

Repression of Dissent

Annual Report 2022



Protesters stormed into several key government buildings in Colombo including the Presidential Secretariat on 9th July 2022 and started occupying them until the resignation of the President. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa soon fled the country Photo Courtesy: Dinuka Liyanawatte, Reuters

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Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka in 2022: The Annual Report.

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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

Methodology: This annual report is based on the monthly repression of dissent reports published in 2022. Repression of dissent provides some general trends and details of some significant incidents related to the repression of dissent in Sri Lanka, 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.

Overview: In 2022, Sri Lanka went through its worst economic crisis since independence, caused by depletion of foreign reserves and high international debt, amidst Covid19 pandemic and financial mismanagement. Shortage of essential items, frequent power cuts and high inflation forced people into the streets, who protested demanding the resignation of the President. As the protests heightened, the President Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled the country, while one of their associates Ranil Wickramasinghe was appointed as the next president. The new government took a more repressive approach, arresting hundreds of protesters who took part in anti-government protests. Sri Lanka was dropped further below in the corruption perception index, while a number of politicians and high-profile politicians were acquitted from a number of corruption and other criminal cases filed against them at courts. As a post war country with high corruption, militarization, and serious issues in justice and accountability, many cases of gross human rights violations still remain in impunity for decades. In October, UNHRC reviewed the situation in Sri Lanka and adopted a new resolution on promoting reconciliation, accountability, and human rights in Sri Lanka which was rejected by the Sri Lankan government according to its Foreign Minister. A report made by the OHCHR in February expressed deep concern over a number of violations in the country.

Case updates: The People’s Tribunal in the Hague found the Sri Lankan state guilty of the murder of Editor Lasantha Wickramatunge. Journalist Keerthi Rathnayake arrested in August 2021 was released on bail after 6 months of detention under Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Human Rights lawyer Hejaaz Hisbullah was granted bail after 20 months of detention under PTA. A Batticaloa based local photojournalist also detained under PTA was granted bail after 470 days of detention.

Seven people who had been arrested and detained for around seven months under PTA, for holding a memorial event in Batticaloa in May 2021 were acquitted and released. A key witness in the case of the disappearance of journalist Prageeth Ekneligoda claimed that the previous testimony he had given before the magistrate court was false, and given under the influence of the criminal investigation of Department (CID) officers, and further told that he had not had any previous knowledge of the disappeared journalist Ekneligoda before meeting investigation officers. Sri Lanka Bar Association (BASL) wrote to the Inspector General of Police, expressing the concern on the arrests and detentions being carried out without adherence to due process “in a manner akin to abductions.” A number of campaigns were conducted demanding the release of student activists who were detained under PTA for a long period. MP Premalal Jayasekara and two others who were previously convicted for committing a murder by shooting at members of an opposition political party in 2015 were acquitted during their appeal. Former MP and Chairperson of the housing development authority Duminda Silva, was arrested again and handed over to prison officials, based on the interim order issued by the Supreme Court suspending the presidential pardon given to him June 2021 in relation to the murder of former MP Bharatha Lakshman Premachandra. 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 contempt of court in one case, and also granted presidential pardon for the previous case he was sentenced for contempt of court for calling the judges corrupt. The supreme court issued travel bans against former president Mahinda Rajapaksa and others hearing a fundamental rights petition on their alleged responsibility for the economic crisis.

Repression of media and freedom of expression: A number of journalists were obstructed and not allowed to cover certain events, including a journalist based in Batticaloa who was issued a court order banning him from reporting a protest. Newspaper Editor Chaminda Senaratna received death threats for reporting on alleged illegal assets held by senior Police officers. A provincial correspondent was threatened by a politician demanding not to release footage of an illegal business. Tamil journalist Lakshaman Devapatheeran working for IBC Tamil website was assaulted by political supporters led by a State Minister. On 31st of March, at least 6 journalists covering the protest in front of the President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's private residence were arrested, while around 9 journalists and hundreds of protesters were allegedly assaulted by the Police and military. On the following day, a director of the President's Media Division threatened journalists who had been reporting on the damages that occurred during the protest. The Inspector General of Police (IGP) ordered an inquiry against a private television channel for distributing information about the same protest. At least five journalists were assaulted while covering the military raid on the GoGotaGama protest site in July. Some were detained and tortured, their phones were confiscated and videos recorded were forcefully deleted

by the military. At least eight journalists were assaulted while covering the tense situation at the Prime Minister Wickramasinghe's private residence in July. A social media activist was summoned and questioned over publishing content allegedly contemptuous of the government. Another was questioned for five hours over a facebook comment. several youtubers were summoned and questioned over the contents of their youtube channels. The court ordered a youtube channel to remove some content based on a complaint filed by an educational institute. A female journalist working in a state-owned television company, and a teacher in Badulla district were sacked from employment for criticising the government in social media. A number of journalists, social media content creators and activists were summoned and questioned by the Police for supporting anti-government protests. Social Media was temporarily restricted on the instruction of the Director General of Telecommunication Regulatory Commission and the Ministry of Defence. Three admins of a social media group including a female TV presenter were arrested in relation to the violence that occurred during protests. Government ordered the government employees to avoid sharing their opinions in social media. Several government officials were arrested and subjected to disciplinary actions for criticising the government including a medical doctor who was indicted for informing the media on alarming rates of child malnutrition in a village. Three ruling party Parliamentarians allegedly assaulted, and threatened two parliamentary correspondents and also took away their mobile phones. A journalist was assaulted while covering a clash between the Police and residents in Akkaraipattu in Ampara district. Several journalists were assaulted while covering tense situations at fuel queues in a few incidents. In November, army soldiers visited the Mullaitivu Press Club and demanded to provide information on key people who are involved with their media centre.

