

Repression of Dissent

June 2022



The protestors who were demanding justice against the 9th May attack on GoGotaGama protestors were tear gassed at the entrance of the Police Headquarters building in Colombo. Video: [Newscutter](#)

INFORM

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Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka in June 2022.

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

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1. Executive Summary

Context: High inflation rates were reported with the worsening economic crisis. Travel costs increased to 128% compared to previous year, while food inflation was 80%. Fuel shortage caused by fall of foreign currency reserves in the country became a major issue, which led to kilometres long fuel queues that people were waiting for days. Several incidents of assaults, police and military violence were also reported at these fuel queues. Former Minister of Finance Basil Rajapaksa resigned from the Parliament on 9th of June. He acted as the Finance Minister during the economic crisis for less than one year. Sri Lanka's first pride marches were held on 11th of June in Jaffna in Northern Province and 25th of June in Colombo in the capital of Sri Lanka for the first time in Sri Lanka. The Colombo Pride March was organised by the LGBTIQ+ activists who were part of the anti-government protests in Colombo, demanding the resignation of the ruling government for their corruption and failure to manage the financial crisis. Former central bank governor Ajith Nivaad Cabral was released from a case relating to his involvement in financial irregularities in the Central bank in 2014. Former Minister MP Prasanna Ranatunga was sentenced to two years of suspended imprisonment over an incident of threatening a businessman. Former Minister and a member of Rajapakse family Basil Rajapakse was acquitted from a corruption case on charges of misappropriation of state funds.

Case updates: When the case of the disappearance of Journalist Prageeth Ekneligoda was taken at the Permanent High Court trial-at-bar for hearing, one of the key witnesses declined the previous statement he had made at the magistrate court several years ago, and stated that he had previously lied due to the influence of Police officers. He also denied that he had any previous knowledge of Prageeth Ekneligoda. Former Sabaragamuwa Provincial Councillor Hasitha Samantha was acquitted and released from the case of the murder of former Sabaragamuwa Councillor Ranjith Nandasena in 1999. Former MP Ranjan Ramanayake was sentenced to two years of suspended rigorous imprisonment for accusing the judiciary during a television talk show for allegedly predetermining the judgement of an ongoing legal case. In the case of the attack on the protestors in GoGotaGama¹ on 9th May, the magistrate asked the Police why Deshabandu Tennakoon, the Senior Deputy Inspector General of Police (SDIG) in charge of Western Province was not transferred in order to prevent any influences on the ongoing investigations, as the Attorney General had previously instructed. Tennakoon was the most senior police officer present at the situation who failed to take required actions to prevent the attack. Five politicians including two parliamentarians were arrested in connection with the attack on the protestors, and granted bail. Activist Anurdha Bandara who was allegedly abducted by the law enforcement, released from the case filed against him.

Repression of Media and Journalists: Jamila Husain, a female journalist working for Daily Mirror newspaper was verbally threatened by the protestors while covering a protest in front of a house of a key government whip. Eastern journalist Shanmugam Thavaseelan was attacked when he was covering the situation of a fuel queue. Journalist Kumanan Kanathipillai was obstructed by the security officers on 7th June 2022, when he was covering a protest against land expansion of a naval camp in Mullaitivu. Journalist and GoGotaGama activist Tharindu Uduwaragedara was summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Sri Lanka Police over a complaint made by the director- Intelligence of Sri Lanka Airforce 10 months ago and he was questioned over the content of his youtube channel.

¹ GoGotaVillage - the occupying protest site in Colombo was named as village demanding #GoHomeGota. Later several other similar sites in different locations were also established around the country.

Repression of Freedom of Assembly: The Supreme Court dismissed the Fundamental Petition directing authorities to not to remove the peaceful protest site in Galle face. The Fort Magistrate ordered nine key activists who took part in protests in the Fort and Thalangama areas in Colombo in June to be arrested and to be produced before the court. Velupillai Madawamajor a former tamil rebel and an activist from Mullaitivu was threatened by military at gunpoint on 15th June 2022, when he took part at a protest against land expropriation of a Hindu Temple. A protester who was arrested during a protest demanding fuel was sentenced to 3 ½ years of rigorous imprisonment by the Matara Magistrate Court. He was accused of damaging a Police trishaw, and obstructing the duties of the Police. The Colombo Magistrate court rejected a request made by the Police to issue a restraining order against a protest march conducted by the University students from Viharamahadevi Park to the University Grants Commission in Colombo on 02nd June 2022. Twenty-one persons were arrested by the Police for blocking the entrances of the Finance Ministry and the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo on 20th June 2022 when there was a scheduled meeting with the IMF officials on the day. Police fired tear gas and water to disperse the protesters near the police headquarters on 09th June 2022. Ceylon Electricity board Engineers union organised an island wide strike over recently proposed amendments to the Electricity Act No. 31 of 2013, that sought to allow certain power plant projects to be implemented without the competitive bidding process. The Fort Magistrate Court issued an order against a protest march scheduled to be held on 04th June 2022 by a group of anti-government protesters. Army officials have disrupted a protest held at the Galle Fort ramparts on 30th June 2022, by a group of Lawyers demanding the resignation of the president Gotabaya Rajapaksha. Army claimed that the protest was a disturbance to the view of the batsmen of an ongoing cricket match in the nearby stadium. Three members of the Tamil National People's Front (TNPf) were arrested by the Sri Lanka police over protesting against the expropriation of a land belonging to a Hindu temple in Kuruthurmalai, Mullaitivu on 12th June 2022. In another incident, Police have allegedly intimidated the protestors protesting against seizing of land for the expansion of the existing Gotabaya Naval Base in Mullaitivu on 07th June 2022. Attorney at Law, the convener of the People's Lawyer Association and GotaGoGama activist Senaka Perera was summoned to the CID on 06th June 2022 for allegedly encouraging some protestors into violence. Activist Chandralal Abegunawardna was summoned to the CID Unit of the Galle police station on 06th June 2022, over a facebook post that he had previously posted condemning the 9th May brutal attack on protestors. Adeepa Ekanayake and Prince Jayasuriya, two active members of GotaGoGama, the occupying protest site in Kurunagela were summoned to the office of Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) in Kurunegala on 7th June 2022. Amal Salinda, a prominent activist of GotaGoGama, the occupying protest site in Colombo was arrested on 20th June, while he was returning after attending a protest organized by student activists and others. Prof. Nedalagamuwe Dammadinna Thero was summoned before the Gampaha Police station regarding an arson attack to a house and a residence in the backdrop of civilian unrest following 9th May attacks on peaceful demonstrators. Police attempted to raid the office of the Frontline Socialist party in Colombo.

