Industries⁸. After two months he was released from the charges.

¹ [Human Rights Council Renews Mandate of Special Rapporteur on the Environment, Adopts Resolutions on Sri Lanka, Nicaragua, Occupied Palestinian Territory, and on Unilateral Coercive Measures](#). OHCHR. Published 23rd March 2021. Last accessed 7th July 2021.

² On 9 January 2020, the Government appointed a Presidential commission of inquiry to investigate allegations of “political victimization” of public officials, members of the armed forces and the police and employees of State corporations by the previous Government. With its broad mandate, the commission has intervened in police investigations and court proceedings and had the effect of undermining the police and the judiciary in several high-profile human rights and corruption cases.

³ [Initial Concerns with the Report of the Commission of Inquiry to Investigate Allegations of Political Victimization and Subsequent Action](#). Centre for Policy Alternatives. Published 12th March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁴ [Anura files writ application against recommendations of PCoI on political victimization](#). Ada Derana. Published 24th March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021; [Senior lawyers express concern over CoI report on political victimisation](#). Sunday Times. Published 7th of March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁵ [Colombo Port City Economic Commission Bill](#). GoSL. published 24th March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021. [Questions raised on the Colombo Port City Economic Commission Bill that was published recently](#). Newsfirst. Published 30th March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁶ [Pillayan acquitted & released from Pararajasingham case](#). Newsfirst. Published 13th Jan 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁷ [Sri Lanka: Collapse of Joseph Pararajasingham murder case a failure of justice](#). Amnesty International. Published 13th January. 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁸ [GoSL Gazetted 2210/27](#). GoSL. Published 14th January 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

Date	Accused	Alleged accusation
13th January	Former LTTE member and pro-government politician Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan alias Pillayan and 04 other suspects	Alleged involvement in Joseph Pararajasingham murder case
22nd January	Former Director of the Sri Lanka Customs, Ranjan Kanagasabey	allegedly soliciting a bribe of Rs 1.6 million to compile a report for the release of certain goods
25th February	agriculture Minister Mahindananda Aluthgamage	alleged misappropriation of Rs.3.9 million from a trade union affiliated to the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP)
15th March	former MP Sajin de Vass Gunawardena	alleged misappropriation of Rs 883 million funds while functioning as the CEO of Mihin Lanka
15th March	Ex-DIG Vaas Gunawardena and his wife Shayamali Priyadarshani Perera	Alleged Illegal acquiring of a land
15th March	Former Secretary to the President Lalith Weeratunge and former Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) Director General Anusha Palpita	Alleged misappropriation of Government funds by distributing 'Sil' cloth to temples islandwide at a cost of Rs. 600 million belonging to the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission during the 2015 Presidential Election.
18th March	Minister Rohitha Abeygunawardena	alleged unlawful acquisition of assets estimated at Rs.41.1 million
26th March	Minister Johnston Fernando, Ex-Sathosa Chairman Eraj Fernando, and Former Director of Operations at Sathosa Mohamed Shakeer	Allegedly removing 153 Sathosa workers from official duties and using them for political activity during 2010-2014 period and causing losses to the state.
30th March	Former Attorney General & Former Chief Justice, Mohan Peiris, Former Deputy Solicitor General, and Present Supreme Court Judge A. H. M. D. Nawaz, and Former Energy Secretary M.M.C. Ferdinando	Allegedly preparing an erroneous Attorney General's Report to avoid taking legal action against irregularities committed in the purchase of lands for LECO while Mohan Peiris was the Attorney General.

Table 1: *Acquittals of accused or convicted persons in crimes and corruption cases related to key politicians and state officials*

Number of politicians and some state employees were acquitted from a number of bribery and corruption cases, often citing technical weaknesses. On 22nd of January, former Director of the Sri Lanka Customs, Ranjan Kanagasabey, who was charged with soliciting a bribe of Rs 1.6 million to compile a report for the release of certain goods was acquitted. The high court judge held the opinion that there was a discrepancy in evidence and insufficient evidence to prove the charges against the accused⁹. On 25th of February, Agriculture Minister Mahindananda Aluthgamage was acquitted and released from the case that alleged he misappropriated Rs.3.9 million from a trade union affiliated to the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). Judge held that the prosecution had failed to prove charges against

⁹ [Customs Director acquitted after lengthy bribery trial](#). Daily News. published 23rd Jan 2021. Last accessed 7th July 2021.

the accused beyond reasonable doubt¹⁰. On 15th of March, the Bribery Commission informed Colombo Chief Magistrate to withdraw the charges pertaining to a case of alleged misappropriation of Rs 883 million funds by former MP Sajin de Vass Gunawardena while functioning as the CEO of Mihin Lanka, due to technical shortcomings. Accordingly, he was acquitted from the case¹¹. On 15th of March, Ex-DIG Vaas Gunawardena and his wife Shayamali Priyadarshani Perera were also acquitted and released from a case filed against them with regard to illegally acquiring land. They were released as the time period to lodge such a complaint has exceeded¹². On 18th March, the Colombo High Court ordered the release of Minister Rohitha Abeygunawardena from a corruption case for the alleged unlawful acquisition of assets estimated at Rs.41.1 million following the Bribery Commission's decision to withdraw the indictments, on the basis that the case was filed without obtaining directions from all the directors¹³. On 30th March, former Attorney General & Former Chief Justice, Mohan Peiris and two others were acquitted and released from a case filed by the bribery commission, after the commission withdrew its allegations¹⁴. On 15th March the Colombo High Court concluded case proceedings against former Secretary to the President Lalith Weeraratunge and former Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) Director General Anusha Palpita in connection with the controversial Sil Redi distribution case during an election, based on a previous order made by the Court of Appeal acquitting the two suspects¹⁵. They had been previously convicted and sentenced to three years in prison¹⁶. Minister Johnston Fernando, Ex-Sathosa Chairman Eraj Fernando, and Former Director of Operations at Sathosa Mohamed Shakeer were acquitted from two separate bribery cases filed against them for allegedly using 153 government workers for political activity and causing losses to the state by the Colombo magistrate court, based on a previous order issued by the Colombo High court¹⁷.

Arrests related to alleged terrorism: Police said that two people have been arrested in Jaffna on charges of promoting terrorism. According to Police, the suspects are reported to have operated a website and a YouTube channel promoting the LTTE and terrorism related activities¹⁸. Rasheed Hajjul Akbar, who headed the Jamaat-e-Islami organisation for 24 years was arrested for allegedly promoting extremism in the country for allegedly promoting Wahhabism and Jihadist ideology in Sri Lanka.¹⁹ Former Western Province Governor Azath Salley was arrested under charges of terrorism after making a controversial statement, however later it was said that he was arrested for his alleged involvement with Easter Sunday bombing²⁰. All these arrests were made under controversial Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

¹⁰ [Minister Aluthgamage acquitted from TU case](#), Daily News, published 26th February 2021. Last accessed 7th July 2021.

¹¹ [Case against Sajin Vass withdrawn](#), Ceylon Today, Published 16th of March 2021. Last accessed 7th July 2021.

¹² [Vaas Gunawardena & wife acquitted and released from land case](#), Newsfirst, 15th of March. Last accessed 7th July 2021.

¹³ [Minister Rohitha Abeygunawardena released from corruption case](#), Daily News, published 19th March 2021. Last accessed 7th July 2021.

¹⁴ [Ex-CJ Mohan Peiris & 02 others acquitted](#), Newsfirst, Published 30th Mar 2021. Last accessed 7th July 2021.

¹⁵ [HC concludes case proceedings against Lalith Weeraratunga and Anusha Palpita](#), Daily News, published 15th March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

¹⁶ [Lalith Weeraratunga and Anusha Palpita acquitted in 'Sil Redi' case](#), Daily FT, published 20th Nov 2020. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

¹⁷ [Johnston Fernando released from two bribery cases](#), Newsfirst, Published 26th March 2021. Last accessed 7th July 2021.

¹⁸ [Two YouTubers arrested in Jaffna for promoting LTTE](#), Newswire, Published 29th March. Last accessed 7th July 2021.

¹⁹ [Former Jamaat-e-Islami leader arrested in Sri Lanka for promoting Islamic extremism](#), The Hindu, Published 13th March 2021. Last accessed 7th July 2021.

²⁰ [Azath Salley arrested over links to Easter attacks – Minister Weerasekera \(Video\)](#), Newswire, Published 17th March 2021. Last accessed 7th July.

Police violence and corporal punishment: A 15 year old student who was assaulted by a teacher and consequently lost hearing in 2017 was ordered to pay compensation after the Supreme court decided that his fundamental rights have been violated²¹. A footage of a Police officer publicly assaulting a lorry driver went viral, after the lorry had knocked down another police officer. The relevant police officer was interdicted and legal action was taken against²². A civilian in Mullaitivu alleged that soldiers have beaten and tortured a Tamil man from Keppapulavu in Mullaitivu after one of his cows accidentally broke through a weak fence and entered an army camp. According to Tamil Guardian, he has been also warned not to speak to the media regarding what happened²³.



A traffic cop brutally assaulted a lorry driver in public. Photo courtesy: [Newsfirst](#)

Women's rights : A fundamental rights petition was filed by 32 Senior Superintendents of Police (SSP) seeking an annulment of the promotion of Bimshani Jasin Arachchi, Sri Lanka's first female Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG), claiming that the promotion was made in violation of the standard promotion procedure. The petition claims that no female police officer in the country can be appointed as the DIG of Police as the word 'women' is not mentioned in the regulations pertaining to promotions²⁴. Meanwhile a 9 year old child was beaten to death during an exorcism ritual. Subsequently the mother of the child and the shaman were arrested.²⁵ Four young women were reported to have been arrested without any reason for allegedly idling on Colombo Streets²⁶. Outdated vagrancy law is discriminatively implemented against women.

²¹ [15-year-old student deprived of hearing, due to assault by teacher](#). Daily Mirror. Published 13th February 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

²² [Traffic Cop filmed assaulting lorry driver interdicted](#). Newsfirst. Published 29th March 2021. Last accessed 7th July 2021.

²³ [Sri Lankan soldiers attack Tamil farmer, police threaten to shoot him and cover it up](#). Tamil Guardian. Published 26th of January 2021. Last accessed 7th July 2021.

²⁴ [32 SSPs file FR petition against promotion of Sri Lanka's first female DIG](#). Ada Derana. Published 16th February 2021. Last accessed 7th July 2021.

²⁵ [Child beaten to death at a witchcraft ritual centre](#). Newsfirst. Published 28th February 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

²⁶ [Rs. 50 fine for 4 women idling on Colombo streets without any reason at night](#). Newswire. Published 22nd March 2021. Last accessed 7th July 2021.

Burqa ban and burial of covid-19 bodies: Muslims in post-war Sri Lanka have been periodically subjected to communal violence, discrimination and other forms of vilification. In the context of Covid-19, the mandatory cremation practice of COVID19 dead bodies in Sri Lanka was discriminatory towards minority Muslims, as Islam did not allow the cremation of the dead. While GoSL claimed such burials could lead to groundwater pollution with COVID19 virus, other countries and WHO guidelines allowed both burial and cremation. Almost a year later in late February this year, GoSL allowed the burial of those who died from COVID19, after continued public outcry and pressure from the international community for a long period.²⁷ In the following month, the State Minister of Public Security Sarath Weerasekara made a controversial statement to the media claiming that a cabinet proposal has been submitted to ban burqa in Sri Lanka, and also to shut down 1000 madrasa (Islamic) schools²⁸. He also said that ‘burqa is a symbol of extremism’. However, the government later claimed that it would require more time to consider the proposal²⁹.



A protest in Colombo in December over the Sri Lankan government's policy of forced cremations in Covid-19 deaths. Photograph: Ishara S Kodikara/AFP/Getty

²⁷ [Sri Lanka finally lifts the ban on burial of COVID victims](#). Aljazeera. Published 26th Feb. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

²⁸ [Sri Lanka announces burqa ban, to shut 1,000 madrasas](#). The Hindu. Published 13th March. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

²⁹ [Sri Lanka says it 'requires time' to consider the proposed burqa ban](#). Aljazeera. Pub. 16 March. Last accessed 8 July 2021.

3. Case updates

UK High Court has ruled in favour of Major General Priyanka Fernando who was previously found guilty of public order offences for making slit-throat gestures at protesters in London on 4th February 2018 while serving as then Defence attache of Sri Lanka high commission in UK. He was acquitted on the ground of diplomatic immunity³⁰.

Rathupaswala court case was taken at the Gampaha High Court on 29th January, and postponed until 23rd April since the judge had been on leave³¹. This case relates to the military shooting at unarmed protestors on August 1st, 2013 at Rathupaswala, killing 3 persons and injuring another 12 persons, and injuring 21 others by physical assault.



Protests held against the arrest of Shakthika Sathkumara in June 2019. Phot courtesy: Sri Lanka Mirror

Writer Shakthika Sathkumara was released and acquitted of all the charges in February 2021³². He was arrested on 1 April 2019, and released on bail on 5th August 2019 for writing a short story about life in Buddhist temple, that allegedly hinted at child sexual abuse and sharing it on his Facebook profile. The case against him continued until this year. He was accused of allegedly “advocating national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence” under the ICCPR Act³³.

The case against the former Director of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Shani Abeysekera and others who are accused of fabricating evidence was taken at the Gampaha Magistrate Court on 21st January. Shani Abeysekera and two other suspects were further remanded until 3rd of February³⁴.