Repression of Freedom of Assembly: Members of a leftist political party were subjected to surveillance, intimidation and harassment. Police also attempted to raid an office of another leftist political party in Colombo. Parliamentarian Rasamanickam was issued a court order preventing him from participating in protests. A court order was issued against a trade union and its president when a trade union action had been planned. Trade unionists were subjected to surveillance, and they were summoned and questioned over their involvement in protests. Police raided an NGO located in Kilinochchi in the Northern Province, while they were planning a protest. Police obstructed, and dispersed protests organised by a worker's union, the families of the disappeared, women's rights activists, residents who protested against land expropriation by the military, and a number of memorial events and protests held in the North and east and Colombo. A number of court orders were also issued banning memorial events, and protests. Teargas and water were fired at a number of anti-government protests, including those organised by students. A protester was shot dead and 14 others were injured when the Police fired live bullets at protesters during an anti-government protest held in Rambukkana in central Sri Lanka. A protester who allegedly damaged a police trishaw, during a protest demanding fuel was sentenced to 3 ½ years of rigorous imprisonment. 21 protesters were arrested for blocking the

entrances of two government buildings when a meeting with the IMF was scheduled there. Almost two weeks after the protesters took over several key government buildings demanding the resignation of the President, on 22nd July, military troops raided occupying buildings and removed the protesters forcefully injuring at least 50 persons and arresting at least 9 persons, despite them already agreeing to hand over the premises peacefully. A student union activist was abducted and then left on a roadside after interrogating him on the well known student leaders. Several protest leaders were also arrested in a manner similar to abduction, however the Police later claimed that they were arrested. Travel bans were issued against at least 27 protesters involved with the Galle Face protest site. In May, the anti-government protest site in Colombo was attacked and protesters were assaulted. In July, an anti-government protest site in Embilipitiya was attacked and destroyed by thugs. In August and September hundreds of protesters who entered the Presidential secretariat and house in July were arrested. In August, IUSF convener Wasantha Mudalige, and Convener of the Inter-University Bhikku Federation, Ven. Galewela Siridhamma Thero and 16 others were arrested. Mudalige and Siridhamma Thero were detained for months under the PTA. A protest organised demanding the release of these activists was dispersed using tear gas and water attacks, and 27 other protesters were arrested in the same month. A Tamil French citizen who was involved in organising a demonstration in Paris in support of anti-government protests was arrested while visiting Sri Lanka. Passport of a British social media influencer who supported Sri Lankan protests was arrested, and later her visa was terminated and asked to leave the country. In September, 84 protesters were arrested, 7 were hospitalised due to police assaults after President Wickramasinghe declared high security zones covering many areas of Colombo city.

Legal and policy changes: Amidst anti-government protests in Sri Lanka, the state of emergency was declared three times, from April to July 2022, along with multiple curfew orders banning the public from gathering at public places including public roads. Monthly Gazettes calling on the armed forces to maintain public order were issued throughout the year, except in July and September, indicating continued militarization. In January 2022, Local government elections were postponed for another year. Sri Lanka de-listed six international Tamil diaspora organisations from the proscript list of individuals allegedly involved in terrorism and terrorism financing, while the poet Ahnaf Jazeem was freshly included in the list. Parliament secretariat, refusing to release the information of asset declarations of parliamentary members, appealed to the Court of Appeal against an order of the Right to Information Commission. The Personal Data Protection bill was passed in the parliament. It restricts RTI and restricts journalists' access to information. In September, the Sri Lanka Police refused to provide information on the number of persons arrested and detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act during a hearing at the RTI Commission. In January 2022, the government gazetted some amendments to the draconian law Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). However, the changes were minimalistic, and inadequate and do not address the key issues lying with the PTA,

according to the human rights groups. In August 2022, Sri Lanka's minister of justice announced the introduction of a new 'national security act' with more "relaxed" provisions to replace the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). On 23rd of September, a Gazette notification was issued declaring new High Security Zones in Colombo including a number of key government buildings under the Official Secret Act. This was later revoked as many including the Human Rights commission of Sri Lanka pointed out the illegality of the action. In September, a controversial draft Bill titled "[Bureau of Rehabilitation Act](#)" was gazetted. Human rights activists and others held that the bill was an attempt to target those who participated in the recent protests, to send them through a forcible process of rehabilitation, without following the judiciary procedures. On multiple occasions, the President declared certain services as essential services in an attempt to prevent trade union actions.

Repression of Civil Society: Several problematic statements were issued by the government ministers and members of parliament, condemning trade union actions and proposing to introduce new laws to ban labour strikes. President Ranil Wickramasinghe, while addressing the parliament, mocked human rights defenders, and argued that the Human Rights Commission cannot obstruct the duties of the police and security forces. An activist known for his activism on demanding justice for victims of the Easter Sunday Bomb attack was arrested. Several activists were summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department and questioned for hours and some others were subjected to surveillance. Police officers from TID have visited several non-governmental organisations and requested them to provide details of the staff and funders. The President of Batticaloa District Civil Society Forum was summoned by the Police both in September and October. Another activist filed a Fundamental Rights case claiming that the Police is attempting to falsely implicate him with the violence that occurred on 9th July, when protesters took over the Presidential secretariat and other buildings.

Other incidents: Land commissioner stated that a politician is attempting to sack him from his position. It was also reported that the government has been considering taking actions against the Chairpersons of Litro Gas company and the Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka (PUCSL) for criticising the government at media interviews. In April, the army commander requested the IGP to take actions against police officers who stopped masked military men on motor bikes with no vehicle registration numbers who were intimidating the protesters. The Health Minister threatened to take action against the health trade unionist who revealed the higher doses of aflatoxin detected in the government distributed nutrition supplement. Two parliamentarians belonging to ethnic minorities reported that they were followed by intelligence officers. In February, the Youth Wing Assistant Secretary of a Tamil political party was subjected to an attempted abduction. In September, a female human rights activist in Batticaloa and a female member of the political party of TNA were summoned and questioned by the Terrorism Investigation division of the Police.