Other incidents: Activist Minshath Mubarak was brutally assaulted by the police while he was in a fuel station in Beruwala on 28th June 2022. Under emergency laws (Public security ordinance), the Sri Lankan President issued a gazette calling out for armed forces for the maintenance of public order from 22nd June 2022.²

² http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/6/2285-03_E.pdf

2. Context

Resignations of public representatives: Former Minister of Finance Basil Rajapaksa resigned from the Parliament on 9th of June. He acted as the Finance Minister during the economic crisis for less than one year from 8 July 2021 to 3 April 2022. In May, the succeeding Finance Minister Ali Sabry and other cabinet ministers also resigned, after Prime Minister (PM) Mahinda Rajapaksa was forced to resign from his position following the attack on anti-government protesters by pro-government supporters. Though Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned from his position as the PM, he continued to act as a Member of Parliament (MP), while his brother Basil Rajapaksa resigned from the position of MP as well.³ Amidst the worsening economic crisis in Sri Lanka, tens of thousands of protesters around the country protested demanding the resignation of Rajapaksa family members, and their corrupted, nepotistic regime responsible for Sri Lanka's economic crisis, bankruptcy, gross human rights violations, and many other socio-political and economic issues.^{4 5}

Pride Celebrations: Sri Lanka's first pride marches were held on 11th of June in Jaffna and 25th of June in Colombo for the first time in Sri Lanka. The Colombo Pride March was organised by the LGBTIQ+ activists who were part of the anti-government protests in Colombo, demanding the resignation of the ruling government.⁶



Aragaya Pride March in Colombo. Photo Courtesy: Ada Derana

³ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/sri-lanka-crisis-ex-finance-minister-basil-rajapaksa-resigns-from-parliament/article65510726.ece>

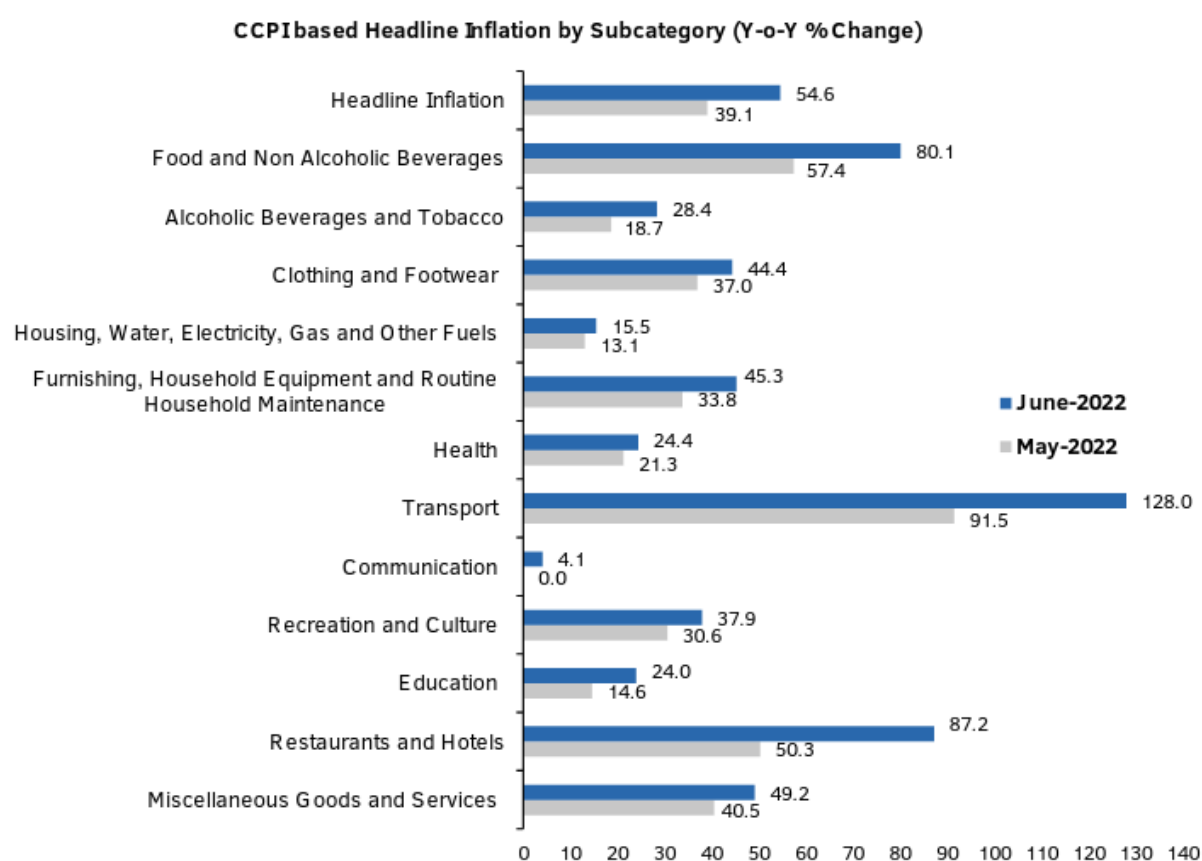
⁴ <https://thewire.in/south-asia/mahinda-rajapaksa-family-sri-lanka>

⁵ <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/sri-lanka-is-a-neoliberal-failed-state/>

⁶ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/watch-for-the-first-time-sri-lanka-holds-pride-rallies/article65576737.ece>