³⁰ [UK Court quashes judgement against Major General Priyanka Fernando](#). Daily News. Published 20th March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

³¹ [රත්නපාසවල නඩුව කල් යයි](#). Lankadeepa. Published 29th January 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

³² [Tweet by Sanjaya Wilson. Lawyer appeared on behalf of Sathkumara](#). Dated 9th Feb 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

³³ [Shakthika Sathkumara discharged days ahead of UNHRC sessions](#). EconomyNext. Published 9th February 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

³⁴ [ශානි අබේසේකර විමර්ශන](#). Lankadeepa. Published 21st January 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

When the case was taken up on 3rd of February, the suspects were further remanded until 17th of February. Though Police had said they are seeking an international red warrant against the exiled suspect Nishantha Silva, no update was provided. The suspects were not produced before the court, citing covid-19 situation as the reason³⁵. On 17th February, the magistrate ordered them to be further remanded until 3rd of March. Police informed the court about the ongoing investigations saying that they have submitted a CD containing a voice recording of a conversation between two police officers to the government analyst department. The suspects were not produced before the court citing Covid-19 situation. Also there was no legal representation on behalf of the suspects³⁶. On the next court date, they were further remanded until 17th March and they were not presented before the court due to covid19 situation. The court was informed that Shani Abeysekera is being treated for a heart related health condition.³⁷ Abeysekera underwent a heart surgery in february.³⁸ On 31st of March, the magistrate ordered them to be further remanded until 7th of April³⁹. The revision bail application filed on behalf of Shani Abeysekera and former Sub Inspector of Embilipitiya Police Sugath Mendis was taken before the Court of Appeal on 23rd of February before the panel of judges Menaka Wijesundara (Ms.) and Neil Iddawela. Since the judge Menaka Wijesundara withdrew from the case, the case was referred to the Court of Appeal President Judge Arjuna Obeysekera who subsequently named a new panel of judges: Nissanka Bandula Karunarathna and R. Gurusinghe. The case was postponed until 1st of March⁴⁰. On the next court day, the lawyer appearing on behalf of petitioners, requested for a short date. Accordingly, the bench decided to consider the petition on 17th March⁴¹. On the next court date, lawyer appearing for the petitioner Shani Abeysekera, stated that his client has been remanded for about seven months and requested that the case be heard in a short time as his client had undergone heart surgery and is currently suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure. The bench accepted the request and directed the Attorney General to take steps to file objections on the next court date on 29th April⁴².

On 7th of January, the CID informed the court that Hejaaz Hizbullah who was to be produced in court has tested positive for Covid-19 and has been undergoing the quarantine process. Until then, Hizbullah's lawyers and family were unaware of his health condition and worried about his safety.⁴³ Neither the family members, nor the lawyers were allowed to speak to Hizbullah for two days⁴⁴. On 10th of January, Hizbullah was provided an opportunity to speak to his wife over the phone⁴⁵. On 11th of January, CID informed the court that the Minister of Defense has given permission to detain Hizbullah for another 90 days, who has been under detention of the CID for more than 8 months⁴⁶. Hizbullah's lawyers filed a motion since the CID has not complied with the order made by the former Magistrate Ranga Dissanayake on 19th August 2020, to submit a comprehensive report on all statements obtained in the process of the investigations into Attorney -at - Law Hejaaz Hizbullah.⁴⁷ Hizbullah's lawyers also pointed out that the CID has been submitting partial facts to court for media publicity.⁴⁸ Non-compliance has occurred as the Attorney General had earlier objected to submitting statements of witnesses involved in the investigations stating that investigations under the PTA are

³⁵ [ශානි නවදුරටත් රිමාන්ඩ්](#). Lankadeepa. Published 3rd Feb 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

³⁶ [ශානි ඇතුළු සැකකරුවන් තිදෙනා නවදුරටත් රිමාන්ඩ්](#). Lankadeepa. Published 17th Feb 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

³⁷ [ශානි ඇතුළු තිදෙනා නවදුරටත් රිමාන්ඩ්](#). Live@8. Swarnavahini. published 3rd March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

³⁸ [Shani transferred back to Welikada after surgery](#). Daily FT. published 20th February 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

³⁹ [Shani & three others further remanded](#). Ceylon Today. Published 31st March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁴⁰ [ශානිගේ ඇප ඉල්ලු පෙත්සම් විභාගයෙන් විනිසුරු මේනකා ඉවත්වෙයි](#). Lankadeepa. Published 23 Feb.. Last accessed 8 July 2021.

⁴¹ [Shani Abeysekera's bail application to on 17 March](#). Daily FT. published 2nd March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁴² [Court directs AG to file objections to Shani Abeysekera's revision bail application on April 29](#). Colombo Page. Published 17th March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁴³ [Hejaaz Hizbullah contracts Covid 19: CID informs court](#). Daily Mirror. Published 7 Jan 2021. Last accessed 8 July 2021.

⁴⁴ [Justice For Hejaaz. Tweet](#). 10th of January 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁴⁵ [Justice For Hejaaz. Tweet](#). 10th of January 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁴⁶ [Rizwan Segu Mohideen. Tweet](#). 11th of January 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁴⁷ [Justice For Hejaaz. Tweet](#). 27th of January 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁴⁸ [Justice For Hejaaz. Tweet](#). 27th of January 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

not subject to the supervision of the Magistrate. Making a historic order, magistrate stated that the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) does not suspend the application of the Criminal Procedure Code, and ordered a comprehensive report including all statements obtained on the investigation into Hejaaz Hizbullah to be submitted to the Court on the 24th of February.⁴⁹ The magistrate also stated that the Detention Order by the Minister of Defence is only to investigate an offence and not to punish a person held in custody.⁵⁰



Attorney-at-Law Hejaaz Hizbullah and the principal of Puttalam Madrasa School Mohamed Shakeel were presented before the Colombo Fort Magistrate's Court on 18th February 2021. Photo courtesy: Ada Derana.

On 17th of February, the court was informed that the Attorney General has instructed the Inspector General of Police (IGP) to report facts on the case filed against Attorney-at-Law Hejaaz Hizbullah, and to present Hizbullah at the court on charges filed under Section 2(1) (h) of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and Section 3(1) of the International Covenant On Civil And Political Rights (ICCPR) Act⁵¹. On the following date, it was reported that Mohammed Shakeel: the principal of a Madrasa School has been also arrested over links to Attorney-at-Law Hejaaz Hizbullah.⁵² Both of them were submitted before the court on 21st February and further remanded. Deputy Solicitor General (DSG) Dileepa Peiris, appearing on behalf of the Attorney General, alleged that Mr Hizbullah was connected to the teaching of extremist ideology at a Madrasa in Puttalam and told that the "Save the Pearl Foundation" which the suspect heads, had fully sponsored this Madrasa where 56 children were educated. He also alleged that 26 of these students had been separated and given specialised training in a classroom from 2018 up until the Easter Sunday attacks in 2019, and claimed that one student had given a

⁴⁹ Fort Magistrate in historic order says arrests under PTA does not suspend Criminal Procedure Code. Newswire. Published 27th January 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁵⁰ [Justice For Hejaaz. Tweet.](#) 27th of January 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁵¹ [AG tells IGP to produce Hizbullah in court under several charge.](#) Newswire. Published 17 Feb. Last accessed 8 July 2021.

⁵² [Sri Lanka: Principal of Madrasa School arrested over links to Hejaaz.](#) Defend Lawyers. Published 18th February. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

statement that the suspect had visited the school and showed the students footage of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians and had claimed that Christians in Israel were controlling mosques and that the only way to frighten them was to attack Christians in Sri Lanka. He further alleged that Naufar Maulavi who is currently held under detention as the alleged theoretician of the terror group responsible for the Easter Sunday attacks had preached at the Madrasa. The lawyer appearing on behalf of Hizbullah claimed that the charges are fabricated, and pointed out that investigators had first arrested the suspects claiming they were connected to the Easter Sunday attacks, but now entirely different accusations are being made.⁵³ On 3rd of March, Hizbullah and Shakeel were produced before the court and further remanded until 18th of March. The Magistrate ordered that special arrangements should be made for a designated lawyer representing Hejaaz Hizbullah to attend the Magistrate's Court registry and study all material filed in relation to him in the presence of the Registrar, without copies being issued. Nalinda Indatissa, PC appearing as senior counsel on behalf of Hizbullah informed the court that without being allowed to know the contents of the summary of evidence and statements made against his client, he is unable to properly discharge his duty towards his client. DSG, appearing for the CID requested that the access to the material being filed as a summary of evidence and statements made against Hizbullah should be restricted, to avoid prejudice to the ongoing investigations.⁵⁴ Meanwhile Eight European Human Rights Ambassadors issued a statement raising concerns over the alleged unlawful detention of Hejaaz Hizbullah⁵⁵. On 12th of March, indictments were formally forwarded to the court by the Attorney General under PTA and ICCPR acts⁵⁶.

On 13th January 2021, Major Ajith Prasanna who was in remand prison for almost a year for allegedly making a problematic statement during a media conference held in December 2019 seeking to influence the witnesses of alleged abduction of 11 youths by military⁵⁷ was granted bail⁵⁸.

⁵³ [Hejaaz Hizbullah, Mohammed Shakeel produced before court, remanded](#). Sunday Times. Published 21st February. Last accessed 8th of July 2021.

⁵⁴ [Court permits Hejaaz's lawyer to access evidence](#). The Morning. Published 3rd March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁵⁵ [Eight European Human Rights Ambassadors voice concerns over Hejaaz](#). Newswire. Published 11th March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁵⁶ [Rizwan Segu Mohideen. Tweet](#). Published 12th March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁵⁷ [Ajith Prasanna claims CID pressured navy officers to give false evidence](#). Ada Derana. Published 6th December 2019. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

⁵⁸ [CoA orders to release Ajith Prasanna on bail](#). Newsfirst. Published 13th January 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

4. Statistical Analysis

In total 78 incidents during the 3 months period covered in this report from 1st January 2021 to 31st March 2021. These individual incidents may include multiple victims. At times, it was difficult to estimate how many individuals would be affected, particularly for incidents relating to legal, policy and institutional actions.

Location	Number	Percentage
North and East	34	44%
Colombo	10	13%
Gampaha and Kalutara	7	9%
Other areas	8	10%
Not Applicable	18	23%
online	1	1%
Total	78	100%

Table 2: Geographical Location of incidents

When geographical location is analyzed, 44% of the incidents were reported from the Northern and Eastern Provinces, former civil war zones. Western Province reported 22% of the total incidents, including 13% of incidents from Colombo district, where the country's capital is located. Only 10% of incidents were reported from other areas in the country. one percent of incidents were reported online. Twenty-three 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.

Gender of the victim	Number	Percentage
Male	38	49%
Female	4	5%
Not Applicable	36	46%
	78	100%

Table 3: Gender of the victims in incidents

When the incidents were analyzed in relation to the gender of the victims, the majority (49%) of the victims were male. Only 5% of the incidents related to women. In 46% of incidents, gender was considered not applicable, as the incidents involved institutions or organizations, or they included persons from both genders.

Ethnicity of the victim	Number	Percentage
Sinhala	17	22%
Tamil	36	46%
Muslim	5	6%
Not Applicable	19	24%
Not mentioned	1	1%
Total	78	100%

Table 4: Ethnicity of the victims in incidents

When the incidents were analyzed in relation to the ethnicity of the victims, the highest percentage (46%) of incidents were related to the ethnic minority Tamil individuals. Second, 22% of incidents were related to ethnic majority Sinhalese individuals. Third, 6% of incidents were related to Muslim individuals. These figures indicate a large deviation from the general ethnic composition in the country⁵⁹. This shows systematic discrimination and targeting of the country's ethnic minorities, especially of Tamil individuals. 24% of incidents were related to victims of more than one ethnic group, while in 1% of incidents, we were unable to find the ethnicity of the victims.

Type of victims	Number	Percentage
Journalists	15	19%
writers	2	3%
protestors	14	18%
politicians	14	18%
Activists	8	10%
Trade unionists	4	5%
state officials	5	6%
lawyers	1	1%
Witnesses	1	1%
other	14	18%
Total	78	100%

Table 5: Type of victims in incidents

Nineteen percent of incidents were related to repression of journalists and media workers, while 2 percent of incidents were related to other writers. Another 18% of incidents involved repression of protests mainly in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Eighteen percent of incidents involving politicians were also mainly related to the protests held in Northern and Eastern Provinces, though they also included few incidents in relation to the politicians in the south. In 10% of incidents, the victims were activists and civil society organizations. In 5% of incidents, the victims were trade unionists. In 6%, the victims were state officials. 2% of incidents were related to lawyers and witnesses. Eighteen percent of incidents involved other types of victims.

⁵⁹ 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.

Type of violation	Number	Percentage
abduction	1	1%
physical attacks	11	14%
verbal threats	3	4%
Arrest	6	8%
Court order or summons	5	6%
Legal action	2	3%
Destruction of memorials	2	3%
Problematic verbal statements	4	5%
hate speech	1	1%
Military/police questioning	14	18%
intimidation	7	9%
legal, institutional and policy	12	15%
others	10	13%
Total	78	100%

Table 6: Types of violations

There was one incident (1%) of an alleged abduction. Fourteen percent of incidents (11 incidents) involved physical attacks. Verbal threats were made in 4% of incidents. There were 8% of arrests. Court orders were taken mainly against protestors in 6% of incidents. Police went to courts against protestors in 2 other incidents (3%), though courts did not accept the claims made by the Police. In another 2 incidents (3%), memorials were destroyed. In 5% of incidents problematic verbal statements were made by politicians, while in 1% of incidents a hate speech campaign was launched against a whistleblower of an environment destruction. 18% of incidents were related to military and Police questioning individuals. 9% were related to intimidation. 15% were related to legal, institutional and policy actions that seemed to repress dissent. There were also 13% of other incidents.