2. Overview



Several kilometers long fuel queues were a common sight in Sri Lanka for a large part of the year. Photo courtesy: FT

Economic crisis: Sri Lanka's economic crisis caused by lack of foreign reserves and high foreign debt, impact of covid19 pandemic and financial mismanagement led to high inflation, frequent power cuts, shortages of fuel, domestic gas, essential medicine, and other items, as the government had to restrict import of goods. Also, researchers found that this situation has led to increased malnutrition and hunger. In April, Moody's Investors Service ("Moody's") downgraded Sri Lanka's debt ratings to Ca from Caa2, due to debt servicing suspension on external public debt repayments. As hospitals ran out of essential drugs, some surgeries were temporarily discontinued in March. Annual average inflation was 46%, while inflation of transport costs and food were reported as 132% and 64% respectively by the end of the year.¹ An island wide survey conducted by CPA found 79% of people saying that their economic situation worsened compared to the previous year. However, the government managed to gradually ensure uninterrupted fuel and electricity supply, towards the end of the year. An island wide survey conducted by Center for Policy Alternatives (CPA) found 79% of people saying that their economic situation worsened compared to the previous year.² The World Food programme reported that 37% of Sri Lankan households have been facing acute food insecurity, and around 41% reducing the number of meals.³ Media reported shortages of around 150 essential drugs.^{4 5}

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https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/sites/default/files/cbslweb_documents/press/pr/press_20221230_inflation_in_december_2022_ccpi_e.pdf

² <https://srilankabrief.org/79-of-sri-lankans-economic-situation-has-got-worse-during-the-last-year/>

³ https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000145643/download/?_ga=2.25620920.407229744.1675774438-458050933.1675774438

⁴ <https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-facing-shortage-of-150-essential-drugs-govt-looking-to-boost-local-production-101449/>

⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2022/12/25/sri-lanka-cancer-patients-struggle-amid-economic-chaos>

Corruption: Sri Lanka dropped further in the [corruption perceptions index](#) from 94 to 102 in January 2022⁶, and 101 in January 2023.⁷ Politicians and high profile government officials were acquitted from corruption charges in at least 7 cases.⁸ Two of those cases were withdrawn by the Commission to Investigate Bribery and Corruption (CIABOC), claiming that the filing of the cases were not approved by all the commissioners. One of them, the case against former Minister of Highway Johnston Fernando and others for allegedly employing government workers for an election campaign was refiled by the commission. Another two cases against the president's brother Basil Rajapaksa on the Divi Neguma project, and purchase of land with state money were withdrawn by the Attorney General Department. In one case⁹, the court decided that the plaintiff has failed to prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt. In the case against Ravi Karunanayake on central bank bonds, the court of Appeal issued an order declaring that the case cannot be sustained under the Public Property Act, under which the charges have been filed, while another case against former central bank governor was withdrawn by the plaintiff.¹⁰ In a separate case, the former Minister MP Prasanna Ranatunga was found guilty and sentenced to two years of suspended imprisonment over an incident of threatening a businessman and demanding bribery worth Rs. 64 million for the eviction of unauthorized occupants in a state land.¹¹ Daily Mirror reported that two commissioners of the CIABOC have allegedly taken steps to withdraw and impede 19 ongoing legal cases against high profile politicians and state officials, of which 13 were against Rajapaksa family members. It was also reported that Chandra Nimal Wakishta, one of the members of CIABOC has allegedly threatened a legal officer of disciplinary action, for not following his instructions.¹² Following a Fundamental Rights petition filed seeking accountability for the financial crisis in Sri Lanka, travel bans were issued against several key politicians and officials related to the former Rajapaksa government from August 2022.

Accountability: In January 2022, Former Prisons Commissioner Emil Lamahewa was sentenced to death, while the other suspects were acquitted in connection with the 2012 Welikada Prison massacre. Despite the pending verdict, the first suspect Inspector of Police (IP) Neomal Rangajeewa was promoted, indicating possible political interference in the case. Media rights groups and family members of victims

⁶ <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/01/25/sri-lanka-drops-from-94-to-102-in-corruption-perceptions-index/>

⁷ <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2023/02/01/sri-lanka-ranked-101-in-corruption-perception-index-2022/>

⁸ (1) Case against Minister Johnston Fernando and others on employing Sathosa government workers for election campaigning, (2) Misappropriation of Funds of Divi Neguma project against Basil Rajapaksa while paying compensation and gratuity to Samurdhi recipients, (3) Misappropriation of Funds of Divi Neguma project by for printing almanacs with the photo of the Mahinda Rajapaksha on 2015 election, (4) Case against former Minister Rambukwella on purchase of GI pipes for Sri Lanka Rupavahini corporation, (5) Central Bank bond issuance case against former Minister Ravi Karunanayake, (6) private plaint filed against former central bank governor Cabraal on financial irregularities during his tenure, (7) Malwana land case against Basil Rajapakse

⁹ Printing 5 million of almanacs with a photograph of Mahinda Rajapaksa during 2015 election incurring a loss Rs.29.4 million to the Divi Neguma Department.

¹⁰ <https://www.dailymirror.lk/print/news/Ajith-Nivard-Cabraal-released-from-a-case/239-252975>

¹¹ <https://www.newswire.lk/2022/06/06/threatening-a-businessman-minister-prasanna-ranatunga-found-guilty/>

¹² <https://www.dailymirror.lk/opinion/Withdrawal-of-bribery-cases-against-politicians-and-their-allies-raises-eyebrows/172-235776>

of assassinated and abducted journalists commemorated the Black January campaign demanding justice for killed media workers and other crimes against journalists that remain in impunity for decades. In May, memorial events were organized in the North East and Colombo to remember the victims of the war, and Wasim Thajudeen who was killed following a brutal assault due to an alleged dispute with a Rajapakse family member. In December, the 17th death anniversary of Tamil MP Joseph Pararajasingham was held in Batticaloa, another case still remains in impunity. The suspects who were arrested in connection with the murder of Pararajasingham were released in 2021, after the Attorney General department withdrew the case. In December, Vavuniya high court made a landmark order to the Sri Lankan army to produce the LTTE cadres who surrendered during the end of the Civil War in 2009 by March next year, who are widely believed to be murdered.¹³

International community: The 49th UNHCR Session of the Human Rights Council began on 28th February. A report issued by the OHCHR in February expressed deep concern over a number of violations in the country. While the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) amendment was recognized as an important step, the report also pointed out that the changes are inadequate as the most problematic provisions of the Act have been left intact. In August, Human Rights experts issued a statement condemning the extensive, prolonged and repeated use of state of emergency measures since April 2022 by Sri Lankan authorities to crackdown on peaceful protesters. The UNHRC resolution on promoting reconciliation, accountability, and human rights in Sri Lanka was adopted at the 51st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva, early October. Issues of accountability on human rights abuses, and new challenges in the context of the current economic and political crisis, and Covid-19 were looked at in the resolution. Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Sabry stated that Sri Lanka categorically rejects the new resolution on the human rights situation in the country, which was presented without Sri Lanka's consent or consultation. In November, Former Prime Minister and former president Mahinda Rajapaksa addressing the parliament claimed that there is a local and international conspiracy to put down Sri Lanka's economy.