One Country, One Law Presidential Task Force: The report of the Presidential Task Force for “One Country, One Law” headed by the controversial monk Ven. Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thera was handed over to the President on 29th June, 2022.⁷ President Rajapaksa appointed the 13 member committee in October 2021, to study the views and opinions of various factions on the implementation of the concept of ‘One Country, One Law’ in Sri Lanka and present a concept paper with proposals. Though it was said that the report consists of 8 chapters with 43 recommendations and 2 appendices, and it will be submitted to the Parliament, neither it has not been submitted to the parliament, nor it has been made public so far.⁸ Galabodaaththe Gnanasara Thero has been alleged of hate speech and attacks on Muslim minorities in the country, as well as he was given Presidential pardon in 2019, after convicted for contempt of court for threatening a human rights defender during a court hearing.⁹

Economic crisis:



Rising inflation rates in June 2022. Source [Central Bank of Sri Lanka](https://www.csl.gov.lk/)

Higher inflation rates were reported the same as the previous months. According to the central bank of Sri Lanka, headline inflation as measured by the year-on-year (Y-o-Y) change in the Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI) increased to 54.6% in June 2022 from 39.1% in May

⁷ <https://www.president.gov.lk/report-of-presidential-task-force-for-one-country-one-law-handed-over-to-president/>

⁸ <https://www.newswire.lk/2022/06/29/one-country-one-law-report-with-43-recommendations-handed-over-to-president/>

⁹ <https://www.cpalanka.org/cpa-statement-on-the-presidential-pardon-of-gnanasara-thero/>

2022. Food inflation increased to 80.1% in June 2022 from 57.4% in May 2022, while Non-Food inflation (Y-o-Y) increased to 42.4% in June 2022 from 30.6% in May 2022. The travel costs increased from 91.5% in May 2022 to 128% in June 2022.¹⁰ Also it was reported that wages have not increased in the pace of rising cost of living according to the Wage Rate Index.¹¹ The share of food insecurity increased to 9.45 percent at the household level, indicating that one in every 10 families had serious issues when accessing their dietary needs and nutritious requirements. According to the data from the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS), by the end of 2019, as much as 9.1 percent of the Sri Lankan population was at the risk of not having access to basic foods, out of which 0.9 percent or nearly 200,000 people were on the brink of facing starvation. This has increased since the year 2020, especially in the estate sector. Nearly 23.5 percent of the people in the estate sector had moderate or severe food insecurity and 3 percent were at a severe level.¹² Meanwhile UN Resident Coordinator in Sri Lanka Hanaa Singer-Hamdy said 22 per cent of the Sri Lankan population or 4.9 million people live in need of food assistance at the moment.¹³

Fuel queues:



On 17th June, pistol-wielding police officer verbally and physically abused, assaulted and handcuffed several motorists waiting at a fuel station in Maspotha, Kurunegala who protested accusing that the fuel station had not issued its full stocks to the public. Photo courtesy: Newsfirst.lk

Several kilometres long queues for fuel have been a frequent sight around Sri Lanka since the year 2021, due to the economic crisis in Sri Lanka. Occasionally, the fuel queues were sites of protests, verbal and physical tension. On June 17, three men including the brother of MP Sanath Nishantha were arrested on charges of assaulting people and obstructing the duties of policemen at a filling station in Arachchikattuwa in Puttalam district.¹⁴ Also deaths were reported from time to time, of people who were waiting at the fuel queues for days. On 15th June, a 53 years old man died at a fuel station in Wekada, Panadura in Colombo District.¹⁵

¹⁰ https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/sites/default/files/cbslweb_documents/press/pr/press_20220630_inflation_in_june_2022_ccpi_e.pdf

¹¹ https://www.dailymirror.lk/latest_news/Sri-Lankans-trapped-in-livability-crisis-as-wages-massively-fall-behind-inflation/342-239480

¹² <https://www.dailymirror.lk/business-news/One-in-10-households-had-food-security-issues-when-country-entered-pandemic-DCS-data/273-238965>

¹³ https://www.dailymirror.lk/latest_news/22-of-SL-population-in-need-of-food-assistance-UN-Resident-Coordinator/342-238776

¹⁴ https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Three-including-MP-Sanath-Nishanthas-brother-arrested/108-239415

¹⁵ https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Another-man-dies-in-petrol-queue/108-239164

On 18th of June, Sri Lanka Bar Association condemned the recent images of a pistol wielding police officer assaulting a member of the public at a petrol shed at Maspotha in Kurunegala district¹⁶, and ensuing exchange of words and the violent scenes at a fuel station in Athurugiriya, and also noted they are “only examples of the volatile situation throughout the country”.¹⁷ Also it was reported that the military opened fire in the air to disperse the tense situation in Visuvamadu Petrol Station in Mullaitivu district on 18th June 2022.¹⁸ Army spokesperson claimed that the incident happened after a group of people pelted stones at the soldiers. The police reported four civilians and three soldiers were wounded during the tense situation.¹⁹

Former Central Bank Governor released on bail:

Former Central Bank Governor Ajith Nivard Cabral was released on bail on 07th June 2022, from a case that a private plaintiff filed for his alleged involvement in financial irregularities that took place while he was serving as the Central Bank Governor in 2014. Colombo Fort Magistrate Thilina Gamage ordered the release of the Former Governor on a surety bail of Rs. 10 million.²⁰

MP Prasanna Ranathunga was sentenced to two years of suspended imprisonment:

Former Minister of Urban Development and Housing Prasanna Ranatunga was sentenced to two-year imprisonment that was suspended for five years by Colombo High Court over an incident of threatening a businessman named Gehard Mendis, demanding 64 million of Sri Lankan Rupees to evict unauthorized occupants of a land in the Meethotamulla area in Kolonnawa and to refill the land. he Court further ordered the Minister to pay Rs. 25 million.²¹

Former Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksha acquitted from Malwana property case:

Former Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksha and Former Minister Nirupama Rajapaksha's husband Thirukumar Nadesan were acquitted over the Malwana Property case by the Gampaha High Court on 03rd June 2022. The case was filed by the Attorney General, indicted on three counts before the Gampaha High Court on charges of misappropriation of state funds, over the purchase of a 16-acre land in Malwana in Dompe. Both failed to appear before the court on the day.²²

¹⁶ <https://asianmirror.lk/news/item/34253-police-manhandle-motor-cyclists>

¹⁷ <https://srilankabrief.org/police-lawlessness-public-mistrust-of-the-govt-will-have-dire-consequences-warns-bas/>

¹⁸ <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/sri-lankan-army-opens-fire-visvamadu-petrol-station>

¹⁹ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/sri-lankan-troops-open-fire-to-contain-fuel-riots/article65543569.ece>

²⁰ https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Ajith-Nivard-Cabraal-released-on-bail/108-238597

²¹ https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Prasanna-Ranatunga-sentenced-to-2-years-suspended-imprisonment/108-238522

²² <https://ceylontoday.lk/2022/06/03/basil-thirukumara-acquitted-over-malwana-property-case/>

3. Case Updates

Nine intelligence officers remanded over Prageeth Ekneligoda case:



Photo: Sandya Ekneligoda, the wife of disappeared journalist Prageeth Ekneligoda provided a testimony before the People's Tribunal on the Murder of Journalists in Hague in May 2022.