Perpetrator/ Responsible party	Number	Percentage
Military or Police	31	40%
Government Institutions and officers	15	19%
President or central government	6	8%
Other Politicians	4	5%
Business persons	2	3%
courts	6	8%
unknown	7	9%
others	7	9%
Total	78	100%

Table 7: Types of alleged perpetrator

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 8% of incidents, while other politicians were responsible for 5% of incidents. In 40% of incidents, the alleged responsible parties were military or police. Courts and other judiciary bodies were allegedly responsible for 8% of incidents. In 19% of incidents, other government institutions and officials were responsible. Business persons were allegedly responsible for three percent of incidents. In nine percent of incidents, other parties were responsible. In another nine percent of incidents, the alleged responsible parties were unknown.

complaint with the Police Headquarters alleging that a suspicious group were searching for his personal information in his residential area in Colombo, his wife's hometown in Kandy and that the group had followed him when he visited north for his official work.

Arrests: The office of the YouTube channel tubetamil and the website www.tubetamil.com situated in Naver Street, Jaffna was raided and two employees were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Other violations: A well-known news anchor attached to a local TV in Jaffna had been summoned by the Terrorism Investigation Division of Sri Lanka Police and inquired details about one of his facebook friends as tweeted by former Senior Lecturer in Law at University of Jaffna, Dr Kumaravadivel Guruparan. The Navy has denied entry to Ruki Fernando, a freelance journalist and a human rights activist, and two other journalists to enter Iranathivu Island in the Kilinochchi District of the Northern Province, without providing a legitimate reason for refusal of entry. The State-owned television network ITN published defamatory news about exiled journalist Sunanda Deshapriya and exiled Police crime investigation officer Nishanta (de Silva).

Legal and policy issues: Cabinet press briefing informed that the Press Council has been identified to be "structurally reformed as a Tribunal for journalists and media institutions covering electronic, print and new media." Press council law has been severely detrimental to media freedom over the years, and therefore media activists have been calling for abolition of the law rather than reforming it.

President Gotabaya Rajapakse made a controversial statement calling certain media institutions as 'mafia' and that he knows how to teach them a lesson. The statement indirectly targeted Capital Maharaja Media Group- a company that owns five radio stations and three television channels. Six media rights organizations collectively issued a statement condemning the president's statement. Their statement mentioned that they believed 'that this statement aimed at a specific media will intimidate especially those who make critical remarks against the government'.

5.2 Repression of Freedom of Assembly

Destruction of memorials: On 8th of January, Jaffna university authorities bulldozed Mullivaikkal monument located in Jaffna university premises, built in memory of those killed in the last phase of Sri Lankan war in 2009. University students and community members protested against the demolition of the monument. Though the university grants commission (UGC) initially claimed that the monument was a threat to national unity, later authorities promised to rebuild the monument. Various threats were made against the protestors who were protesting against the demolition of the monument including conducting forceful PCR tests. On 28th March, the entrance to the Kittu Memorial Park in Nallur was destroyed due to an alleged arson attack by an unidentified group. The park was constructed in 1994 by LTTE rebels, naming it after a fallen LTTE leader. Kittu Park has been a frequent gathering place for many protests organized in the area.



The P2P protest was a days-long walking rally from Pottuvil in Ampara to Polikandy in Jaffna demanding rights of ethnic minorities in Sri Lanka. Photo Courtesy: Tamil Guardian

Court orders banning P2P protest: On 3rd February to 7th February, activists, politicians, civil society members and victims rallied from Pottuvil in Ampara to Polikandy in Jaffna despite a number of court orders issued against the March. This protest was called the P2P protest. After Police claimed that protests could lead to spread of covid19, the Jaffna Magistrate Court banned all protests for 4 days between February 3rd to February 6th. Orders were issued against 32 individuals including leading politicians and civil society leaders banning them from participating at protests. Later the court withdrew its order later, after public health officials declined the claim of covid19 spreading through protests. Police filed legal cases against protestors at multiple local magistrate courts. Mallakkam magistrate postponed the case requesting the Ministry of Health to produce a report substantiating claims that the protests will extend COVID-19 spread. Other cited reasons for injunctions were public nuisance and attempting to smear Sri Lanka's image ahead of the upcoming United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) session in Geneva. The Chavakachcheri magistrate court dismissed petitions

submitted by the police on the grounds that people have the right to freedom of speech and assembly. Mannar magistrate court, Point Pedro Magistrate and Kalunvanchikudy Magistrate court in Batticaloa issued orders banning the protest.

Vavuniya Magistrate Court imposed a ban on demonstrations and hunger strikes planned by families of the disappeared marking the National Independence Day of Sri Lanka held on 4th February annually, citing covid19.

Other intimidations on protestors: Security forces have allegedly attempted to break up the rally at various points of the march by threatening protesters, obstructing protesters with roadblocks, but protesters have defied these moves and continued their demonstration. Public waiting to greet protesters in Mullaitivu were disrupted and protesters were also asked to be dispersed by the Police due to alleged COVID-19 concerns. At the Vavuniya bus stand, Police were seen recording the vehicle numbers of vehicles and motorcycles that the supporters of Pottuvil to Polikandi (P2P) protest were travelling. Nails had been allegedly placed on the road near the military checkpoint in front of the Yan Oya bridge near Pulmoddai in an alleged attempt to damage the tyres of the vehicles where protesters were travelling to join the procession in order to stop them participating in the protest. Previously another similar incident had been reported in Kinniya in the same district in relation to another protest

Arrests: 26 year old young man was arrested in Point Pedro in Jaffna for taking part in the Pottuvil to Polikandy protest. He was released after 6 hours in police custody, after recording a statement.

Police recorded statements from Politicians



Police officers from six different stations recorded a statement from TNA MP Shanakiyan Rasamanickam at his office, about his participation in the P2P protest rally. Photo Courtesy: Newswire

Number of politicians were summoned or their statements were recorded by the Police regarding their participation in the Pottuvil to Polikandy (P2P) March. MP M.A. Sumanthiran was questioned regarding his participation in the protest, and government security provided to him was withdrawn immediately following his participation at the protest upon alleged orders of the public security minister. Police officers from six different stations recorded a statement from TNA MP Shanakiyan Rasamanickam at his office, about his participation in the P2P protest rally. Similarly TNA MP Selvam Adaikalanathan was questioned at his office by Mankulam and Vavuniya police stations. Despite two rounds of questioning at his office, Adaikalanathan has been ordered to appear at the Oddusuddan police station for further interrogation. TNA MP S Shritharan was also questioned by the police at his office. TNA MP Vino Noharathalingam was also questioned by Mankulam police for allegedly violating a court order over participating in the P2P protest. Former Northern Provincial Council member, Thurairasa Ravikaran was summoned for allegedly defying police orders by continuing the protest when it reached Nayarthu bridge in Mullaitivu district. TNPF leader Gajendran Ponnambalam and General Secretary Selvarajah Kajendran were subjected to questioning at their office. Murunkan police visited the home of Nanattan Pradeshiya Sabha chairperson Thiruselvam Paranjothy and ordered him to go to the police station to record his statement. Former Vanni MP and Attorney-at-Law Hunais Farook also provided a statement to Mannar police over his participation at the protest. Mallavi, Mullaitivu and Mankulam police stations have questioned former Northern Provincial Council member, Thurairasa Ravikaran regarding his participation in the Pottuvil to Polikandy (P2P) rally.

Police have also questioned Mariyasuresh Eswary, the head of the Association of Relatives of Disappeared Persons in Mullaitivu, over her participation in the Pottuvil to Polikandy (P2P) rally.

Other incidents: Secretary and President of the Vavuniya Families of the Disappeared Association were summoned to the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) and questioned on their involvement in the hunger strike and protests held in early February.

The President issued two extraordinary gazettes on 30th January and 1st March, 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. Similar gazettes were previously issued in the month of December.

5.3 Repression of Environmental activists



Lakmal Ranabahu while in the hospital following the attack. Photo courtesy: The leader.

Physical attacks: Environmental and social activist Lakmal Ranabahu was assaulted on 24th January in Kalawana area in Ratnapura district, over an alleged dispute with the Divisional Secretary after inquiring about an environmental destruction in the area. Ranabahu has been an activist on environmental and land issues concerning Sinharaja forest reserve which is a biodiversity hotspot and World Heritage Site recognized by UNESCO. A young man named Saranga Madushan has been assaulted by unknown persons as his brother abroad has expressed concerns regarding a road development project that allegedly causes environmental destruction in the Rumassala area in Galle.

Surveillance and Threats: Environmental activist Rev. Pahiyangala Ananda Sagara Thero made a complaint to the Police headquarters stating that he has faced life threats as a reprisal for opposing environmental destruction and unidentified persons claiming to be from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) have visited his driver's house and several other neighbouring houses inquiring about him at multiple times. A farmer in Alakolawewa area in Dambulla has been assaulted and threatened with death as a reprisal for informing authorities and media about an alleged land grabbing in the area. The victim D.M. Dissanayake has exposed an illegal business of acquiring and selling forest lands in the area. Bhagya Abeyrathna, a young school student was subjected to threats by Police, and government authorities after exposing alleged deforestation in Sinharaja world heritage site. While participating at the 'Lakshapathi' millionaire quiz show at a national television channel, she expressed concern and dissatisfaction about ongoing deforestation in her neighbourhood as a hotel was being constructed clearing a forest land located at the border of the Sinharaja forest. The next day, the Minister of Wildlife and Forest Conservation stated that her statement was factually incorrect as alleged construction occurs in a private land. Two police officers of the Rakwana police had gone to her residence and recorded a statement inquiring as to who had influenced her to express these views. Later several forest officers who have also visited her have said that she should not speak about

deforestation in the forest without knowing the exact borders of the forest. She was also subjected to a hate speech online campaign for her views expressed.

Reprisals against government forest officers: Devani Jayatilake, a government forest officer was subjected to harassment after whistleblowing about a near-extinct tree that was about to be removed due to a road development project. On 9th February, the Minister of Wildlife and Forest Conservation C.B. Ratnayake made a statement at the parliament claiming “some officers promote themselves like mentally ill people”, targeting Jayatilake. Two days later, additional Conservator General of Forests Thilak Premaratne stated that Jayatilake may have violated institutional guidelines by speaking to the media and the government attempted to launch a disciplinary inquiry against the forest officer. However, the inquiry was withdrawn due to huge public outcry. In a separate incident, the State Minister of Wildlife Protection – Wimalaweera Dissanayake had allegedly threatened the officials at the Maha Oya Forest Office in Ampara and secured the release of a suspect in their custody after the suspect had been arrested by the wildlife officials for falling down four large trees in the Tampitiya proposed reserve.



The Stop Ecocide Mural made by a group of youth environmental activists was forcibly removed by the Colombo Municipal Council, despite prior-approval granted. Photo Courtesy: [@MevanPeiris](#) Twitter

Other incidents: Colombo Municipal council (CMC) has forcefully removed the ‘stop ecocide’ mural built by a group of youth environmental activists, to raise awareness on climate change and ongoing deforestation in the country. Despite prior-approval granted to the event by the CMC, the 70 x 20 foot mural has been taken down, reportedly on instructions by the Presidential Secretariat. It was removed, reinstalled on the next day, and then removed once again despite the protest by the youth who took part at the event. President Rajapaksa said the Ecocide Mural which was set up at the Viharamahadevia Park in Colombo had caused damage to the environment adding displaying murals is not the way to protect nature.

The Environment Ministry stated that they are planning to set up a special unit to monitor accurate and false information published on social media pertaining to incidents of environmental destruction. Environment Minister Mahinda Amaraweera said nearly 323 environmental officers will be recruited at the Divisional Secretariat Level for this purpose and legal action will be taken against those found to be posting false information. While it is important to tackle fake news, INFORM believes that limiting it to ‘environmental destruction’ and taking legal action against those who publish ‘inaccurate’ information could be possibly targeted at silencing people from speaking about environmental destruction.

5.4 Legal policy actions

A gazette notification was issued appointing a Special Presidential Commission to implement the recommendations of the controversial Presidential Commission of Inquiry on Political Victimization. The PCoI on Political victimization had recommended the discontinuation of many ongoing legal cases regarding major human rights violations, and incidents of corruption in Sri Lanka and taking legal action against witnesses, victims, and lawmakers for allegedly engaging in a process of politically targeting state officials and others. The report was subjected to various criticisms by opposition political groups, and activists. And many pointed out that the commission has acted beyond its mandate.

Gazettes calling on the armed forces to maintain public order were reissued in February, March and April, 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.

The Ministry of Defence criminalized 7 Tamil diaspora organizations and around 300 individuals under the List of Designated Persons under Regulation 4(7) of the United Nations Regulation No. 01 of 2012. Following organizations were banned: (1) British Tamil Forum, (2) Canadian Tamil Congress, (3) Australian Tamil Congress, (4) Global Tamil Forum, (5) National Council Of Canadian Tamil (6) Tamil Youth Organization, (7) World Tamil Coordinating Committee. Alan Keenan of the International Crisis Group tweeted that “in an extraordinarily regressive move, the government of Sri Lanka has used terrorist designation law to effectively criminalise a large portion of the politically active Tamil diaspora - potentially putting at risk any in Sri Lanka with even limited contact”.