Protests: Year 2022 was a year of protests in Sri Lanka, as the economic crisis, shortage of essential items, and other issues led people to protest on the streets demanding the resignation of the ruling government, and solutions for the problems they face. On the 31st of March and early morning of 1st of April, thousands of protesters gathered in front of the President's private residence in the Colombo suburbs were attacked with tear gas and water by Police and military. Around 54 protesters including journalists were arrested and detained by the Police, while some of them were also allegedly subjected to police violence. Soon after, anti-government protesters started occupying the Galleface Green urban park located in front of the Presidential secretariat in Colombo and the site was named as the GoGotaGama

¹³ <https://www.inform.lk/repression-of-dissent-december-2022/>

(GGG/ GoGotaVillage) , the village demanding the resignation of the ruling President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. On 9th of May, the peaceful protesters in GotaGoGama were assaulted by pro-government mobs who attended a meeting with Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. Following the attack, agitated anti-government mobs attacked those who assaulted the demonstrators, a number of houses and property belonging to government Politicians were damaged and 10 individuals including a member of parliament (MP) were killed during the mob attacks. The Police arrested over 1500 individuals including several politicians for alleged involvement in the violence occurred on the day. Soon after, as the Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned from his position, Ranil Wickrasinghe was appointed as the new Prime Minister. On 9th July, the protestors stormed into several major government buildings including the Presidential secretariat, official residence of the President and the Prime Minister and started occupying them, which resulted in the resignation of the President Gotabaya Rajapaksa who fled the country. Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe was then appointed as the new President. More than 3000 anti-government protesters were arrested following the appointment of the new government.

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 GotaGoGama. Various protests were organised by activists, relatives of disappeared and political parties in the North and East demanding justice, a political solution to the long standing national question, and remembering the victims who lost their lives during the civil war period. As a group of detainees detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) for several years, launched a hunger strike demanding their release, an island wide signature campaign was conducted demanding the repeal of the PTA.

3. Case updates

January 2022

Scheduled hearing of the murder of Editor Lasantha Wickramatunge in the People's Tribunal in the Hague was postponed to May 2022, due to prevailing Covid19 restrictions in the Netherlands. Shani Abeysekera, the former CID Director who directed investigations on key human rights cases including the crimes against journalists who also faces a legal case for allegedly fabricating false evidence, filed a writ petition against the Presidential Commission on Political Victimisation seeking a writ of certiorari preventing the Commission from submitting their report to the President that contain recommendations against the petitioner.¹⁴ The long detained poet Ahnaf Jazeem who was released after 18 months of detention in December 2021 filed a case against the remand officer for detaining him for an additional day, despite him having completed the bail conditions.

February 2022

Journalist Keerthi Rathnayake arrested in August 2021 was released on bail after 6 months of detention under draconian anti-terror law Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Ratnayake, is a former army intelligence officer and regular freelance contributor to the London-based, Sri Lanka-focused news website *Lanka-e-News*. Hearing the case of the disappeared journalist Prageeth Ekneligoda who was allegedly abducted and murdered by the military in 2010 was postponed until 29th April 2022. Human Rights lawyer Hejaaz Hisbullah was granted bail after 20 months of detention under PTA. The suspects who attacked the JVP leader with eggs were reported to be missing in Police custody. Media rights activist and senior journalist Lasantha Ruhunag made a complaint for the second time about the threats he has been facing, as the Police had conducted no investigation since his complaint in December 2021.

March 2022

Batticaloa based photojournalist Murugupillai Kokilan Thasan, locally known as the Gokulan was released on bail after 470 days of detention under PTA. He was arrested for allegedly posting some photos of LTTE, after posting pictures of a memorial event to remember the victims of war in the North and East. Medical Doctor Shafi Shihabdeen who was arrested for allegedly conducting involuntary infertility surgeries based on islamophobic accusations made by nationalist groups was acquitted, released and reinstated in his position in December 2021. However, he had to file a case at the court of appeal to receive his salary arrears. The Court of Appeal ordered

¹⁴ https://www.dailymirror.lk/latest_news/Shani-files-writ-petition-against-Presidential-Commission/342-229538

the Attorney General to take steps to ensure that his salary arrears would be paid. MP Premalal Jayasekara and two other suspects who were convicted for shooting at Opposition party members and killing a person were acquitted after the appeal. In January 2015, a group allegedly led by the suspects shot at around 200 Opposition Party members who were setting up a stage for an upcoming election rally, causing death to one person and sustaining injuries to others.

April 2022

The Puttalam High Court granted bail to three accused of the case against Lawyer Hejazz Hisbullah. Hizbullah in a tweet said that the accused were arrested to falsely implicate him in the Easter Sunday bomb attack case. Seven people who had been arrested and detained for around seven months under PTA, for holding a memorial event in Batticaloa in May 2021 were acquitted and released.



Memorial event remembering the victims of war that led to arrest and detention for more than seven months under PTA. Photo Courtesy: Tamil Guardian

May 2022

On 12th and 13th of May, the case of murdered journalist Lasantha Wickrematunge was heard at The Permanent People's Tribunal (PPT) on the Murder of Journalists in Hague. On 17th May, two Fundamental Rights petitions filed challenging former President Maithripala Sirisena's decision to grant pardon to Ven. Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thero were scheduled for further hearing at the pre-trial stage. In a separate case, the Supreme Court (SC) ordered the arrest of former MP and Chairperson of the housing development authority Duminda Silva, issuing an interim order against the presidential pardon given to him in June 2021, who was convicted for a murder of a opposition politician and three of his supporters in 2011. The

Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) filed a fresh indictment against Former Minister Johnston Fernando on 30th May 2022 for allegedly utilizing government employees for election campaigns in 2015. Previous case on the same incident was withdrawn by the CIABOC in January 2022, citing a technical issue.

June 2022

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 predetermining the judgement of an ongoing legal case. Former MP and Chairperson of the housing development authority Duminda Silva, was arrested by the CID and handed over to prison officials, based on the interim order issued by the Supreme Court last month in relation to the murder of former MP Bharatha Lakshman Premachandra.