When the case was taken at the Colombo Permanent High Court Trial-at-Bar on 3rd of June, nine Military Intelligence personnel who were out on bail, were remanded again until 13th of June in the case of the journalist Prageeth Ekneligoda who disappeared in January 2010. The lawyer appearing on behalf of the aggrieved party asked the court for an investigation as witnesses are being influenced, referring to a witness Sumathipala Suresh Kumar who was absent on the previous court date. Senior Deputy Solicitor General Dileepa Peiris appearing for the prosecution told the court that he too notes that the witnesses in the case were being influenced, and requested the court look into it. Thereafter, the witness statements were recorded from prosecution witness, former LTTE member Sumathipala Suresh Kumar and the matter was postponed to the 13th of June.²³ The nine intelligence officers were granted bail on 17th of June, while the witness was remanded until 23rd of June.²⁴ On 23rd of June, when the case was taken up before Court, Sumathipala Suresh Kumar testifying for the second consecutive day, refused the previous witness statement given by him before the Homagama magistrate court, and claimed that it was given under the instructions of the criminal investigation Department (CID). He further stated that he was unaware of Prageeth Ekneligoda until he was summoned to the CID.²⁵ The case was then postponed to 27th of June.

²³ <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/06/03/prageeth-ekneligoda-nine-military-intelligence-personnel-who-were-out-on-bail-remanded/>

²⁴ <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/06/17/ekneligoda-disappearance-army-intel-personnel-granted-bail-witness-remanded/>

²⁵ <https://www.dailynews.lk/2022/06/24/law-order/281622/ekneligoda-murder-trial-witness-sumathipala-testifies-camera>



“Key suspect of the murder of Provincial Council member is a businessman. Four others were arrested: Did their hands burn when they set fire to the bodies?” News report about the murder of MP Ranjith Nandasena. The suspect Hasitha Samantha was then a businessman, he later joined politics. Photo: Paper cuttings from Lankadeepa newspaper 10th September 1999/ INFORM archive.

The Colombo high court has ordered to acquit and release the former Sabaragamuwa Provincial Councillor Muhandiramge Hasitha Samantha alias Sarpaya from a case filed against him for allegedly murdering the two individuals in 1999 on 20th June 2022. High court judge Nawaratne Marasinghe observed that prosecution has failed to prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt and evidence lacked the credibility to prove the case beyond a reasonable doubt. Former Sabaragamuwa Provincial Councillor Hasitha Samantha alias Sarpaya was indicted committing murder against United National Party (UNP) provincial councillor Ranjith Nandasena and his private secretary Thushara Deepal by shooting then and setting them on fire while inside a vehicle on or around September 3, 1999.²⁶ At the time of the double murder, Hasitha Samantha was a businessman and later he joined politics representing the UNP. In December 2014, he was sentenced to death for murdering another two individuals on 31st December 2013. In 2015, He lost his Southern Provincial Council membership and the position as the leader of opposition as a result of losing civic rights for being sentenced to death.²⁷

²⁶ https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Sarpaya-acquitted-in-double-murder-case/108-239487

²⁷ <https://www.pressreader.com/sri-lanka/daily-mirror-sri-lanka/20150827/281801397715332>

Former MP Ranjan was sentenced to two years suspended imprisonment:

Former Smagi Jana Balawegaya MP Ranjan Ramanyaka was sentenced to the two year suspended rigorous imprisonment (RI) on 8th June 2022 for another case of contempt of court after pleading guilty. Ramanayake, participating at a television talk show named “Wada Pitiya” of Derana TV, has stated that, according to information he has received, the judgement regarding a particular fundamental rights case has been already decided by the judges. As the court judgement says Ramanayake had stated “that according to a source, the matter would be referred to a bench of five judges and the decision would be a divided one, three judges holding a particular view and the other two a different view, clearly implying that the issues in the case had already been determined by the judges, even before the case had been heard”.²⁸

^{29 30} In January 2021, he was sentenced to four years of rigorous imprisonment for calling the majority of Sri Lankan judges and lawyers corrupt.³¹

Attack on anti-government protestors in GotaGoGama: Magistrate queries why AG’s order to transfer senior police officer not implemented:

The Colombo fort magistrate Thilina Gamage has issued an order on 15th June 2022, the secretary to the Ministry of Law and order to show the reasons as to why the Ministry failed to transfer the Western Province Senior Deputy Inspector General Deshabandu Tennakoon, ignoring the Attorney General (AG)’s instructions. On 23rd May 2022, the AG directed and instructed the Inspector General of Police (IGP) to transfer the Western Province Senior Deputy Inspector General of Police (SDIG) Deshabandu Tennakoon with immediate effect to prevent unnecessary intervention to the investigations on attacks against protestors Galleface on 9th May. Lawyers appearing for the aggrieved party stated that they consider the SDIG as a main suspect of the mob attack on 9th May to peaceful protesters for his negligence of duty to prevent the attack. The defence counsel raised the objection against the request made by the aggrieved party lawyers to name SDIG as a suspect.³²

Politicians arrested on attack on protestors in GotaGoGama MP Sanath Nishantha and Moratuwa Mayor Saman Lal Fernando:

The Colombo Fort Magistrate court granted bail to three suspects including Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna Parliamentarian (SLPP) Sanath Nishantha and Moratuwa Mayor Saman Lal Fernando on 15th June 2022.³³ They were arrested for their involvement in the mob attack against the peaceful demonstrators in Colombo on 9th May 2022. On the 15th June when case called off in the Colombo Magistrate court, Magistrate Thilina Gamage ordered them to be released on two surety bails of Rs. 10 million each. Meanwhile another suspect of the same case, Dan Priyasad, an ultra-nationalist who has a track record for involvement in anti-Muslim attacks was ordered to be further remanded until 25th June 2022.³⁴

²⁸ https://www.supremecourt.lk/images/documents/sc_contempt_06_18.pdf

²⁹ https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Ranjan-sentenced-two-years-suspended-imprisonment-over-second-contempt-of-court-case/108-238595

³⁰ <https://www.themorning.lk/ranjan-given-suspended-two-year-ri-on-second-contempt-charge/>

³¹ “Majority in Sri Lanka are corrupt Judges. Corrupt lawyers. About 95%. They work for money. They everyday protected murderers, corrupt people and drug dealers for money” See https://www.supremecourt.lk/images/documents/sc_rule_1_2018.pdf

³² https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Probe-on-attack-on-Galle-Face-protesters-Law-and-Order-Ministry-Secretary-noticed-to-show-cause/108-239123

³³ https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Sanath-Nishantha-Moratuwa-Mayor-granted-bail/108-239110

³⁴ https://www.dailymirror.lk/print/front_page/Arrest-warrant-against-Johnston-Fernando/238-238731

Former Minister Johnston Fernando: Former Minister Johnston Fernando was released on bail after he surrendered to the Police on 09th June 2022. He was granted bail when he surrendered and appeared before Fort Magistrate Thilina Gamage at the Magistrate's residence in Maharagama. He was named as the suspect of the attack on peaceful demonstrators on 09th May 2022. Previously, Fort Magistrate Gamage issued the arrest warrant considering a submission made by Additional Solicitor General Ayesha Jinasena. In her submission she mentioned that the MP (member of parliament) was not residing at his residence, therefore called for an open warrant to arrest the MP.³⁵ MP Johnston Fernando was released on two personal bail of 10 million each and banned from travelling overseas.³⁶

Mahinda Kahandagama and MP Milan Jayatilake: Colombo Municipal Councilor Mahinda Kahandagama was arrested by the Sri Lanka police over the connection of the 9th May attack to the peaceful demonstrators at Galleface and near temple trees.³⁷ He was produced before the Colombo Fort Magistrate on 3rd June 2022 and ordered to remand him till 8th June 2022.³⁸ On 8th June, Mahinda Kahandagama, Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) Parliamentarian Milan Jayatilake, along with 11 others who were arrested and remanded as suspects of attack on Galleface protestors were granted bail.³⁹

Youth Activist Anuradha Bandara was released from the case: Social media activist Anuruddha Bandara who was allegedly abducted and then found in the arrest of Police was acquitted and released from the case. He was accused of publishing various posts and articles on social media in a manner that allegedly causes unrest among the public. Saliya Pieris, PC, who appeared on behalf of the defendant, had earlier stated in court that it is not possible to pursue the relevant charges against his client. After considering the submissions made by the police and the defence counsel, the Colombo Additional Magistrate Keminda Perera issued his order stating that the suspect would be released.^{40 41}

³⁵ <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/06/08/court-orders-the-arrest-of-johnston-fernando/>

³⁶ https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Update-Johnston-Fernando-granted-bail/108-238761

³⁷ <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/06/02/mahinda-kahandagama-arrested/>

³⁸ https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Mahinda-Kahandagama-remanded-till-June-8-over-Galle-Face-attack-case/108-238343

³⁹ <https://ceylontoday.lk/2022/06/08/slpp-mps-milan-jayathilake-mahinda-kahandagama-granted-bail/>

⁴⁰ <http://www.adaderana.lk/news/83181/youth-activist-anuruddha-bandara-released-from-court-case>
<http://adaderana.lk/news.php?nid=81584>

⁴¹ https://www.dailymirror.lk/top_story/Go-Home-Gota-FB-admin-and-social-media-activist-Anuruddha-Bandara-arrested-by-Mutuwal-Police/155-234357

4. Repression of Media and Journalists

4.1. A female journalist was threatened at a protest

Daily Mirror Journalist Jamila Husian was verbally threatened by some protestors who were protesting in front of the residence of Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) MP Dhammika Perera, when she was covering the protest on 12th June 2022. A group of protestors verbally threatened her and later chanted slogans against her on the speakers. She tried to calm and explain what she was doing to the protestors, but the protestors forced her to leave the place.

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4.2. Eastern journalist assaulted while reporting about a petrol queue

Journalist Shanmugan Thavaseelan was attacked by man when he was covering the fuel que in the Mallavi Petrol station in Mullaitivu on 17th June 2022. Shamungam went to report the long quest that had built up in the outside of the petrol station. An identified person came to Shamungan and attacked him. He has logged a complaint to the Mallavi police station regarding the assault.⁴³



Shanmugam Thavaseelan was attacked by a man. Photo Courtesy: Tamil Guardian

⁴² https://www.dailymirror.lk/latest_news/Daily-Mirror-journalist-threatened-at-protest/342-238942

⁴³ <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/tamil-journalist-attacked-unidentified-person-mullaitivu>

4.3. Police officers obstructed journalists covering a protest in Mullaitivu

Journalist Kumanan Kanathipillai was obstructed by the security officers on 7th June 2022, when he was covering the protest on stage against land expansion of the naval camp located in Vattuvakkal, Mullaitivu. Kumanan Kanthupillai is a journalist working for the Virakesari newspaper. A Naval Officer had threatened him while he was taking photographs of the demonstration. Several police officers have also attempted to forcibly seize his official media card.⁴⁴

4.4. Journalist Tharindu Uduwaragedara was summoned to CID:

On 28th June 2022, journalist and activist Tharindu Uduwaragedara was summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Sri Lanka Police over a complaint made by the director- Intelligence of Sri Lanka Airforce 10 months ago, on 06th September 2021. CID has questioned him about the content of his youtube channel.⁴⁵ Tharindu Uduwaragedara was one of the leaders in the anti-government protest in Colombo, and he played a pivotal role in establishing the media unit at the GotaGoGama protest site. He was also the former president and active member of the Sri Lanka Young Journalist Association (SLYA) and an Executive Committee member of the Sri Lanka Working Journalist Association (SLWJA).^{46 47}