On 19th April, the Cabinet of Ministers issued a statement that an Act for the Regulation of Publishing Buddhist Publications will be enacted to counter distorting the pure Buddhism and Buddhist traditions. Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs Secretary Prof. Kapila Gunawardana has said publications that contain material related to Buddhist teachings, the character of the Buddha, or which have any relevance to Buddhism are to be reviewed, regulated, and censored by a committee appointed by the government. The proposed Act is to be introduced to counter publications that use Buddhism or the character of the Buddha in “disrespectful ways in order to spark controversy”, or oversimplify or misinterpret Buddhist teachings. The Government also appointed a Committee to present recommendations on how to deal with those who misinterpret and spread falsehoods about the Buddha’s character, the Tripitaka and Buddhist sacred sites.

Similarly a notice was issued by the Deputy Director of Customs stating that from 5th March onwards “any Islamic religious books brought into the country should be released only on approval from the Ministry of Defence”. This order could be used to censor islamic books and publications brought to Sri Lanka without consulting the views of the Islamic community or the scholars. Also the law seemed discriminatory as it targeted only Muslims. A letter issued by the Defence Ministry dated 22nd of February mentioned an incident where the Ministry of Defence has denied the release of a box of 90 books, because of 4 books that contained ideas related to Wahhabist and Salafi Islamic traditions.

5.5 Other incidents



Protesting garment workers about increasing labour rights issues in the covid19 context.

Photo Courtesy Sri Lanka Brief.

Reprisals against protesting workers: Workers of a garment company faced reprisals for establishing and joining a trade union. In January 2021 workers at the Katunayake factory of Next Manufacturing Limited formed a branch of the FTZ & GSEU trade union. Workers experienced various threats and forms of intimidation to resign from the union. In another incident, workers at Chiefway Katunayake garment company participated in a protest previously and were denied the bonus payment given to other workers. When workers complained they were told that their next bonus would also not be paid they protested. In early 2021, according to worker representatives, Chiefway agreed to pay some of the bonus, however 25 workers involved in the protest for their bonus have been dismissed for alleged misconduct. Ten workers involved in a labour strike in the Alton tea estate in the Up-Cot, Masekeliya area have been arrested and jailed by police for allegedly assaulting an estate manager. Incident occurred when workers were continuing an indefinite strike since 3rd February demanding a 1,000-rupee (\$US5.19) basic daily wage. Workers allege that Police acted in a biased manner, and deny the alleged assaults on the managers. Later 38 employees were suspended for alleged involvement in the physical attack on the estate manager. Though the alleged attack on the estate manager might have happened the actions taken against the estate workers seemed excessive.

Freedom of expression in social media: A resident of Dehiwala was arrested by the Cyber Crime Unit of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for allegedly publishing a defamatory statement criticizing the President. In a separate incident, TID of Police arrested a young man in Wattala for posting photos of LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran on TikTok. The suspect has been allegedly accused of promoting a terrorist organization by posting these photos. A writer and a businessman named Fazl Muhammed Nizar was arrested by the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) of Police on

charges of issuing statements via Facebook allegedly inciting racial tensions, an offence under the ICCPR Act. As reported by Free Media Movement, the arrest was prompted by a video posted on Facebook by Nizar directly addressing the President and criticizing a controversial statement made by the President in Ampara. The latter part of the video contains a section where the monks are scolded in obscene language. He has also written many articles for the Colombo Telegraph website.

Opposition MP Harin Fernando representing the main opposition party SJB alleged that the government has recently bought pegasus software. Pegasus is an infamous spyware that has been allegedly used for surveillance of human rights defenders by repressive governments in many countries including India, Mexico, Morocco and UAE.

Repression of Opposition Politicians: During the President's speech in Walapane during 'a dialogue with the village programme', President Gotabaya Rajapaksa read out some details about several fake news that had been published by a Facebook page named 'JVP parisarwediyo (environmentalists).' JVP is a leftist opposition political party representing the parliament. The speech attempted to level the accusations of environmental destruction as fake news spread by the political opponents. The next day, the JVP MPs lodged a complaint at the CID of Police claiming 'JVP parisarwediyo' as a fake Facebook page which Facebook had already taken down at the time of President's speech based on a complaint they had made earlier. They also demanded an inquiry into the matter.

On 10th January, Samagi Jana Balawegaya MP Harin Fernando has informed the Inspector General of Police that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's statement made at a function in Ampara has posed a severe threat to his life and has requested that IGP intervenes to protect his life and freedom. The President made these remarks at the "Discussion with the Village" programme held in Lathugala, Uhana in Ampara district on 9th January 2021. During the speech the President went on to compare MP Fernando's behaviour with the behaviour of LTTE. And told that the LTTE leader was "killed like a dog." MP Fernando in his letter stated "The President clearly insinuates that he is capable of having me "killed like a dog" if I continue saying things that displease him".

MP Ranjan Ramanayake was sentenced to 04 years of rigorous imprisonment by the Supreme Court for committing contempt of court. On 21st of August, speaking to the media, he made a controversial statement accusing the majority of lawyers and judges in Sri Lanka as corrupt. At the time he was a deputy Minister of the ruling government. Subsequently he also lost his parliamentary seat. While the judgement might not be a consequence of political influence of the ruling regime, INFORM believes that contempt of court laws should be changed and freedom of expression should be promoted.

Repression of Witnesses and lawyers : In March, the long detained poet under Prevention of Terrorism Act Ahnaf Jazeem was finally granted access to his lawyers, after months of continuous appeals. However, the lawyers for poet Ahnaf Jazeem have complained to the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) about TID officers listening and audio-recording the conversation between the lawyers and their client, Ahnaf Jazeem. They have complained that the entire conversation was under police surveillance.

A witness who appeared at the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Easter Sunday attack has been assaulted by a group as an alleged reprisal about his statements provided to the commission.

The witness Rishath Marush had been assaulted by a group of residents in Galkiriyagama area in Anuradhapura district. Following the attack, he has been admitted to the Dambulla hospital for further treatment.



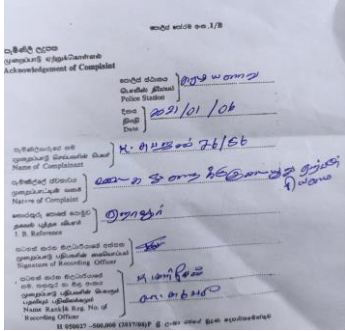
Assaulted law student. Photo courtesy the leader

Police officers have allegedly assaulted a law student who had been visiting a detainee at the Peliyagoda police station. The victim Guneratne is the son of politician Maithri Guneratne and the brother of lawyer Charitha Guneratne, had been assaulted while carrying food to a suspect that his brother is representing. Previously there had been an argument between the lawyer Charitha and the Police, which he believes that his brother has been assaulted as a retribution for his act, mistaken for him as both of them look alike. Though the government claimed to take immediate actions regarding the incident, Police failed to arrest the suspects for almost three weeks.

Repression of State officials: Several Police officers attached to Aluthgama Police station have been allegedly assaulted for implementing a court order relating to a property related lawsuit. Subsequently, 4 persons have been arrested for allegedly disturbing the duties of Police and judicial officers, contempt of court and assault. Excise officers who attempted to arrest 3 drug related suspects have been assaulted. Two assaulted officials have been hospitalized. The suspects were later arrested by Parasangawewa Police in Kokpetiyawa. In another incident, a suspect has assaulted a Police officer with a sharp weapon during an arrest, in Nagaswatte area in Kirulapone.

Other incidents: The secretary of Kiribathgoda Traders Association has been assaulted by two local politicians over a controversy about opening the public vehicle park without informing certain politicians. CCTV footage showed a group of persons led by two local politicians assaulting the victim in a restaurant.

6. List of incidents


	Date	District	Repression of Media and journalists	Source
1	4th January 2021	N/A	Cabinet press briefing informed that the Press Council has been identified to be “structurally reformed as a Tribunal for journalists and media institutions covering electronic, print and new media.” A proposal was also made by the Minister of Mass Media, to appoint a committee to obtain recommendations from civil society and public for amending the Sri Lanka Press Council Act, to suit the present day needs. Media organizations such as Free Media Movement (FMM) vehemently opposed this proposal. In a letter to the Secretary of the Ministry of Mass Media and Information, FMM said that Press council law has been severely detrimental to media freedom over the years, and therefore they call for abolition of the law rather than reforming it. Media activists believe that the media should not be controlled by a politically appointed body, instead, through a self-regulatory mechanism which is free from all political interference.	<p>Press briefing of Cabinet Decision taken on 2021-01-04. Office of Cabinet Ministers Sri Lanka. Published 4th Jan 2021. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p> <p>Sri Lanka to extend controversial Press Council law to electronic, new media. Economy Next. Published 5th Jan 2021. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p> <p>FMM calls the Press Council flawed and wants it abolished not restructured. Economy Next. Published 5th Jan 2021. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p> <p>Amending Press Council Act: Government seeks opinions on amendments. The morning. Published 21st February. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p>
2	5th January	Batticaloa	<p>A Tamil journalist was assaulted and threatened by a group of unidentified people, when he went to film a protest in Batticaloa. The journalist: Kugarasu Subojan has been threatened by unidentified persons, when he was covering a local protest against the ‘Airtel Tower’ held in Eravur, Batticaloa. He has been threatened to immediately stop filming the demonstrations, before attempting to assault him. They have also demanded to delete the video he had already made, and attempted to take his camera equipment. He made a complaint at the Karadiyanaru police station the next day.</p>  <p><i>Receipt of the Police complaint made by the Journalist</i></p>	<p>Tamil journalist assaulted and threatened in Batticaloa. Tamil Guardian. Published 6th Jan 2021. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p>

3	17th of January	Colombo	Mawbima Editorial Director and senior journalist Sisira Paranathanthri has lodged a Police complaint regarding a telephone call he had received, threatening him and his fellow journalist Shiran Rupasinghe, by the Secretary to the State Minister of Public Security Sarath Weerasekara for publishing a news in the Mawbima newspaper stating that police have been involved in demolishing shops in Maharagama town, for developmental activities. When Free Media Movement contacted Mawbima editor Bennett Rupasinghe, he admitted that a complaint had been lodged and declined to comment further. The compainents have laer decided not to proceed with the complaint based on a mutual agreement.	Media Freedom Rights Monitoring Report . Free Media Movement. Published January 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.
4	5th February	Mullaitivu	A journalist working for a IBC Tamil news website has been assaulted while covering the Pottuvil to Polikandy (P2P) protest march. As reported in IBC Tamil website, a white van has attempted to hit the Journalist Rajanthan intentionally, while he was covering the protest on the Vadduvakal bridge, in Mullivaikkal area. Then the people in the van have assaulted the journalist. It was also reported that the driver of the van was wearing a T-shirt of a political party.	Tamil journalist was attacked at P2P protest by men in white van . Tamil Guardian. 18th February 2021. Last accessed 26th April 2021.
5	12th February	Monaragala	The Kataragama local correspondent M. K. Nandasena of the Lankadeepa newspaper has been threatened over the phone by a Police officer in the Kataragama Police after reporting that the officer was infected with the covid-19. The journalist has reported that the relevant police officer along with two other officers has contracted covid19 after participating in the independence day ceremony held in Colombo and that they were quarantined. The Police officer made a threatening phone call to the journalist on 10th February around 12.13pm and allegedly stated “I will look after, once I recover”.	පොලිස් නිලධාරියාට ආසාදිතයායි පුවත පළකළාට මාධ්‍යවේදියාට මරණ තර්ජන . Lankadeepa. Media Freedom Rights Monitoring Report . Free Media Movement. February 2021.
6	4th February		Balanathan Satheesan, a local journalist based in Vavuniya has been threatened and harassed by a person identified as an ‘investigator’. The ‘investigator’ has allegedly obstructed the journalist when he was covering the protest organized by Vavuniya families of the disappeared.	Tamil journalist harassed and intimidated at Vavuniya families of the disappeared protest . Tamil Guardian. Published 15th February. Last accessed 30th April 2021.

7	27th February	Mullaitivu	Tamil Guardian correspondent Kanapathipillai Kumanan has been allegedly intimidated and harassed by three Sri Lankan Forest Department officials in Mullaitivu, when he went to report on a land dispute in Thannimurippu, Mullaitivu. The officers have photographed the journalist and demanded for his personal information.	Tamil journalist intimidated and harassed by Sri Lankan Forest Department officials in Mullaitivu. Tamil Guardian. Published 10th March. Last accessed 30th April 2021.
8	1 st - 3 rd March	Colombo and Jaffna	BBC Tamil correspondent Ranjan Arun Prasad had lodged a complaint with the Police Headquarters alleging that a suspicious group were searching for his personal information in Colombo and that the group had followed him when he visited North for his official work. He said the incident took place after the BBC Tamil website published a report containing the views of the people of the North on the ongoing discussion among the international community regarding the human rights situation in Sri Lanka. The group of people followed him and searched for information about him in his residential area, also visited his wife's house in Kandy and inquired about him. Any steps taken by the Police were not reported.	Media Freedom Rights Monitoring Report. Vol 3. Free Media Movement. Published January 2021. Last accessed 14 th June 2021.
9	5 th March	Killinochchi	The Navy has denied entry to Ruki Fernando, a freelance journalist and a human rights activist, and two other journalists to enter Iranathivu Island in the Killinochchi District of the Northern Province, without providing a legitimate reason for refusal of entry. When inquired about this matter from the Killinochchi District Secretary, the Director of Government Information and the Minister of Mass Media, they had stated that they were unaware of such a ban. However, Navy Media Spokesperson Indika de Silva has told the Media.lk website that no one other than the residents are allowed to enter Iranathiv Island. Complaining to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, Ruki Fernando stated that the actions of naval officers resulted in the violation of their constitutional rights, especially the freedom of movement (Article 14 - 1-h) and the freedom of expression and publication (Article 14-1-a).	Media Freedom Rights Monitoring Report. Vol 3. Free Media Movement. Published January 2021. Last accessed 14 th June 2021.