In the case of the attack on the protestors in GoGotaGama 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 Anuruddha Bandara who was allegedly abducted by the law enforcement, was acquitted from the case filed against him.

July 2022

Police informed the court that extracts relating to the investigations on senior Police officer Tennakoon's failure to issue due orders to prevent attack on protestors, were submitted to the Attorney General Department.

Two fundamental Rights petitions were filed by Transparency International Sri Lanka and a few individuals against 13 respondents including high profile politicians and top state officials, for their alleged responsibility for the economic crisis. After President Rajapakse fled the country, petitioners sought an order to prevent others from fleeing the country, and the Supreme Court ordered foreign travel bans on former Finance

Ministers Mahinda Rajapaksa and Basil Rajapaksa, former Central Bank Governors Ajith Nivard Cabral and Professor W. D. Lakshman and other senior financial officials.

August 2022

On 9th August, Sri Lanka Bar Association (BASL) wrote to the Inspector General of Police, regarding arrests and detentions being carried out without adherence to due process “in a manner akin to abductions.” The freelance journalist and student activist Veranga Pushpika who was arrested in a manner similar to abduction, was granted bail on 9th August 2022, by Kaduwela magistrate. Bail was granted to Dhaniz Ali, the protester who disrupted the broadcasting of state television. Four cops were granted bail in the case of shooting at protesters in Rambukkana. On 19th April 2022 police opened fire at a group of protesters who were protesting against fuel shortage and fuel price hike, killing one person and injuring 24 others. A nun who supported anti-government protesters was arrested and granted bail. The former Minister, and MP Ranjan Ramanayake who was imprisoned for contempt of court for calling judges corrupt was granted presidential pardon. Human Rights Commission (HRCSL) issued a press release on their inquiry into the attack on Sirasa Tv journalists by Special Task Force (STF) Police officers. Two recommendations were made: (1) to transfer the senior police officer in charge of the situation outside Colombo until the investigations are over, (2) Police to not wear camouflage uniforms during civilian operations. On 22nd August, HRCSL wrote a letter to the IGP on the arrest of protesters using PTA. The letter said that PTA has been grossly manipulated, and undemocratically used to justify wrongful arrests of the protesters. HRCSL made several recommendations about ongoing investigations into the 9th May attack on anti-government protesters. Recommendations included (1) appointment of a committee to identify the perpetrators within the law enforcement and to recommend appropriate legal actions, (2) examining the telephone conversations among IGP, his subordinates and Secretary of Defence at the time of incident.

September 2022

People's Tribunal on the Murder of Journalists delivered its verdict on the murder of journalist Lasantha Wickramatunge on September 19, where the Sri Lankan government was found guilty of “grave violations of the international human rights of journalist Lasantha Wickrematunge, specifically the right to life, the right to freedom of expression and the right to an effective remedy.” Arrested convener of Higher National Diploma (HND) students’ union Haritha Darshana was ordered to be remanded until 16th September, who got arrested for violating a court order during a protest. The Supreme Court permitted Basil Rajapaksa, former minister of Finance and Rajapaksa family member to travel to the USA for a period of one month, for medical treatment. Former CID Sub Inspector Sugath Mendis who was arrested along with former CID Director Shani Abeysekera has not been paid his salary arrears as previously instructed by the Supreme Court, Mendis informed the court filing a motion. The Court

of Appeal issued notices to MP Sanath Nishantha in relation to two petitions alleging him of contempt of court and ordered him to appear before the court on 13th October 2022. Attorney at law Dushmantha Weeratne who had been arrested for tooting his vehicle horn to support the protesters on 09th September was discharged from the case.

October 2022

The Ministry of Defence issued a gazette revoking the previous order issued in September declaring high security Zones under the Official Secret Act. At the trial against human rights lawyer Hejaaz Hisbullah, the prosecutor was absent for the third occasion in the Puttalam High Court. The Court of Appeal issued a warrant to arrest State Minister Sanath Nishantha over contempt of court charges and produce him in court, after he failed to appear at the court based on the summons that were previously issued. He reported to the court later on the same day and was released after stern warnings. Student Activist Hashan Gunathilake detained under a 90-day detention order under the Prevention of Terrorism Act was released by the magistrate Court in Tangalle after the Police informed that they do not have sufficient evidence to continue the case. The Supreme Court granted leave to proceed with the petition against a group of Sri Lankan top politicians and officials on accountability on Sri Lanka's economic crisis. The overseas travel ban issued against Former Central Bank Governor Ajith Nivard Cabraal was extended until 24th of November regarding a case on financial misappropriation. The Supreme Court of Sri Lanka issued an order to resend a notice to former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to provide evidence pertaining to a case filed on the disappearance of activists Lalith Weeraratne and Kugan Murugananthan in Jaffna in 2011. The former Chairman of the Akuressa Pradeshiya Sabha Saruwa Liyanage Sunil was acquitted and released over a sexual assault case for allegedly molesting a 14-year-old girl. Indictments were served on former minister Johnston Fernando, and two others over a bribery case pertaining to state-owned Lanka Sathosa.

November 2022

Sandya Ekeneligoda, the wife of disappeared journalist Pargeeth Ekeneligoda wrote a letter to the chief justice on 03rd November 2022 as court authorities did not allow her to attend the hearing of Habeas Corpus (Writ) Petition on the disappearance of Prageeth Ekeneligoda at two occasions recently. The Supreme Court ordered the Police to produce the convener of Inter University Student Federation (IUSF) Wasantha Mudalige before a magistrate and before a Judicial Medical officer after hearing his Fundamental Rights Petition. Amnesty International made an appeal to the government asking them to drop the terror charges against Mudalige and Galwewa Siridhamma Thero, two activists who have been detained under terror charges. Colombo magistrate ordered them to be remanded until the Attorney General's instructions are received. Despite Ven. Galwela Siridhamma Thero was released on

bail, he was arrested again and remanded under different charges. Fort Magistrate Court issued an order to record a statement from the former president Gotabaya Rajapaksha over the Rs. 18 million cash found in the President's House by protesters.