Journalist Uduwaragedara speaking to the media after the interrogation, along with activists who protested in front of the CID office in Colombo against summoning him. Photo Courtesy: JDS Lanka

⁴⁴ <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/why-are-you-laying-your-hands-me-sri-lankan-security-forces-grab-tamil-journalist>

⁴⁵ <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1541691598618169350>

⁴⁶ <https://srilankabrief.org/sri-lanka-human-rights-defender-and-journalist-tharindu-udawaragedara-summoned-to-the-criminal-investigation-division/>

⁴⁷ <https://srilankabrief.org/sri-lanka-human-rights-defender-and-journalist-tharindu-udawaragedara-summoned-to-the-criminal-investigation-division/>

5. Repression of Freedom of Assembly

5.1. Fundamental Rights Petition seeking not to remove GotaGoGama dismissed

The Supreme Court dismissed the Fundamental Petition directing authorities to not to remove the peaceful protest site in Galle face on 02nd June 2022. This case was filed by the petitioner Nuzly Hameem, a protester who took part in the GoGotaGama occupying protest at the Galleface. Petitioner named the Inspector General of police (IGP), Army Commander, Secretary to the President and Attorney General (AG) as respondents.⁴⁸

5.2. Magistrate orders to arrest nine Anti-government protestors, seven arrested and four granted bail

The Fort Magistrate ordered nine activists who took part in protests in the Fort and Thalangama areas in Colombo in June to be arrested and to be produced before the court. The order was issued against (1) current convener of Inter-University Student Federation (IUSF) Wasantha Mudalige, (2) Former convener of IUSF Lahiru Weerasekera, (3) Former Convener of IUSF Ven. Raththkarawwe Jinarathana Thero, (4) IUSF student activist Ven. Galwawa Siridhamma Thero, (5) Youtuber Rathindu Senaratne alias Ratta, (6) Actor Jagath Manuwarna, (7) Actor Jehan Appuhamy, (8) Trade unionist Dhammika Munasinghe, and (9) the National Organizer of the Socialist Youth Union attached to JVP political party Eranga Gunasekera. They were accused of allegedly violating penal code provisions relating to unlawful assembly, obstructing the duties of the police, undue influence, obstruction, causing injury and damaging State property by taking part in protests in the Fort police area and opposite police headquarters on the 9th of June and the protests opposite Isurupaya in Pelawatte in the Thalangama police area on the 10th of June and causing Rs. 179,000 worth of damage to public property.^{49 50}

Accordingly, seven activists were arrested when they reported to the Maradana Police station in Colombo on 22nd June. Actor Jagath Manuwarna, actor Jehan Appuhami, trade unionist Dhammika Munasinghe, Socialist Youth National Organizer Eranga Gunasekera, Youtuber Rathindu Suramyia alias Ratta, Former IUSF convener Lahiru Weerasekera, Rathkarawwe Jinarathna thero were the arrested. On 24th June, Actor Jagath Manuwarna, Actor Jehan Appuhami, Dhammika Munasinghe, and Socialist Youth Party National Organizer were released on bail, while the rest were remanded until 1st July 2022.⁵¹

⁴⁸ https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/FR-petition-seeking-an-order-not-to-remove-structures-set-up-at-GotaGoGama-dismissed/108-238273

⁴⁹ <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1539612132504993794>

⁵⁰ <https://counterpoint.lk/fort-magistrate-orders-arrest-nine-galle-face-green-protestors-june-protests/>

⁵¹ <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1540301703446134785/photo/1>

5.3. Activist threatened by the Army officials:

Velupillai Madawamajor a former tamil rebel and a social activist from Pudukuduirippu in Mullaitivu was threatened by military at gunpoint on 15th June 2022, when he took part in the protest against land expropriation of a Hindu Temple in Kurunthamalai. Velupillai has logged the complaint to the pudukuduirippu police station on 21st June 2022.⁵²



Velupillai Madawamajor at the protest with others. Photo courtesy: JD SLanka

5.4. Protester sentenced for 3 and ½ years of imprisonment:

A protester who was arrested during a protest demanding fuel was sentenced to 3 ½ years of rigorous imprisonment by the Matara Magistrate Court. He was arrested on 19th April during a protest demanding fuel in which protestors blocked the Matara- Colombo main road on the Mahanama Bridge in Matara in Southern Province. He was accused of allegedly damaging Police trishaw, unlawful obstruction and unlawful assembly, and sentenced for multiple charges. He was sentenced for six months rigorous imprisonment for being a member of an unruly gang and fined Rs. 1,500. He was sentenced for one year of imprisonment for criminally harassing police officers and fined Rs. 1500. For unlawful obstruction, he was sentenced to one-year rigorous imprisonment and fined another Rs. 1500. For damaging the government property, he was sentenced to another one year of imprisonment and fined Rs. 1,500. In addition, the court also ordered that Rs. 50,000 be credited to the account in the name of the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) in charge of the Matara Division for the damage caused to the police three-wheeler.^{53 54}

⁵² <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1540289731807875072>

⁵³ <https://www.newswire.lk/2022/06/06/matara-protester-sentenced-for-over-3-years-in-prison/>

⁵⁴ <https://en.newswave.lk/29313/>

5.5. Court rejects the Police request against the student's protest:

The Colombo Chief Magistrate Nandana Amarasinghe rejected a request made by the Police to issue a restraining order against a protest march conducted by the University students from Viharamahadevi Park to the University Grants Commission in Colombo on 02nd June 2022. The magistrate further stated that police are authorised to take required actions if the conduct of the protesters results in a breach of law and order, in accordance with Article 95 of the Criminal Code Procedure.⁵⁵

5.6. 21 Protestors were arrested for blocking the entrances of government buildings:



Protest blocking the entrances of the Finance Ministry started the previous night. Video: [Ada Derana](#).