10	29 th March	Jaffna	The office of the YouTube channel tubetamil and the website www.tubetamil.com situated in Naver Street, Jaffna was raided and two employees were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Police media spokesperson DIG Ajith Rohana stated that a 35-year-old female and a 36-year-old male working for the YouTube channel tubetamil and www.tubetamil.com website were arrested, while the police also seized five desktops, five laptops and several other equipment in the office. He further stated that the arrests were made following an investigation by the Police Terrorism Investigation Division, which confirmed that the above YouTube channel and website were publishing various news items promoting terrorism and that they would be brought to the Colombo Terrorism Investigation Division for further investigations. He added that they were hoping to detain them and question further.	LTTEය ජවවර්ධනය වන අයුරින් කටයුතු කළ කාන්තාවක් ඇතුළු දෙදෙනෙක් අත්අඩංගුවට . Ada Derana. 29 th March 2021. Last accessed 10 th June 2021. ஊடகங்களில் தலைப்பு செய்தியாக ரியூப் தமிழ் பணிப்பாளர் கைது - தொடர்ந்து தடுப்பு காவலில் . Tube Tamil (youtube). Published 29 th March 2021. Last accessed 10 th June 2021.
11	29 th March	Jaffna	A well-known news anchor attached to a local TV in Jaffna had been summoned by the Terrorism Investigation Division of Sri Lanka Police and inquired details about one of his facebook friends as tweeted by former Senior Lecturer in Law at University of Jaffna, Dr Kumaravadivel Guruparan.	Tweet . K. Guruparan. Published 30 th March 2021. Last accessed 16 th June 2021.
12	10 th March	Gampaha	Siyarata News website Journalist Sujeewa Gamage has been allegedly abducted and tortured by unknown persons who demanded him a memory chip containing controversial information. According to Gamage, he was abducted in the Mirigama town, and forcefully taken to an unknown house, interrogated, beaten and burned with a heated iron rod. Then he had been questioned about opposition politicians, and demanded a data storage chip containing an interview he had conducted with the wife of one of the Easter Sunday Suicide Bombers. The assailants were alleged to have stolen two pen drives and a data card from the journalist before leaving him in the Wellampitiya area of Colombo District. After being released from hospital, he was arrested by the Police for allegedly making 'false claims' on abduction. He was granted bail on 19 th March. Gamage is a senior journalist who has previously worked for several newspapers such as Janadina, Janasathiya, Yukthiya, and Aththa. When	Web Journo abduction probed by CCD . The Morning. .published 17 th of March 2021. Last accessed 7 th May 2021 WATCH : Journalist Gamage denies Police claims, says he didn't fake an abduction . Newswire. Published 20 th of March 2021. Last accessed 7 th May 2021. Sri Lanka: Journalist charged with 'false claim' of abduction . IFJ. published 25 th March 2021. Last accessed 7 th May 2021. වෙබ් මාධ්‍යවේදියාගේ ඇමරිකානු බොරු . Divaina newspaper [print]. Page 7. Published 27 th March 2021.



			the case was taken at the Colombo magistrate court on 25th of March, Colombo Crime Division of Police informed that investigations conducted so far have revealed that claims made by the journalist are false and further investigations are underway to find out information about those who have influenced him to make such a false claim. The case was postponed until 29th July 2021.	
13	19th March	N/A	President Gotabaya Rajapakse made a controversial statement calling certain media institutions as 'mafia' and that he knows how to teach them a lesson. As many news and political websites mentioned, his statement indirectly targeted Capital Maharaja Media Group - a company that owns five radio stations and three television channels. During his speech, he stated "Media freedom does not mean the freedom of the person who owns the media institution. If the owners of media institutions try to run the country as they want, then that is a mafia. That's what happens. In our country there are no kings and no Maharajas. The Maharajas were in India. These mafias want to control governments and rulers. That's not going to work with me. If necessary, I know how to teach them a lesson." Six media rights organizations collectively issued a statement condemning the president's statement. Their statement mentioned that they believed 'that this statement aimed at a specific media will intimidate especially those who make critical remarks against the government'.	<p>Sirasa Network Under Fire Again: Nandasena Vows He Knows 'How To Teach Media A Lesson'. Colombo Telegraph. published 21st March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021.</p> <p>Sri Lanka: Groups express concern over the president's statement about the media. Free Media Movement. Published 24th March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021.</p> <p>මාධ්‍ය නිදහස මාධ්‍ය අයිති මිනිහගේ නිදහස නෙමෙයි, ඒව උගන්වන්න ඕන උගන්වන විදිහත් මම දන්නවා-ජනපති. News Centre [Youtube]. published 20th March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021.</p> <p>ජනාධිපතිගේ මාධ්‍ය මර්දන සහ ව්‍යාජ ජේෂ්ට්වුන් කතාව ජනාධිපති මාධ්‍ය අංශය වාරණය කරයි? SriLanka Brief. published 22nd March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021.</p>
14	4th March 2021	N/A	State-owned television network ITN representative speaking from Italy & posing as broadcasting from Geneva stated that the prominent journalist Sunanda Deshapriya and exiled Police crime investigation officer Nishanta (de Silva) are providing information to Human Rights Council against war crimes. The claim intended to discredit and label them as the enemies of the country.	Sunanda Deshapriya. Tweet dated 4th March 2021.


	Date	District	Freedom of Assembly	Source
15	8th January 2021	Jaffna	 <p><i>Image: Destroyed Mullivaikkal monument before destruction, Image courtesy Tamil Guardian.</i></p> <p>On 8th of January, Jaffna university authorities bulldozed Mullivaikkal monument located in Jaffna university premises, built in memory of those killed in the last phase of Sri Lankan war in 2009. The monument included a sculpture of hands held out of water. University students and community members protested against the demolition of the monument. The chairman of the university grants commission (UGC) stated that the monument was a threat to national unity. Due to continued protests, later the authorities promised to rebuild the monument.</p>	<p>Protest at Jaffna University as authorities destroy Mullivaikkal memorial. Tamil Guardian. published 8th January 2021. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p> <p>Removal of war victims' memorial at Jaffna University sparks tension. The Hindu. published 9th January 2021. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p> <p>The memorial at the Jaffna University removed as it is a threat to unity between North and South- UGC Chairman. Colombo Page. published 9th January 2021. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p> <p>Sri Lanka: Tamil war monument to be rebuilt after hunger strike. BBC. published 11th January 2021. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p>
16	8th January 2021	Jaffna	<p>Various threats were made against the protestors who were protesting against the demolition of the monument. According to Pakianathan Ujanthan, President of the Jaffna Students' Union, Police have told them that they would be subjected to PCR tests, if they decide to continue the protest. Former head of the law faculty of Jaffna university alleged that the "previous Vice Chancellor (VC) of Jaffna University was sacked because he didn't agree to demolish the monument" and that he has "concrete reasons to believe that one of the pre-conditions for appointment of the new VC by the incumbent President was demolition of this monument". According to the Tamil Guardian, VC has indirectly threatened the protestors saying that "If they (protestors) do not go by themselves we will deal with them."</p>	<p>Removal of war victims' memorial at Jaffna University sparks tension. The Hindu. published 9th January 2021. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p> <p>Jaffna University's Vice-Chancellor disparages protesters warning 'they will be dealt with'. Tamil Guardian. published 8th January 2021. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p> <p>https://twitter.com/rkguruparan/status/1348597875853373446</p>
17	28 th March 2021	Jaffna	<p>The entrance to the Kittu Memorial Park in Nallur had been destroyed due to an arson attack by an unidentified group. The park was constructed in 1994 by LTTE rebels, naming it after a fallen LTTE</p>	<p>Kittu Park gate destroyed in suspected arson attack. Tamil Guardian. Published 29th March. Last accessed 7th May 2021.</p>

			<p>leader. Although the blaze had been reported to the Jaffna Municipal Council fire brigade, they had been unable to attend in time as their vehicle had been occupied at another location at the time. Tamil Guardian website and others alleged that the arson attack could have been linked to destroying of Tamil memorials in the recent past. Kittu Park has been a frequent gathering place for many protests organized in the Nallur area in Jaffna.</p>	<p>Entrance of Kittu Park in Jaffna set ablaze. NewsHub. Published 29th March. Last accessed 7th May 2021.</p>
18	3rd February	Jaffna	<p>The Jaffna Magistrate Court banned all protests for 4 days between February 3rd to February 6th. Stay orders were issued to multiple individuals after an application was filed by Jaffna and Kopay police stations to the Jaffna Magistrate, citing reasons of public harassment and violations of COVID-19 guidelines.</p> <p>32 individuals including Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kacchi (ITAK) leader Mavai Senathirajah; Jaffna mayor Visvalingam Manivannan, lawyer Sugash Kanagaratnam, Uthayan newspaper publisher Eswarapatham Saravanapavan, former Northern Provincial Council members Shivajilingam and C.V.K Sivagnanam; Jaffna University Union members were issued with direct orders banning them from protesting.</p> <p>Later Jaffna Magistrate vacated his previous order banning protests after Jaffna Mayor Visvalingam Manivannan told the court that Public Health Inspectors confirmed that the rally would not spread COVID-19.</p>	<p>Court bans issued against #P2P protests across the North-East. Tamil guardian. published 4 Feb 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021.</p> <p>Jaffna families of disappeared resist police intimidation and court bans to protest for their missing relatives. Tamil guardian. published 4 Feb 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021.</p> <p>https://twitter.com/tamilguardian/status/1357694121612296193</p>
19	3rd February	Jaffna	<p>Local police stations in Chunnakam, Achuveli and Kankesanthurai filed applications at Mallakam Magistrate Court requesting to ban protests in the relevant areas. However, Mallakam Magistrate Court has postponed the hearing of the case until 5th of February, requesting them to produce a Ministry of Health report substantiating claims that the protests will extend COVID-19 spread. The applications submitted by the police cited reasons for the injunction as public nuisance, violations of COVID-19 guidelines and attempting to smear Sri Lanka's image ahead of the upcoming United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) session in Geneva. Later Mallakam Magistrate dismissed petitions submitted by Sri Lankan police on the grounds that people have the right to freedom of speech and assembly.</p>	<p>Court bans issued against #P2P protests across the North-East. Tamil guardian. published 4 Feb 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021.</p> <p>Third day of P2P protests marked in Trincomalee and Mullaitivu. Tamil Guardian. published 5 Feb 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021.</p>

20	February	Jaffna	The Chavakachcheri magistrate court also dismissed petitions submitted by Sri Lankan police on the grounds that people have the right to freedom of speech and assembly.	Third day of P2P protests marked in Trincomalee and Mullaitivu . Tamil Guardian. published 5 Feb 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021.
21	February	Jaffna	Point Pedro Magistrate has ordered a ban on protests after Point Pedro, Nelliyadi and Valvettithurai police filed applications to block the peaceful protests from going ahead.	Third day of P2P protests marked in Trincomalee and Mullaitivu . Tamil Guardian. published 5 Feb 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021. Tweet . Tamil Guardian. Dated 5th February 2021. Last accessed 7th July 2021.
22	3rd February	Vavuniya	Vavuniya Magistrate Court imposed a ban on demonstrations and hunger strikes planned by families of the disappeared marking the National Independence Day of Sri Lanka held on 4th February annually. The magistrate cited COVID-19 as a pretext to forbid the protests, claiming that an agitation or demonstration would cause damage to public health in light of the coronavirus pandemic. Members of the Association of Relatives of the Disappeared, including Shanmugaraj Sarojadevi and Kasipillai Jayavanitha have been specifically banned from participating in any demonstrations.	Vavuniya court bans Tamil families of disappeared from protesting against Sri Lankan Independence Day . Tamil guardian. published 3 Feb 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021. Vavuniya families of disappeared defy court ban with protest and hunger strike on SL Independence Day . Tamil Guardian. Published 4 Feb 2. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021.
23	3rd February 2021	Mannar	The Mannar Magistrate Court issued an injunction from February 3 rd to February 6 th , against the 'Pottuvil to Polikandy' walk going through the Mannar district, citing COVID-19 risks as the reason, hearing an application filed by Mannar police. Police also argued that the protest against the Sri Lankan Independence day would create ethnic tensions. 14 individuals including ITAK party leader Mavai Senathirajah, Jaffna mayor Visvalingam Manivannan and other politicians in Jaffna were specifically named in the injunction order.	Court bans issued against #P2P protests across the North-East . Tamil guardian. published 4 Feb 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021.
24	3rd February 2021	Batticaloa	The Kalunvanchikudy Magistrate court in Batticaloa has issued a ban on protests targeting the 'Pottuvil to Polikandy' walk, based on an application filed by Batticaloa Police. The Police have allegedly informed the court that protests are intended for 'instigating the UNHRC to act against Sri Lanka', to 'turn people against the Sri Lankan Government' and to encourage 'communal disharmony'. The ban was issued against Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Batticaloa District MP Shanakiyan Rasamanickam and others.	Court bans issued against #P2P protests across the North-East . Tamil guardian. published 4 Feb 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021. https://twitter.com/rkguruparan/status/1356923699237179393


25	5th February	Vavuniya	At the Vavuniya bus stand, Police were seen recording the vehicle numbers of vehicles and motorcycles that the supporters of Pottuvil to Polikandi (P2P) protest were travelling. The protest was held to raise awareness on repression of ethnic minorities in the North and East. The police have also engaged in harassment and intimidation of the protesters.	Police threaten and track protesters in Vavuniya . Tamil guardian. published 5 Feb 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021.
26	2nd-5th February	North and East	Security forces have allegedly attempted to break up the rally at various points of the march by threatening protesters, obstructing protestors with roadblocks, but protesters have defied these moves and continued their demonstration. Public waiting to greet protestors in Mullaitivu were disrupted by the police due to alleged COVID-19 concerns.	Third day of P2P protests marked in Trincomalee and Mullaitivu . Tamil guardian. published 5 Feb 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021. Fourth day of P2P protests in Vavuniya and Kilinochchi . Tamil guardian. Published 6 February. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021.
27	5th February	Trincomalee	Nails had been allegedly placed on the road near the military checkpoint in front of the Yan Oya bridge near Pulmoddai in an alleged attempt to damage the tyres of the vehicles where protestors were travelling to join the procession in order to stop them participating in the protest. Previously another similar incident had been reported in Kinniya in the same district in relation to another protest.  <i>Photo: Damaged tyre by the nails</i>	Third day of P2P protests marked in Trincomalee and Mullaitivu . Tamil Guardian. Published 5th february 2021. Last accessed 30th April 2021.
28	08 February 2021 or earlier	Mullaitivu	In Mullaitivu, police demanded that protesters disperse under alleged COVID-19 concerns. The police had also established rails on the roads at the military checkpoint in front of the Yan Oya bridge near Pulmoddai, disrupting those on vehicles. A similar incident was reported to have occurred previously as vehicles attempted to attend the Kinniya protest.	From Pottuvil to Polikandy - What happened on the five day march for justice . Tamil guardian. published 8 Feb 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021.