December 2022

The Supreme Court granted leave to proceed with the Fundamental Rights Petition, filed by the medical doctor Chamal Sanjeewa, who was suspended from duty last month as he made a statement to the media on increasing levels of malnutrition among children in a village in Hambantota District based on a study he had conducted. Wasantha Mudalige, the convenor of the Inter-University Student Federation and Ven. Galwewa Siridhamma Thero, the convenor of Inter-University Bhikku Federation were granted bail on 06th December 2022 by the Kaduwela magistrate court as the Police failed to identify them during an identification parade. However, Mudalige remained in remand custody in relation to the other case filed against him. A group of activists met with the Commissioner of Prisons requesting not to transfer Mudalige to the notorious Boosa prison in Galle. Mullaitivu based journalist Kanapathipillai Kumanan was summoned to Mullaitivu Police station to record a statement on a harassment he had previously faced from the military and Police, while covering a protest in the area. The Attorney General Department assured that Shani Abeysekera, the former Director of Criminal Investigation Department of Police will be provided with Police protection, as previously instructed by the National Authority for the Protection of Victims of Crimes and Witnesses. Abeysekera alleged that Deshabandu Tennakoon, Deputy Inspector General in charge of Western Province had deliberately ignored providing him protection as an act of retribution. The Court of Appeal issued an order to the Attorney General to draft the contempt of court charges against Minister Sanath Nishantha, who criticised the magistrates during a press briefing, for granting bail to the suspects involved in the Argalaya anti-government protest movement.

4. Repression of media and freedom of expression

January 2022

A social media activist and actor Sudaththa Thilakasiri was summoned and questioned for publishing social media content that has been allegedly contemptuous of the government. Police media spokesperson said insulting the President is a punishable offence. Shanmugam Thavaseelan a journalist was harassed for taking a photograph of the name board of the magistrate court in Mankulam in Jaffna. Lankadeepa journalist Chandani Dissanayake was obstructed when she was reporting on the weekly fair run by the Kurunegala Municipal Council and she had been asked to obtain prior approval to take photographs of the venue. Journalists were not allowed to be in the court premises of Colombo High Court Trial-at-Bar when the former defence secretary appeared before the court in relation to the Easter Sunday bomb attack. Colombo Today youtube channel and Youtube company were issued with an order to remove content based on a complaint made by an educational institute.



February 2022

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) summoned Kumara Joseph, a civilian over a facebook comment made on a facebook post by Rev. Fr. Cyrill Gamini. Despite the comment not including any hateful ideas, he was questioned over 5 hours. Military officers in civil clothes visited the residence of poet Ahnaf Jazeem who had been previously arrested under Prevention of Terrorism (PTA) and currently on bail. Punniyamurthi Sasikaran, a journalist based in Batticaloa was issued a court order banning him from reporting a protest on Independence Day that he was not even

aware of. Batticaloa based journalist and media rights activist Selvakumar Nilanthan was interrogated by the CID of Sri Lanka Police. Journalist Chamuditha Samarawickrama's residence was subjected to a stone and excrement attack. Tamil journalist Lakshaman Devapatheeran working for IBC Tamil website was assaulted by political supporters led by a State Minister.

March 2022

Auna Daily and weekend news editor Chaminda Senaratna received death threats over a phone call for reporting on alleged illegal assets held by senior Police officers. Parami Nilepithi Ranasinghe, a freelance journalist working at Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation owned by the government was sacked from her job allegedly due to the facebook posts she had published criticising the government. Swarnavahini correspondent Rahul Samantha Hettiarchchi was threatened by a politician and a brother of a media owner demanding not to release footage of an illegal business. The journalist, Raasaia Jayasankar was assaulted while reporting a road accident in Vavuniya. The President restricted comments in his facebook page. Kanishka De Lanerolle, an Opposition party youth wing leader was stopped from doing a facebook live broadcasting by Police during a tense situation that occurred at a domestic gas distribution queue.

April 2022

On 31st of March, at least 6 journalists covering the protest in front of the President's private residence were arrested, while around 9 journalists and hundreds of protesters were allegedly assaulted by the Police and military. CID of Police interrogated the Daily Mirror newspaper's photographer Waruna Wanniarachchi for over 4 hours, regarding the same protest. A director of the President's Media Division threatened journalists who were reporting on the damages that occurred during the protest. Inspector General of Police writing to Criminal Investigation Department (CID) with letter numbered GP/PA/CID/OUT/76/22 on 1st of April 2022 has ordered to launch an inquiry against the private television channel Sirsa TV for allegedly distributing information about the Mirihana protest knowingly instigate outrage among public. Intelligence officers visited houses of two journalists S. Nilanthan and P. Sasikaran in Batticaloa over social media posts regarding the anti-government protests. Police obstructed the journalists from attending a press conference organised by the Tamil political party, Tamil National People's Front (TNPf) in the North. Social Media was restricted on the instruction of the Director General of TCRC who had acted upon a request made by the Ministry of Defence, however the decision was withdrawn after the Public Utility Commission and Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) intervened.

May 2022

Digital Journalist Buwanka Perera was among the group of people who were arrested during a protest held on 4th May 2022 near the Parliament premises. On 14th May 2022, the Sri lankan forces allegedly obstructed Mullaitivu based journalist Shanmungam Thavaseelan while he was covering preparations of annual commemoration for remembrance of victims of war in Mullivaikkal. Three ruling party Parliamentarians have physically assaulted, verbally threatened and forcefully taken away the mobile phones of two Parliament correspondents Swarnavahini Journalist Prageeth Perera and Sirasa TV Journalist Kasun Samaraweera, on 17th May 2022. The Vlogger and Youtuber Darshana Handungoda was summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on 25th May 2022 over the certain revelations he made on social media. Eastern journalist Shaheer Khan Farookh was assaulted by a group of people while he was covering a clash between police and residents in Palamunai area in the Eastern town of Akkaraipattu in Ampara district on 05th May 2022. Mohammed Bhuhari a freelance journalist was subjected to an attack while he went to record a crowd queuing outside a petrol station in the Eastern town of Muttur in Trincomalee district on 21st May 2022. Three admins of a social media group including Wasundra Gamage a female TV presenter from state owned media channel Rupavahini Corporation was arrested by CID in relation to the violence erupted following the pro-government mob attack on protesters in GoGotaGama on 9th May. Pushpa Weerasekara, a well-known freelance journalist and a prominent activist associated with GotaGoGama protest site in Kurunegala and her husband were summoned to the Wariyapola Police Station on 16th May 2022 to be questioned on an "arson investigation". Arumugam Balasubramaniam, a government youth service officer from Hatton in the Central Province of Sri Lanka was arrested for publishing a facebook post criticising the mob attack on Galle Face protest site. He was granted bail after being presented before the Hatton District Court.