Twenty one persons including a Buddhist monk were arrested by the Police and Special Task Force for blocking the entrances of the Finance Ministry and the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo on 20th June 2022. The protest started from the previous night.⁵⁶ Police claimed the protesters continued to engage in protest blocking both entrances using the temporary tents that had interrupted a meeting to be held with the officials of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF official meeting was held at the Prime Minister's office and the Secretary to the Finance Ministry had to be escorted out of the Ministry building to attend the meeting as the protesters have been blocking both the entrance and the exit of the Ministry. Police further said 4 women were also among the arrested protesters.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ <https://www.themorning.lk/court-rejects-police-request-against-university-students-protest-march/>

⁵⁶

⁵⁷ https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Finance-Ministry-Secy-late-to-attend-IMF-meeting-due-to-protest-21-protesters-arrested/108-239420

5.7. Police fired Tear gas on Protesters near Police Headquarters



The protestors were tear gassed at the entrance of the Police Headquarters building in Colombo. Video: [Newscutter](#)

Police fired tear gas and water to disperse the protestors near the police headquarters on 09th June 2022. The protest commenced from near Fort Railway Station and marched towards the police headquarters when Police fired tear gas.^{58 59} They protested demanding justice for the May 09th attack on peaceful protest sites in the Galleface and near the Temple Trees.⁶⁰

5.8. President declares supply of electricity as an essential service to prevent a trade union action

Ceylon Electricity board Engineers union organised an island wide strike over recently proposed amendments to the Electricity Act No. 31 of 2013, that sought to allow certain power plant projects to be implemented without the competitive bidding process. In this context, the President issued a gazette extraordinary on 08th June, declaring the supply of electricity an essential service.^{61 62}

⁵⁸ <http://www.adaderana.lk/news/82956/protesters-marching-towards-police-hq-tear-gassed>

⁵⁹ https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Police-fire-tear-gas-on-protesters-near-Police-HQ/108-238754

⁶⁰ https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Police-fire-tear-gas-on-protesters-near-Police-HQ/108-238754

⁶¹ http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/6/2283-33_E.pdf

⁶² http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/6/2285-04_E.pdf

5.9. Colombo District Court issued an enjoining order against the CEB Engineer's Trade Union action:

On 9th June, the Colombo District Court issued an enjoining order preventing the Ceylon Electricity Board Engineers Union, its office bearers and its members from preventing supply of electricity to the general public as a result of engaging in any strike or trade union action, in response to a complaint lodged by the Ceylon Electricity Board, thus prohibiting the trade union action they have called.

Ceylon Electricity Board union demanded to withdraw the proposed amendments to the Sri Lanka Electricity Act No: 20 of 2009 (as amended by the Act no: 31 of 2013) gazetted on 29th April 2022, with immediate effect. Despite the court order, CEB engineers went ahead with trade union action. After discussion with the president Engineers union of the ceylon electricity board was called off the strike.^{63 64 65 66}

5.10. Court order issued against a protest against government:

The Fort Magistrate Court issued an order against a protest march scheduled to be held on 04th June 2022. The protest was organised by a group of anti-government protesters. The police have obtained a court order preventing the protestors from entering York Street, Bank Street, or Chatham Street. Also, court order further said the protestors were not allowed to cause any inconvenience to the general public or vehicular movement in the fort police Division.⁶⁷ Order was issued against the organisers of the protests Rathindu Senarathna (Ratta), Nimesha Dewmini, Dinomi Diwsidu, Shesani Jayawardane, Malcolm Nicholos, Dinesh Niranjan Fernando and others.⁶⁸ The protest was held in the Colombo Fort area.⁶⁹

5.11. Army officials obstructed the protest held at the Galle Fort ramparts:

Army officials have disrupted a protest held at the Galle Fort ramparts on 30th June 2022. The protest was organised by a group of Lawyers demanding the resignation of the president Gotabaya Rajapaksha. Army soldiers have claimed that the protest was a disturbance to the ongoing Test cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia, held in the Galle cricket stadium, as the sight of protest could be a distraction to the batsmen playing at match.^{70 71}

⁶³ https://www.dailymirror.lk/latest_news/Court-issues-Enjoining-Order-preventing-CEB-Engineers-Trade-Union-action/342-238750

⁶⁴ https://www.dailymirror.lk/latest_news/Island-wide-strike-called-off-after-presidents-assurance-CEB-Workers-Union/342-238721

⁶⁵ http://www.colombopage.com/archive_22A/Jun09_1654742269CH.php

⁶⁶ <http://www.adaderana.lk/news/82952/court-issues-enjoining-order-against-cebeu->

⁶⁷ https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Court-order-issued-on-protest-march-scheduled-for-tomorrow-in-Fort/108-238362

⁶⁸

<https://www.aruna.lk/%E0%B6%8B%E0%B6%AF%E0%B7%8A%E0%B6%9D%E0%B7%9D%E0%B7%82%E0%B6%9A%E0%B6%BA%E0%B7%92%E0%B6%B1%E0%B7%8A%E0%B6%A7-%E0%B6%85%E0%B6%B0%E0%B7%92%E0%B6%9A%E0%B6%BB%E0%B6%AB%E0%B6%BA-%E0%B6%AF%E0%B7%94%E0%B6%B1/>

⁶⁹ <https://www.newscutter.lk/sri-lanka-news/latest-news/protests-erupt-infront-of-fort-railway-station-04062022-38211/>

⁷⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjG90StcCq0>

⁷¹ <https://www.themorning.lk/army-says-galle-fort-protest-disrupted-to-make-sure-batsmen-not-distracted>

5.12. Three members of the Tamil National People's Front arrested for protesting against land grabbing:

Three members of the Tamil National People's Front (TNPF) were arrested by the Sri Lankan police over protesting against the expropriation of a land belonging to a Hindu temple in Kuruthurmalai, Mullaitivu on 12th June 2022. In 2018 the court issued an order to prevent making any changes on the site. The court also stated that the archaeology Department has misused its power on allowing it to survey the area.⁷² Despite the court order, the Sri Lankan Army and Archaeology Department have initiated the excavations in the land, preventing Hindu devotees from entering the area for which the protest was held. The arrested Three members of the Tamil National People's Front (TNPF) were released on the same day.⁷³