29	18th February	Jaffna	<p>26 year old young man was arrested in Point Pedro in Jaffna for taking part in the Pottuvil to Polikandy protest. While summons have been given to a number of politicians, this was the first (civilian) arrest. Police identified the person using motorcycle number. He was released after 6 hours in police custody, after recording a statement.</p>	<p>Tamil youth arrested in Jaffna for participating in P2P protest as Sri Lanka intensifies crackdown. Tamil guardian. published 18 Feb 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021.</p> <p>Tweet. K Guruparan. Dated 18th Feb 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021.</p>
30	15th February	Mullaitivu	<p>Former Northern Provincial Council member, Thuraiasa Ravikaran, was summoned by Mullaitivu police over his participation in the Pottuvil to Polikandy (P2P) March in early February.</p>  <p>In early February, when P2P protest reached near the Nayarthu bridge in Mullaitivu district, the Police ordered that the rally could not go ahead due to Covid-19 concerns. Then Thuraiasa Ravikaran defied the orders and said they will continue the protest while observing social distancing measures. Thuraiasa had been summoned by the Police over this incident.</p>	<p>Mullaitivu police summon Ravikaran over P2P participation. Tamil Guardian. Published 18th February. Last accessed 30th April 2021.</p> <p>Tamils to welcome P2P protesters in Mullaitivu despite Sri Lankan police disruption. Tamil Guardian. Published 5th February. Last accessed 30th April 2021.</p>
31	February	Batticaloa	<p>Police officers from six different stations arrived at TNA MP Shanakiyan Rasamanickam's office to question him for his participation in the P2P protest rally. Police officers from Muttur, Kattankudy, Kilinochchi, Mankulam, Valaichenai and Sampanthurai police stations all recorded Shanakiyan's statement.</p>  <p>Police officers questioning TNA MP Shanakiyan Rajaputhiran Rasamanickam. Photo Courtesy: Tamil Guardian</p>	<p>TNA MP Shanakiyan questioned by 6 Police stations. Newswire. Published 19th February. Last accessed 30th April 2021.</p> <p>TNA MP Rasamanickam questioned on P2P protest. Ceylon Today. Published 19th February. Last accessed 30th April 2021.</p>

32	February	Mannar	<p>Mankulam police arrived at TNA MP Selvam Adaikalanathan's office in Mannar at 9am for questioning and recorded his statement regarding his participation in the P2P protests. Vavuniya police officers later arrived at the MP's to obtain further statements. Despite two rounds of questioning at his office, Adaikalanathan has been ordered to appear at the Oddusuddan police station for further interrogation.</p>  <p><i>Police officers questioning TNA MP Selvam Adaikalanathan. Photo Courtesy: Tamil Guardian</i></p>	<p>Sri Lankan police ramp up questioning of Tamil politicians over P2P participation. Tamil Guardian. Published 20th February. Last accessed 30th April 2021.</p>
33	1st March	Kilinocchi	<p>TNA MP S Shritharan who was also questioned by the police at his office, explained that the P2P march was to bring attention to ongoing issues faced by the Tamil people in the North-East.</p>	<p>Sri Lankan police ramp up questioning of Tamil politicians over P2P participation. Tamil Guardian. Published 20th February. Last accessed 30th April 2021.</p> <p>Tweet. Shritharan Sivagnanam. Dated 1st March 2021. Last accessed 1st June 2021.</p>
34	February	Mullaitivu	<p>Mankulam police asked TNA MP Vino Noharathalingam why he had violated a court order to attend the P2P rally but Noharathalingam told the police that he did not receive any court order. He told the officers that he joined P2P protesters as their representative in the democratic struggle for the rights of Tamil people.</p>	<p>Sri Lankan police ramp up questioning of Tamil politicians over P2P participation. Tamil Guardian. Published 20th February. Last accessed 30th April 2021.</p>
35	February	Jaffna	<p>TNPF leader Gajendran Ponnambalam and General Secretary Selvarajah Kajendran were subjected to questioning at their office, about their participation in the P2P protest march.</p>	<p>Sri Lankan police ramp up questioning of Tamil politicians over P2P participation. Tamil Guardian. Published 20th February. Last accessed 30th April 2021.</p>

36	February	Mannar	Murunkan police visited the home of Nanattan Pradeshiya Sabha chairperson Thiruselvam Paranjothy and ordered him to go to the police station to record his statement. Paranjothy stated that he participated in the rally as a representative of the people.	Sri Lankan police ramp up questioning of Tamil politicians over P2P participation. Tamil Guardian. Published 20th February. Last accessed 30th April 2021.
37	21st February	Mannar	Former Vanni MP and Attorney-at-Law Hunais Farook submitted a statement to Mannar Police over his participation in the Pottuvil to Polikandy (P2P) protest march, at the former United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) parliamentarian's Mannar office. The police officers probed Farook with a number of questions, pertaining to the P2P protest last month, including whether he had violated a court order and whether precautions were considered, given the coronavirus threat.	Mannar police investigate former Muslim MP for P2P participation. Tamil Guardian. Published 1st March. Last accessed 30th April 2021.
38	22nd February	Colombo	Tamil MP M.A. Sumanthiran was questioned regarding his participation in the Pottuvil to Polikandy (P2P) protest. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentarian, who had his Special Task Force security team withdrawn following the protest upon orders of Sri Lanka's public security minister, stated that police officers from several stations in the North-East visited his office yesterday (February 22 nd) in order to obtain statements.	Sri Lankan police continue scrutiny of Tamil MPs over P2P participation. Tamil Guardian. Published 23rd February. Last accessed 30th April 2021.
39	March first week	Mullaitivu	Mallavi police have questioned former Northern Provincial Council member, Thurairasa Ravikaran and obtained a statement regarding his participation in the Pottuvil to Polikandy (P2P) rally. Ravikaran had previously been interrogated by Mullaitivu and Mankulam police about the event. The police accuse Ravikaran of defying a ban imposed by the Mullaitivu Magistrate Court against the rally entering the territory of its jurisdiction.	Interrogation of Tamil politicians over P2P participation continues. Tamil Guardian. Published 13th March. Last accessed 30th April 2021.

40	22nd February	Vavuniya	Secretary and President of the Vavuniya Families of the Disappeared Association were summoned to the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) and questioned on their involvement in the hunger strike and protests earlier in the month. The Secretary of the Vavuniya Families of Disappeared Gopalakrishnan Rajkumar and its President Kasipillai Jayavanitha have been questioned in this manner. Rajkumar has also been questioned about a protest held on 10th December 2020 and whether they carried US and EU flags in the protest.	<p>Sri Lankan TID investigate Vavuniya Families of the Disappeared Association secretary and president. Tamil Guardian. Published 26th February. Last accessed 30th April 2021.</p> <p>Sri Lankan TID continues interrogation of North-East families of the disappeared personnel. Tamil Guardian. Published 28th February. Last accessed 30th April 2021.</p>
41	9th March	Mullaitivu	Police have questioned Mariyasuresh Esuary, the head of the Association of Relatives of Disappeared Persons in Mullaitivu, over her participation in the Pottuvil to Polikandy (P2P) rally.	<p>Sri Lankan police interrogate Tamil disappearance activist for participation in P2P march. Tamil Guardian. Published 13th March. Last accessed 30th April 2021.</p>
42	30th January and 1st March	Colombo	The President issued two extraordinary gazettes on 30th January and 1st March, 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. Similar gazettes were previously issued in the month of December.	<p>http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2021/1/2212-58 E.pdf</p> <p>http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2021/3/2217-05 E.pdf</p> <p>https://www.inform.lk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ROD_Nov-Dec2020.pdf</p>

	Date	District	Repression of Environmental activists	Source
43	24th January	Ratnapura	<p>Environmental and social activist Lakmal Ranabahu was assaulted on 24th January in Kalawana area in Ratnapura district. The environmentalist has phone called the Divisional Secretary to inquire about an environmental destruction in the area, which her husband has answered. Following the telephone call, the husband of the Divisional Secretary had come to Ranabahu's village and assaulted him. Ranabahu has been an activist on environmental and land issues concerning Sinharaja forest reserve which is a biodiversity hotspot and World Heritage Site recognized by UNESCO.</p>  <p><i>Lakmal Ranabahu while in hospital following the attack. Photo courtesy: The leader.</i></p>	<p>Environmentalists condemn attack on journalist Lakmal Ranabahu. The leader. Published 26th January 2021. Last accessed 9th April 2021.</p> <p>මාධ්‍යවේදී ලක්මාලා රනබාහුට පහරදුන් වෛද්‍යවරයාට ඇප. Lankatarget. Published 26th January 2021. Last accessed 9th April 2021.</p>
44	February 2021	Gampaha	<p>A government forest officer was subjected to harassment after whistleblowing about a near-extinct tree that was about to be removed due to a road development project. On 9th February, the Minister of Wildlife and Forest Conservation, C.B. Ratnayake stated that 'some officers act to promote themselves like mentally ill people' indirectly referring to forest officer Devani Jayatilake who voiced on saving a near-extinct tree located in the middle of a road construction project in Gampaha district. Though the government expressed their plans to relocate the tree, environmentalists and environment experts criticized such a plan, as it could result in the death of the tree in the process of relocation. On 11th February, the Morning newspaper published that additional Conservator General of Forests Thilak Premaratne had said that according to his knowledge, Jayathilaka may have violated institutional guidelines by speaking to the media. While various news websites published that Devani has been banned from speaking to the media, the government attempted to launch a</p>	<p>Forest officer who saved rare tree No decision on disciplinary action yet. The morning. Published 11th February, 2021. Last accessed 25th June 2021.</p> <p>WATCH: Parliament heats up over Forest officer Devani: Minister indirectly criticizes her. Newswire. Published 9th February, 2021. Last accessed 25th June 2021.</p> <p>The Sri Lankan legume: Extinct, rediscovered, and now at risk again (commentary). Jagath Gunawardane. Mongabay. Published 11 December 2019. Last accessed 25th June 2021.</p>

			disciplinary inquiry against the forest officer, which they claimed that they have not yet decided. It seemed that the government withdrew the disciplinary actions against Jayatilake due to huge public outcry.	
45	9th March	Kalutara	Environmental activist Rev. Pahiyangala Ananda Sagara Thero made a complaint to the Police headquarters stating that he has faced life threats as a reprisal for opposing environmental destruction. "The intelligence services, as well as the police and CID, are gathering information about us in order to tarnish our reputation," the Venerable Thero has told reporters. Thero has further said that unidentified persons claiming to be from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) inquiring about him have visited his driver's house and several other neighbouring houses multiple times.	<p>Clergy under surveillance? Pahiyangala Thero voices concern Newsfirst. Published 9th March 2021. Last accessed 25th June 2021.</p> <p>Pahiyangala Ananda Sagara Thero says he is under threat. Hiru News. Published 9th March 2021. Last accessed 25th June 2021.</p>
46	13th March 2021	Matale	A farmer in Alakolawewa area in Dambulla has been assaulted and threatened with death as a reprisal for informing authorities and media about an alleged land grabbing in the area. The victim D.M. Dissanayake has exposed an illegal business of acquiring and selling forest lands in the area. A person who illegally occupies the forest land has done the assault.	<p>සිගිරියේ ඉඩම් අත්පත් කර ගැනීමේ ජාවාරම මාධ්‍යයට කී පුද්ගලයාට මැර ජරණයක් . Gossip Lanka news. Published 16th March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021.</p> <p>ඉඩම් කොල්ලයේ කොරතුරු කීවැයි ගොවියට ගහලා. Lankadeepa. Published 16th March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021.</p> <p>News 1st: Prime Time Sinhala News - 7 PM (15-03-2021) රාත්රී 7.00 ජර්‍යාන ජර්‍යාන Newsfirst. Published 15th March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021</p>
47	14th March 2021	Ampara	The State Minister of Wildlife Protection – Wimalaweera Dissanayake had allegedly threatened the officials at the Maha Oya Forest Office in Ampara and secured the release of a suspect in their custody. The suspect had been arrested by the wildlife officials for falling down four large trees in the Tampitiya proposed reserve. Forest officials have subsequently lodged a complaint with the Mahaoya Police regarding the incident, while the minister made a counter complaint to the Police that he had been threatened by the officials at the Mahaoya Forest Office.	<p>වනජීවී ඇමැති මහඔය රක්ෂිතයේ ගස් කැට්ටි කරමින් සිටි තම ආධාරකරුවා වෙරා ගනී. Ceylon Britannia. Published 14th March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021</p> <p>State Minister plays "Good Samaritan" to his aide. Counter Point. Published 15th March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021</p>