June 2022

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 Shanmungam 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.

July 2022

On 22nd July early morning, the military raided and took over the Presidential secretariat, and surrounding area occupied by the protesters. At least five Journalists covering the military raid were assaulted, some were detained and tortured, their phones were confiscated and videos they recorded were forcefully deleted by the military. Persons in civilian clothes, claiming to be policemen, had visited the office of Xposure News, demanded the security guard to identify persons in photos and to see CCTV footage and monitored the entrance for around one hour. Eight journalists from Sirasa TV NewsFirst were allegedly attacked by the Sri Lanka Police Special Task Force while they were live broadcasting a tense situation that occurred in the Prime Minister's private residence on 09th July 2022. Another journalist Pradeep Sanjeewa Wickramasinghe reporting for Derana TV has experienced breathing difficulties and was hospitalised after facing dozens of tear gas attacks while covering protests. A teacher named A. M. Kumara Addarege in Badulla district was suspended from duty over a facebook post he had published supporting people's protests against the government.

August 2022

The poet Ahnaf Jazeem who was previously arrested and later released on bail under the Prevention of Terrorism Act was named as a person designated for terrorism related Activities in a list published by the Defence Ministry on 1st of August.

September 2022

Mankulam Police in Jaffna district has summoned the Tamil Senior Journalist Shanmugan Thavaseelan to record a statement over a fuel scam that happened at the Pudukuduirippu Divisional Secretariat which he had reported. Secretary of the Batticaloa District Tamil Journalist Association Selvakumar Nilanthan was summoned to the Counter Terrorism Investigation Division Colombo for allegedly having links with former Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Batticaloa political head. Police officers attached to the Batticaloa police station handed over a summon notice to Balasingham Krishnakumar, President of the Batticaloa District Tamil Journalists Union asking him to appear at the Counter Terrorism Investigation Division Headquarters in Colombo. Government has ordered the civil servants to avoid sharing their opinions in social media after some officials had claimed that some school students were fainting due to lack of food due to the country's economic crisis. Freelance writer Dulani Priyadarshini was summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) headquarters in Colombo and questioned for around 5 hours on her involvement with the protest movement.

October 2022

Journalist Tharindu Jayawardhana accused the Officer-in-Charge (OIC) of the Fort Police Station of threatening him, while he attempted to file a complaint against the actions of two Police officers during a recent peaceful protest.

November 2022

Journalists Tharindu Jayawardena and Tharindu Uduwaragedara were summoned to the CID over a Social media post they published several months ago. Two police officers in plain clothes have visited the residence of exiled journalist S Nilanthan, the secretary of the Batticaloa District Tamil Journalist Association. In another case, army soldiers have visited the Mullaitivu Press Club and questioned journalist Kumanan demanding him to provide information on key people who are involved with the media centre of the Mullaitivu Press Club. Joining a parliamentary debate, the Minister of Mass Media has accused Sri Lankan media for damaging the country's reputation by publishing negative stories and photographs especially referring to anti-government protests. Local journalist Sambasivam Sathiskumar was threatened by the management of Kirkoswald tea estate and the estate superintendent of Ceylon labour congress while he was reporting a discussion between the tea estate management and the residents in the area.

Medical doctor and trade unionist Chamal Sanjeewa were interdicted after revealing about child malnutrition in Sooriyawewa area in Hambantota. The Ministry of Health informed him that he has been indicted for providing false information to the media and not taking permission from the Health Ministry before speaking to the media.

December 2022

On 18th December, Youtuber and Journalist Chamuditha Samarawickrama summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department regarding an investigation into the killing of businessman Dinesh Schafter, as he conducted a discussion on the matter with investigative journalist and defence analyst Keerthi Rathnayake who was previously arrested and detained for months under PTA and published the interview in his YouTube Channel.

5. Repression of Freedom of Assembly

January 2022

Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), a leftist political party and its members were subjected to multiple harassment including surveillance, intimidations, egg attacks on its leader, and supporters at two public rallies. The Police obstructed an event to remember those who were killed by the Sri Lankan military in a massacre that occurred in 1987. The Minister of Justice stated that some labour strikes should be banned and constitutional amendments should be brought to do so.

February 2022

Minister Tissa Kuttiarachchi made a controversial statement claiming that people should assault the trade union activists. Police raided an NGO in Kilinochchi named District office Fisheries Solidarity (DIFSO), when they were planning a protest. The President declared Electricity and Health services as essential services. Declaration as essential services has been historically used as a measure to prevent and restrict trade union actions. Court issued two enjoining orders against the nursing trade union and its President just before a trade union action that they were planning. An activist was summoned to the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) to get details of the participants who attended a remembrance event held on 18th May last year. A quarry company employee organised a counter protest against a protest organised by villagers on environmental destruction caused by the granite cutting in the area. Police dispersed a protest conducted by the Ceylon Workers' Red Flag Union in Kandy.

March 2022

Opposition political party JVP alleged that Avant Garde, a controversial security company that has been linked to the ruling government politicians and ex-military, was involved in allegedly hiring thugs to interrupt a public rally organized by the JVP and their Coalition party NPP. Police obstructed a protest organized by the families of disappeared against a visit by the Prime Minister to Jaffna. Two local councillors who joined the same protest were later summoned by the Police and they were questioned on their involvement with the protest. Police also threatened the organizers and attendees of the International Women's day protest in Jaffna. Police fired teargas and imposed curfew when a protest was held in front of the President's private residence in the Colombo suburbs.

April 2022

Police arrested and took legal action against a Police officer who took part at the anti-government protests wearing his uniform.