5.13. Sri Lanka police Intimidate the protestors against the seizing of land for a naval base.

Sri Lanka police have pushed back the protestors who were protesting against seizing 250 acres of the land for the expanding the existing Gotabaya Naval Base in Mullaitivu on 07th June 2022. As Sri Lanka officials and the Sri Lanka land survey department have started to survey the lands, the local residents in the area organised the protest. Police who have arrived at the protest site have intimidated the protestors by pushing them off.⁷⁴

5.14. Attorney at Law Senaka Perera summoned to the CID



Activist and lawyer Senaka Perera speaking to the media after being interrogated by the CID. Courtesy: Newsfirst

Attorney at Law and the convener of the People's Lawyer Association was summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on 06th June 2022. Lawyer Senaka Perera stated that he was unaware about the reason he was summoned until he went to the CID premises. He had been interrogated for over two and half hours on the allegation whether he had

⁷² <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/buddhist-dedication-ceremony-take-place-tamil-temple-site-despite-court-order>

⁷³ <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/sri-lankan-police-arrest-3-tnpf-members-during-protest-against-landgrab-tamil-temple-site>

⁷⁴ <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/tamils-push-back-efforts-expand-gotabaya-naval-base-despite-intimidation>

encouraged protestors at a protest held in front of Fort high Court premises on 25th May 2022, to gather and engage in 'illegal activities' based on a voice recording CID had received. Speaking to the media, Senaka Perera stated that the voice in the voice recording was not his, also declined any connection to him. He further stated that the CID even failed to provide information on who had made the complaint though they have said the complaint was referred to by the Inspector General of Police.^{75 76}

5.15. Social activist summoned to the Galle Police Station:

Social Activist Chandralal Abegunawardna was summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) unit at the Galle police station, in Galle District in Southern Province on 06th June 2022, over a facebook post that he had previously posted condemning the 9th May brutal attack on peaceful protestors in Galleface in Colombo and demanding justice.⁷⁷

5.16. Two Activists of Kurunegala GotaGoGama summoned to the Police:

Adeepa Ekanayake and Prince Jayasuriya, two active members of GotaGoGama, the occupying protest site in Kurunagela were summoned to the office of Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) in Kurunegala on 7th June 2022. While both of them have been detained and interrogated, Adeepa Ekanayake has been later arrested, produced before a magistrate and granted bail.⁷⁸

5.17. GotaGoGama activist Amila Salinda arrested:



Photo: Amal Salinda. Courtesy: Colombo Gazette

A prominent activist of GotaGoGama⁷⁹, the occupying protest site in Colombo was arrested on 20th June, while he was returning after attending a protest organized by student activists and others. The protest was held in front of the Ministry of Finance building in Colombo, demanding the resignation of the President. Video footage shared on social media showed how the Police dragged him away.⁸⁰
⁸¹ Salinda who has not resigned from his job as a military soldier was later arrested, and charged for not reporting to duty without prior notification.⁸²

⁷⁵ <https://www.themorning.lk/activist-lawyer-senaka-perera-summoned-by-cid/>

⁷⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z02ifSm3QU>

⁷⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z02ifSm3QU>

⁷⁸ http://www.fmm.srilanka.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022_June_FMM_MFRM_Monthly_report_English.pdf

⁷⁹ GoGotaVillage - the occupying protest site in Colombo was named as village demanding #GoHomeGota. Later several other similar sites in different locations were also established around the country.

⁸⁰ <https://thesinhalanews.lk/2022/06/21/ggg-activist-amal-salinda-arrested-video-breaking-news/>

⁸¹ <https://colombogazette.com/2022/06/20/gota-go-gama-activist-arrested/>

⁸² <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/08/08/soldier-released-on-bail-for-violating-court-handed-over-to-military-police/>

5.18. Prof. Nedalagamuwe Dhammaduinna Thero was summoned to the Gampaha Police Station:

Prof. Nedalagamuwe Dhammadinna Thero appeared before the Gampaha Police station over a statement regarding 9th May attacks on peaceful demonstrators on 27th June 2022.⁸³ Prof. Nedalaganywe Dhammadinna thero was named as a suspect in a case filed at the Gampaha court in connection with an arson attack on Gampaha District National List MP Minister of Urban Development and Housing Prasanna Ranathunnga's house in Udugampola in Gampaha District in Western province, according to the police sources. Prof. Nedalagamuwe Dhammadinna thero is the professor of the Department of Modern Language, University of Kelaniya.⁸⁴ Prof. Nedalgamuwe Dhammadinna thero was questioned over six hours and produced before the Gampaha Chief Magistrate Manjula Thilekaratna and bailed out.⁸⁵

5.19. Wellawatte Police Station attempted to raid the office of Frontline Socialist Party:

Officers from the Mirihana Special Crime Investigation Unit and the Wellawatte police station attempted to raid the Frontline Socialist party Headquarters in Nugegoda in Colombo district on 21st June 2022.⁸⁶ When the party members opposed the forceful entry of police, police informed them that they had come with a warrant to arrest a man, whom they failed to mention with the name. Socialist Party Education Secretary stated that police were turned away, as the party members protested.^{87 88}

⁸³ <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1541321606248660994>

⁸⁴ <https://lankasara.com/news/chinese-language-prof-dhammadinna-thera-surrenders-to-the-police/>

⁸⁵ <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1541381961050103810>

⁸⁶ <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1539186117240578048>

⁸⁷ <https://lankanewsweb.net/archives/14503/police-raid-the-frontline-socialist-party-hq/>

⁸⁸ <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1539186117240578048>

6. Other incidents

6.1. Muslim Activist was attacked by the Sri Lanka police while he was in the petrol que:



Activist Minshath Mubarak at the hospital. Courtesy: JDSLanka

Prominent Muslim Social Activist Minshath Mubarak was brutally assaulted by at least eight police men while he was in the petrol que at IOC fuel station in Beruwala on 28th June 2022. He was admitted to the Nagoda General Hospital. He faced this attack after waiting 12 hrs in the IOC fuel station in Beruwala.⁸⁹

6.2. Gazette issued calling out for armed forces

Under emergency laws (Public security ordinance), the Sri Lankan President issued a gazette calling out for armed forces for the maintenance of public order from 22nd June 2022.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka/status/1542105764684333064/photo/1>

⁹⁰ http://documents.gov.lk/files/eqz/2022/6/2285-03_E.pdf