48	15 th - 20 th March	Ratnapura	<p>Bhagya Abeyrathna, a young Sri Lankan environmental activist gained wide media attention for exposing alleged deforestation of the UNESCO world heritage site: Sinharaja Forest Reserve. While participating at the 'Lakshapathi' millionaire quiz show at a national television channel, she expressed concern and dissatisfaction about ongoing deforestation in her neighbourhood as a hotel was being constructed clearing a forest land located at the border of the Sinharaja forest. The next day, the Minister of Wildlife and Forest Conservation stated that her statement was factually incorrect as alleged construction occurs in a private land. Two "male" police officers of the Rakwana police had gone to her residence and recorded a statement inquiring as to who had influenced her to express these views. Then several forest officers who have also visited her have told that she should not speak about deforestation in the forest without knowing the exact borders of the forest. Environmental lawyers pointed out that environmental impact assessment should be conducted before any construction in an environmentally sensitive area, whether it is a state or private land. Activists, media and the general public condemned the repressive response from the government. The Free Media Movement issuing statement said "it is a social responsibility to comment on an event that affects the people within a democratic society. Both local and foreign courts have emphasized in their judgments that such dissenting voices are not necessarily required to be one hundred percent correct."</p>	<p>Police questions young environmental activist: Little Bhagya unmoved by undemocratic forces. Daily Mirror. Published 19th March. Last accessed 5th June 2021.</p> <p>"මම කර්ජන එනවා, නමුත් මම කැමැත්ත එක නවත්වන්නේ නෑ" - භාග්‍ය අබේරත්න Sinharaja. Newsfirst (youtube). March 2021. Last accessed 5th June 2021.</p> <p>'Stop harassing Bhagya & question who destroy the environment' – Clergy & Activists. Newsfirst. Published 17th March. Last accessed 5th June 2021.</p> <p>Forest officials visit Lakshapathi contestant over Sinharaja issue. Newsfirst. Published 16th March. Last accessed 5th June 2021.</p> <p>FMM condemns harassment of Bhagya Abeyratne, a young female who spoke against deforestation. Sri Lanka Brief. Published 16th March. Last accessed 5th June 2021.</p>
49	13th March	Galle	<p>A young man has been assaulted by unknown persons as his brother abroad has expressed concerns regarding a road development project that allegedly causes environmental destruction in the Rumassala area in Galle. The victim Saranga Madushan has been hospitalized after the attack. Galle port Police has told the media that they have received a complaint regarding the incident.</p>	<p>රුමස්සල විනාශ කරනවාට විරුද්ධ විම නිසා මගේ සහෝදරයාට ඔවුන් පහර දුන්නා. Headline News. 16th March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021.</p> <p>රුමස්සල නිසා ජරහායක්. Newsfirst. published 14th of March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021</p>
50	15 th - 20 th March	Online	<p>Government supporters shared various posts online claiming Bhagya Abeyrathna's statement on alleged environmental destruction in Sinharaja as false. Meanwhile she was also subjected to occasional hate speech and trolling. One such example was a comment made by fake profile demanding that she should be stoned to death (see the link). The perpetrator/ troll used the image is of a Dr. Y.</p>	<p>Facebook post. Marisa DS. Published 18th March. Last accessed 5th June 2021.</p>


			Venkata Ramana from India as the (fake) profile picture and appeared as an official working in the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka.	
51	28 th March	N/A	The Environment Ministry stated that they are planning to set up a special unit to monitor accurate and false information published on social media pertaining to incidents of environmental destruction. Environment Minister Mahinda Amaraweera said nearly 323 environmental officers will be recruited at the Divisional Secretariat Level for this purpose and legal action will be taken against those found to be posting false information. In the recent past, the government was heavily criticized by the environmental activists and general public for incidents of environmental destruction reported from various areas of the country. While it is important to tackle fake news, INFORM believes that limiting it to 'environmental destruction' and taking legal action against those who publish 'inaccurate' information could be possibly targeted at silencing people from speaking about environmental destruction.	Unit to monitor environment destruction posts on social media Sunday Times. Published 28 th March 2021. Last accessed 16 th June 2021.
52	19th March	Colombo	Colombo Municipal council (CMC) has forcefully removed the 'stop ecocide' mural built by a group of youth environmental activists, to raise awareness on climate change and ongoing deforestation in the country. Despite prior-approval granted to the event by the CMC, the 70x20 foot mural has been taken down, reportedly on instructions by the Presidential Secretariat. It was removed, reinstalled on the next day, and then removed once again despite the protest by the youth who took part at the event. President Rajapaksa said the Ecocide Mural which was set up at the Viharamahadevia Park in Colombo had caused damage to the environment adding displaying murals is not the way to protect nature.	Environmental activists cry foul as climate action event allegedly disrupted Economy Next. published 19th March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021. Environmental groups determined to march forward amidst hurdles. Daily Mirror. published 19th March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021. Ecocide Mural damaged the environment – President. 20th March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021.

	Date	District	Legal and policy	Source
53	January -March	N/A	<p>The final report of the controversial Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCol) into Political Victimization was submitted to the President in December 2020. In January 2021, a special Presidential Commission of Inquiry was appointed to implement the recommendations of the PCol into Political Victimization. However the report was not formally submitted to the Parliament until March 2021, while a leaked copy of the report was published by a website in January 2021. The commission and its report was subjected to strong criticisms of civil society and opposition politicians for its undue pressures on judiciary, ongoing legal cases of key human rights violations and other state institutions. It was also pointed out that it could be used to nullify court rulings and to impose civil disabilities on key opposition political leaders.</p> <p>The report also recommended the acquittal of suspects including alleged perpetrators of crimes committed against journalists and other HRDs. Various parties have pointed out that implementation of the recommendations will lead to erosion of justice and accountability and to the further increase of impunity.</p>	<p>Full Text Of The Leaked Report. Colombo Telegraph. Published 28th January. Last accessed 10th June 2021.</p> <p>Political victimization commission releasing criminals – Vijitha Herath. EconomyNext. Published 27th January 2021. Last accessed 14th June 2021.</p> <p>Stiff opposition to implementation of political victimization commission's report. CounterPoint. Published 22nd April. Last accessed 10th June 2021.</p> <p>Report: PCol into Political Victimization and attempts to deny Sri Lankan opposition politicians of their civic rights. SriLankaBrief. Published 28th February. Last accessed 10th June 2021.</p> <p>Political Victimisation Commission Report tabled. Daily News. 10th March 2021. Last accessed 10th June 2021.</p> <p>Special Commission to implement recommendations of PCol on political victimization. Ada Derana. Published 31st January. Last accessed 10th June 2021.</p>
54	4 th January	N/A	<p>Sri Lanka Cabinet of Ministers has decided to amend the controversial Press Council law to include electronic and new media. The cabinet of ministers has identified that “Press Council should be structurally reformed as a Tribunal for journalists and media institutions covering electronic, print and new media.”</p>	<p>Sri Lanka to amend the controversial Press Council Law to include electronic and new media. Sri Lanka Brief. Published 5th January 2021. Last accessed 10th June 2021.</p> <p>Press briefing of Cabinet Decision taken on 2021-01-04. Cabinet office GoSL. Published 4th January. Last accessed 10th June 2021.</p>

55	31st Jan	N/A	<p>A gazette notification was issued appointing a Special Presidential Commission to implement the recommendations of the controversial Presidential Commission of Inquiry on Political Victimization. Several MPs and political parties expressed fear towards the appointment of this Special Presidential Commission as it is a mechanism historically misused by previous political regimes to withdraw civic rights of the Politicians. The PCoI on Political victimization had recommended the discontinuation of many ongoing legal cases regarding major human rights violations, and incidents of corruption in Sri Lanka and taking legal action against witnesses, victims, and lawmakers for allegedly engaging in a process of politically targeting state officials and others. The report was subjected to various criticisms by opposition political groups, and activists. And many pointed out that the commission has acted beyond its mandate.</p>	<p>Extra Ordinary Gazette 2212/53. Appointment of Spe. Presidential Commission. Presidential Secretariat.</p> <p>Published 29th January 2021.</p> <p>Extraordinary Gazette 2213/47. Appointment of Spe. Presidential Commission. Presidential Secretariat. Published 5th Feb 2021.</p> <p>ජරජා අයිතිය නිබන් නැතත් අපි මේ රට වෙනුවෙන් දේශපාලනය කරනවා - අනුර කුමාර. Newsfirst. Published 31st January 2021.</p> <p>Parliament Hanzard Report. Vol 281 (9). P 1321. Parliament of Sri Lanka. 11th Feb 2021.</p> <p>Opp. alleges move to strip Ranil, SF, Rajitha, Patali, others of civic rights. The Island. Published 8th Feb 2021. Last accessed 9th April 2021.</p> <p>Leaked copy of the report of PCoI on Political Victimization. [language: Sinhala]. Colombo Telegraph. January 2021. Last accessed 9th April 2021.</p>
56	18th February 19th March	N/A	<p>Gazettes calling on the armed forces to maintain public order were reissued in February, March and April, 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.</p>	<p>Extraordinary Gazette 2215/42. Published 18th February 2021.</p> <p>Extraordinary Gazette 2219/71. Published 19th March 2021.</p>
57	25th February	N/A	<p>The Ministry of Defence criminalized 7 Tamil diaspora organizations and around 300 individuals under the List of Designated Persons under Regulation 4(7) of the United Nations Regulation No. 01 of 2012. Following organizations were banned: (1) British Tamil Forum, (2) Canadian Tamil Congress, (3) Australian Tamil Congress, (4) Global Tamil Forum, (5) National Council Of Canadian Tamil (6) Tamil Youth Organization, (7) World Tamil Coordinating Committee. Alan Keenan of the International Crisis Group tweeted that “in an extraordinarily regressive move, the government of</p>	<p>Extraordinary Gazette 2216/37. Published 25th February 2021.</p> <p>Alan Keenan @akeenan23.Tweet. Published 28th March 2021. Last accessed 30th April 2021.</p>

			Sri Lanka has used terrorist designation law to effectively criminalise a large portion of the politically active Tamil diaspora - potentially putting at risk any in Sri Lanka with even limited contact".	
58	12th March	N/A	New regulations titled 'Prevention of Terrorism (De-radicalization from holding violent extremist religious ideology) Regulations No. 01 of 2021' were gazetted allowing two-years of detention without trial for causing "religious, racial, or communal disharmony" under the pretext of 'rehabilitation'. Human Rights Watch warned that the regulation will allow the government of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to more easily target religious and racial minorities, in violation of their basic rights. These regulations expanded the powers of controversial Prevention of Terrorism Act that has been historically used for arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights defenders, ethnic minorities and others.	Government Gazette Notification: 2218/68. Prevention of Terrorism (De-radicalization from holding violent extremist religious ideology) Regulations No. 01 of 2021 . GoSL. Published 12th March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021. 'Religious Disharmony' Order Threatens Minorities: Withdraw Expansion of Notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act . Human Rights Watch. Published 16th March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.
59	March-April	N/A	On 19th April, the Cabinet of Ministers issued a statement that an Act for the Regulation of Publishing Buddhist Publications will be enacted to counter 'distorting the pure Buddhism and Buddhist traditions' through printed and digital publications, based on a proposal made by the Prime Minister in his capacity as the Minister of Buddhasasana, Religious & Cultural Affairs. Earlier the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs Secretary Prof. Kapila Gunawardana confirmed this decision. He said publications that contain material related to Buddhist teachings, the character of the Buddha, or which have any relevance to Buddhism are to be reviewed, regulated, and censored by a committee appointed by the government. The proposed Act is to be introduced to counter publications that use Buddhism or the character of the Buddha in "disrespectful ways in order to spark controversy", or oversimplify or misinterpret Buddhist teachings.	Buddhism-related publications to be censored . Morning. Published 24th March. Last accessed 8th July 2021. The sacred vs. the profane: Censoring texts in the name of Buddhism . Morning. Published 25th March. Last accessed 8th July 2021. Proposed Buddhist Publications Regulatory Act: An attempt at censorship? Morning. Published 4th April. Last accessed 8th July 2021. Proposed Buddhist Publications Regulatory Act: Buddhist academia welcome move . Morning. Published 28th March. Last accessed 8th July 2021.

60	19th March 2021	N/A	<p>The Government has appointed a Committee to present recommendations on how to deal with those who misinterpret and spread falsehoods about the Buddha's character, the Tripitaka and Buddhist sacred sites. This decision was made in response to a written request made by the Mahanayake Theros of Tri Nikayas to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa when the Buddhist Advisory Council met at the Presidential Secretariat for the ninth time.</p>	<p>Committee to address distortions of Buddha's character, Tripitaka and Buddhist sacred sites. Daily FT. Published 22 March. Last accessed 8th July 2021.</p> <p>Dealing with falsehoods about Buddhism: Committee Appointed to Advise Govt. Ceylon Today. Published 22 March. Last accessed 8th July 2021.</p>
61	5th March 2021	N/A	<p>A notice was issued by the Deputy Director of Customs stating that from 5th March onwards "any Islamic religious books brought into the country should be released only on approval from the Ministry of Defence". This order could be used to censor islamic books and publications brought to Sri Lanka without consulting the views of the Islamic community or the scholars. Also the law seemed discriminatory as it targeted only one specific religion. A letter issued by the Defence Ministry dated 22nd of February mentioned an incident where the Ministry of Defence has denied the release of a box of 90 books, because of 4 books that contained ideas related to Wahhabist and Salafi Islamic traditions.</p>	<p>Sri Lanka Ministry of Defence starts controlling Islamic thought – Dr. Ameer Ali. Sri Lanka Brief. Published 8th March 2021. Last accessed 10th July 2021.</p>

	Date	District	Other	Source
62	January 2021	Gampaha	<p>Workers of a garment company faced reprisals for establishing and joining a trade union. In January 2021 workers at the Katunayake factory of Next Manufacturing Limited (a company wholly owned by Next plc, largest clothing retailer in the UK) formed a branch of the FTZ & GSEU trade union. Workers experienced various threats and forms of intimidation to resign from the union.</p>  <p><i>Image: Next Garment Factory Premises in Katunayake, Sri Lanka.</i></p>	<p>COVID-19 Pandemic: A Pretext to Roll Back Sri Lankan Garment Workers' Rights p12. Published 12th March 2021. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p> <p>Why union-busting must go out of fashion at Next. War on Want. Published 12th March 2021. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p> <p>Next UK reports huge profits yet denies Sri Lankan garment workers their 'bonus'. War on Want. Published 7th January 2021. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p>
63	Early January 2021	Gampaha	<p>Workers of a garment company participated in a protest previously and were denied the bonus payment given to other workers. Workers at Chiefway Katunayake (Private) Ltd were denied their bonus in April 2020, and when told the December bonus would also not be paid they protested. In early 2021, according to worker representatives, Chiefway agreed to pay some of the bonus, however 25 workers involved in the protest for their bonus have been dismissed for alleged misconduct.</p>	<p>COVID-19 Pandemic: A Pretext to Roll Back Sri Lankan Garment Workers' Rights p15. Published 12th March 2021. Last accessed 5th April 2021.</p>
64	17th February	Nuwara Eliya	<p>Eight workers involved in a labour strike in the Alton tea estate in the Up-Cot, Masekeliya area have been arrested and jailed by police on February 17 for allegedly assaulting an estate manager. Later two other suspects including a 16 years old young boy were also arrested. Police have taken the eight workers claiming that they would be released after recording their statements, however they have been duly arrested, brought before the Magistrate's Court in Hatton, and remanded for 14 days. Incident occurred when workers were continuing an indefinite strike since 3rd February demanding a 1,000-rupee (\$US5.19) basic daily wage. According to Sunday Times, workers have allegedly poured cow dung mixed with water on the manager and assistant</p>	<p>State tea estates seek top-level effort to end alleged union-led violence. Sunday Times. Published 21 Feb 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.</p> <p>Eight Sri Lankan plantation workers arrested in company-police attack. WSWS. Published 23rd Feb 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.</p> <p>Sri Lankan police arrest more Alton estate workers WSWS. Published 4th March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.</p>

			<p>manager of one of the estates. Workers also allege that a manager had assaulted a female worker—a local trade union leader—who was injured and hospitalised. Workers alleged that Police acted in a biased manner, and denied the alleged assaults on the managers. Later 38 employees were suspended for alleged involvement in the physical attack on the estate manager. Though the alleged attack on the estate manager might have happened the actions taken against the estate workers such as suspension of 38 workers seemed excessive.</p>	<p>Management suspends 38 Alton estate workers in Sri Lanka. WSWs. published 29th March 2021. Last accessed 8th July 2021.</p>
65	12 th January	Colombo	<p>A resident of Dehiwala was arrested by the Cyber Crime Unit of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for allegedly publishing a defamatory statement criticizing the President. Fort Magistrate Court ordered the suspect to be remanded for a period of 14-days.</p>	<p>Arrests made over shaming President on Facebook. Lankanewsweb. Published 12th January. Last accessed 10th June 2021.</p>
66	13 th January	Colombo	<p>A writer and a businessman named Fazl Muhammed Nizar was arrested by the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) of Police on charges of issuing statements via Facebook allegedly inciting racial tensions. CID officials informed the Court that the businessman had shared statements on his personal Facebook account that were deemed to have incited racial tensions and content that was demeaning Buddhist monks and other individuals. They said the businessman had committed an offence under International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Act. The Colombo Magistrate's Court ordered him to be remanded till 18th January, 2021. In the past, the ICCPR act has been misused to restrict freedom of expression and target ethnic minorities. As reported by Free Media Movement, the arrest was prompted by a video posted on Facebook by Nizar directly addressing the President and criticizing a controversial statement made by the President in Ampara. The latter part of the video contains a section where the monks are scolded in obscene language. He has also written many articles for the Colombo Telegraph website.</p>	<p>Businessman remanded over alleged hate speech on Facebook. Newswire. Published 13th January. Last accessed 10th June 2021.</p> <p>Users beware: Another person arrested for content shared on FB. The leader. Published 13th January. Last accessed 10th June 2021.</p> <p>Media Freedom Rights Monitoring Report. Vol 1. Free Media Movement. Published January 2021. Last accessed 14th June 2021.</p>

67	8th February	Anuradhapura	A witness who appeared at the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Easter Sunday attack has been assaulted by a group. The witness Rishath Marush had been assaulted by a group of residents in Galkiriyagama area in Anuradhapura district. The attack was a reprisal regarding the witness he provided against several politicians. Following the attack, he has been admitted to the Dambulla hospital for further treatment. Galkiriyagama Police are conducting further investigations.	<p>පාස්කු ප්රහාර කොමිෂමේ සාක්ෂිකරුට පහර දීම. Lankadeepa. Published 9th Feb 2021. Last accessed 14th June 2021.</p> <p>Witness who provided testimony before Easter Attack Commission assaulted. Newshub. Published 9th Feb 2021. Last accessed 14th June 2021.</p>
68	8th March 2021	Colombo	<i>Ahnaf Jazeem</i> , a 26-year-old Sri Lankan poet and teacher, has been detained by the Sri Lankan authorities since 16 May 2020 under the Prevention of Terrorism Act was denied of legal access for many months. After months of continuous appeals, lawyers were allowed to meet him on 8th March 2021. However, the lawyers for poet Ahnaf Jazeem have complained to the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) about TID officers listening and audio-recording the conversation between the lawyers and their client, Ahnaf Jazeem. They have complained that the entire conversation was under police surveillance. Further, their letter says that proper legal access was denied to their client and that TID has converted lawyers appearing for detainees to be objects of their investigations.	<p>Lawyers appearing for detained poet Ahnaf Jazeem complain to BASL that TID officers listening and audio-recording their conversation. Sri Lanka Brief. Published 17th March 2021. Last accessed 10th July 2021.</p>
69	25th February	Colombo	Police officers have allegedly assaulted a law student who had been visiting a detainee at the Peliyagoda police station. The alleged victim Guneratne is the son of politician Maithri Guneratne and the younger brother of Attorney-at-Law Charitha Guneratne. The victim had been assaulted while carrying food to the victim. Two days before, when Charitha had visited the client, he had been allegedly threatened by Police for inquiring about intimidation of the client. He believes that his brother has been assaulted as a retribution for his act, mistaken for him as both of them look alike. Though the government claimed to take immediate actions regarding the incident, Police failed to arrest the suspects for almost three weeks.	<p>Final year law student Migara Gunaratne brutally assaulted at the Peliyagoda police station. The leader. Published 26th February 2021. Last accessed 25th April 2021.</p> <p>Peliyagoda Police assault: AG orders all Cops involved arrested. Economy Next. Published 3rd Mar 2021. Last accessed 25th April 2021.</p> <p>Assault on law student: CCD not received instructions to arrest Police officers. Daily News. published 16th of Mar 2021. Last accessed 25th Apr 2021.</p>

70	8th March 2021		The secretary of Kiribathgoda Traders Association has been assaulted by two local politicians over a controversy about opening the public vehicle park without informing certain politicians. CCTV footage showed a group of persons led by two local politicians assaulting the victim in a restaurant.	Pradeshiya Sabha members attack trade union secretary. Hiru News. published 7th April 2021. මැටි ඇමැතිගේ හෙවයිසෝ යකා නට්ති. Janayugaya. Published 14th March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021.
71	12 th January	Colombo	MP Ranjan Ramanayake was sentenced to 04 years of rigorous imprisonment by the Supreme Court for committing contempt of court. On 21 st of August, speaking to the media, he made a controversial statement accusing the majority of lawyers and judges in Sri Lanka as corrupt. At the time he was a deputy Minister of the ruling government. Subsequently he also lost his parliamentary seat.	Ranjan Ramanayake sentenced to 04 years RI. Newsfirst. Published 12 th January. Last accessed 7th May 2021. BASL requests CJ to take legal action against Ranjan Ramanayake. Hiru Gossip [youtube]. Published August 2017. Last accessed 7th May 2021.
72	9th January 2021	N/A	On 10th January, Samagi Jana Balawegaya MP Harin Fernando has informed the Inspector General of Police that President Gotabhaya Rajapaksa's statement made at a function in Ampara has posed a severe threat to his life and has requested that IGP intervenes to protect his life and freedom. The President made these remarks at the "Discussion with the Village" programme held in Lathugala, Uhana in Ampara district on 9th January 2021. The President criticized MP Harin Fernando referring to him with his first name during parliamentary speeches. The President said that he has two sides in his character: a peaceful side and a dark side and he is capable of returning to the dark side. Further he went on to compare MP Fernando's behaviour with the behaviour of LTTE. And told that the LTTE leader was "killed like a dog." MP Fernando in his letter stated "The President clearly insinuates that he is capable of having me "killed like a dog" if I continue saying things that displease him."	Harin complains to IGP about death threats from President! Sri Lanka mirror. Published 10th January. Last accessed 5th April 2021. හරින්ගේ කතාවට ජනපතිගෙන් ජ්වරිවාරයක් - ඔව් මම නන්දසේන ගෝඨාභය නන්දසේන ගෝඨාභයගෙන් වරිත දෙකක් තියෙනවා. Voice Tube. Published 10th January. Last accessed 5th April 2021.
73	20th March 2021	N/A	During the President's speech in Walapane during 'a dialogue with the village programme', President Gotabaya Rajapaksa read out some details about several fake news that had been published by a facebook page named 'JVP parisarwediyo (environmentalists).' JVP is a leftist opposition political party representing the parliament. The speech attempted to level the accusations of environmental destruction as fake news spread by the political opponents. In doing so, the President	JVP files CID complaint on "Fake" FB page quoted by President. Newsfirst.published 21st March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021. Comrades disown 'JVP Parisarawediyo'; complain to CID against the group. Island. published 22nd March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021.

			seemingly attempted to silence those who exposed incidents of environmental destruction in social media. The next day, the JVP MPs lodged a complaint at the CID of Police claiming 'JVP parisarawediyo' as a fake facebook page which facebook had already taken down at the time of President's speech based on a complaint they had made earlier. They requested Police to conduct an investigation into the said Facebook page and whether they have used a credit card in boosting its posts. The President made no correction to his statement.	ජවිපට මඩ ගහන්න අටවපු ජේවිපි පරිසරවේදියෝ - ලේස්ටුන් ගිණුම කාගේ වැඩක් ද...?. Headline News. published 22nd March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021. "මම කවදාවත් පරිසරය විනාශ කරලා නැහැ" - ජනපති Gama Samaga Pilisandara Walapane. Newsfirst.published 20th March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021.
74	26th March	N/A	Opposition MP Harin Fernando representing the main opposition party SJB alleged that the government has recently bought pegasus software. Pegasus is an infamous spyware that has been allegedly used for surveillance of human rights defenders by repressive governments in many countries including India , Mexico , Morocco and UAE .	Govt. is using Pegasus spyware: Harin. News First. published 26 March 2021. Last accessed 7 May 2021. Parliament Hanzard Vol 282 (6). Pages 813-814. Harin Fernando speech. 26 March. Last accessed 7 May 2021. Israeli court lets NSO keep selling spyware to repressive gov'ts. Aljazeera. Published 13 July 2020. Last accessed 7 May 2021.
75	22 nd February	Colombo	Terrorism Investigation Division has arrested a young man in Wattala for posting photos of LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran on the video-sharing social media network TikTok. The suspect has been allegedly accused of promoting a terrorist organization by posting these photos.	Man arrested for promoting LTTE through Tik Tok. Colombo page. Published 23 rd February. Last accessed 7th May 2021.
76	1 February 2021	Kalutara	Several Police officers attached to Aluthgama Police station have been allegedly assaulted for implementing a court order relating to a property related lawsuit. Subsequently, 4 persons have been arrested for allegedly disturbing the duties of Police and judicial officers, contempt of court and assault.	අලුත්ගම පොලීසියේ ස්ථානාධිපතිට සිව්දෙනෙක් එක්වී පහරදීලා.
77	Before 9th March 2021	Anuradhapura	Excise officers who attempted to arrest 3 drug related suspects have been assaulted. Two assaulted officials have been hospitalized. The suspects were later arrested by Parasangaswewa Police in Kokpetiyawa.	සුරාබදු නිලධාරීන්ට පහර දුන් 3 ක් අත්අඩංගුවට. Lankadeepa. Published 9th March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021.
78	21st March	Colombo	A suspect has assaulted a Police officer with a sharp weapon during an arrest, in Nagaswatte area in Kirulapone. The suspect was arrested later.	Kirulapone Police officer attacked while attempting arrest of warranted suspect. Hiru Tv. published 22nd March 2021. Last accessed 7th May 2021.