The government issued a gazette order banning the public from gathering at public places at a time protests against the government were being organised around the country. President also declared a state of public emergency, which allows the arrest and detention of individuals without a warrant and provides more powers to the military and Police. Police fired tear gas and water cannon attacks on protesters at multiple protests. These included the Protest in front of President's private residence in Colombo, a protest in front of Prime Minister's private residence in Tangalle, a protest organised by IUSF¹⁵ in front of Parliament roundabout, a protest organised by Peradeniya University students, a protest organised by residents in Rambukkana, a protest in front of SLPP office in Kalutara and several other protests organised near the private houses of Parliamentarians. One protester was shot dead and several others were injured in Rambukkana protest, while the Police alleged that protestors attempted to fire a fuel bowser. Pro-Government protesters attempted to interrupt a candlelight vigil conducted by anti-government protesters. The Police requested a court order against the protest conducted in front of the Temple trees: The Prime Minister's official residence in Colombo. Police also requested a court order against a protest organised in front of Fort Railway station in Colombo. However, the request was declined by the court. In Rideemaliyadda in Badulla district, the chairperson of the local council assaulted a protester causing a tense situation. Banners with photographs of murdered, assaulted and disappeared journalists during the previous Rejapakse regime were removed by the Presidential Secretariat officials. Police assaulted a protester in front of the Temple Trees. A social media activist engaged with #GoHomeGota2022 facebook group was abducted and then called to be arrested by Police. A former athlete working in a government institution received verbal threats for supporting anti-government protests. Parliamentarian Rasamanickam was issued a court order preventing him from participating in protests. Batticaloa magistrate court banned a memorial event organised in memory of Annai Poopathy, who died in 1988 in a hunger strike in protest of atrocities committed by Indian Peace Keeping Forces. A Senior Police officer assaulted a bus driver who protested against the fuel hike.

May 2022

On the 9th May 2022, supporters of the ruling party Sri Lanka Podujana peramuna (SLPP) following a meeting with the former Prime Minister (PM) Mahinda Rajapakse at the Temple Trees, attacked the peaceful anti-government demonstrators who were near the Temple Trees and then in the Galle Face. Police requested the court to issue an urgent order to remove the huts built by demonstrators claiming that they obstruct

¹⁵ Inter University Student Federation

the access to the Presidential Secretariat and private companies in the area. Another protester, Susantha Rambukwella a Library Assistant of the Kanthale Mahaweli Pura Vidyalaya in the eastern province was arrested by the Kanthale police on 16th May 2022. Police arrested Prabodha Lakshan an employee working in the Lanka Naigai (pvt) Ltd in Katunayake Export Processing Zone on 13th May 2022 night for taking part in the protests. On 19th May 2022, Police fired tear gas and water to disperse the protestors at a protest organised by the Inter-University Student Federation (IUSF) . On a request made by the Fort Police, the Colombo Fort Magistrate has issued an order on a protest march by students of the Higher National Diploma (HND), banning them from entering certain roads in the Colombo Fort, state institutions or damaging property and obstructing duties of Police. Despite the court order, as the students marched in protest on 21st May, police used tear gas and water cannons. Riot Police have used tear gas and water cannons to disperse another protest organised by the Medical Faculty Student Activist Committee in Colombo on 29th May 2022. On 12th May 2022, a travel ban was issued by the Colombo Magistrate Court to seven people who were eyewitnesses including those injured during the 9th May pro-government mob attack, as per the request of the Attorney General, claiming they need to be present in Sri Lanka for further investigation. Activist and president of the Sri Lanka Information Technology Professionals Association, Indika Gamage was arrested by the Matale police on 27th May 2022 in relation to the attack on protestors on 9th May. Dewalegama Premarthana Thero was summoned to the Weeraketiya police station on the 26th May 2022 and he was questioned over the destruction of the parental grave of the president Gotabaya Rajapaksha and several other incidents that occurred on 9th May 2022. Nuwan Neelamuni and Harshana Neelamuni, two environmental activists who were actively involved in the anti-government protests were arrested by the Ambalangoda police on 26th May 2022. On 4th May 2022, the Colombo Magistrate Court issued an order to remove all the structures, vehicles and belongings to the protesters who had staged protests opposite to the Temple Trees. Saman Kumara Ranthilaka, a youth from Pannala in Kurunegala district was arrested by the Yakkala Police in Gampaha district, along with another person on 1st May 2022. These two were arrested for taking part and speaking to the media at an anti-government protest. YouTuber Rathidu Senarathna alias "Ratta" was arrested by the Slave Island Police on 30th May. Ratta was arrested over allegations that he had violated a court order issued against a protest he took part in. A group of protesters protesting against the shortage of gas in the Dematagoda area in Colombo were assaulted by a mob led by a local politician. A person who shared the incident live on facebook was also assaulted. Amila Mendis of Wāriyapola, a youth activist who actively took part in Kurunegala GotaGoGama protest campaign was arrested and detained by the police following a complaint made by the Mayor of Kurunegala on 16th May.

June 2022

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 protesters 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. While the 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 President issued a gazette declaring electricity as an essential service. 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 Kuruthumalai, Mullaitivu on 12th June 2022. In another incident on 07th June 2022, Police allegedly intimidated the protestors protesting against seizing of land for the expansion of the existing Gotabaya Naval Base in Mullaitivu. 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 Kurunegala 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 of a politician in the context of 9th May violence.¹⁶ Police attempted to raid the office of the Frontline Socialist party in Colombo.

July 2022

On 7th July 2022, the Fort police obtained a court order against a protest demonstration by a group of religious leaders demanding the resignation of the President. Former Parliamentarian Hirunika Premachandra and 11 others were arrested by the Police for staging a protest opposite the president's house in Colombo on 06th July 2022.

On 8th July, with effect from 9pm in the night, Police imposed curfew in multiple areas of Colombo District. Sri Lanka Bar Association stated in a letter and said that the Inspector General has no power to impose such a curfew restricting the fundamental rights of the people.

On 9th of July, the protesters took over the key government buildings demanding the President to resign. On 21st July, the protestors publicly announced that they are ready to hand over the Presidential Secretariat premises to the authorities. While everything was ready to hand over the building, the sleeping protestors occupying the Presidential Secretariat, and those who were in the huts set up on the road sides were brutally assaulted with batons by the military in the early morning of 22nd July 2022, without any prior warning. More than 50 people were injured and at least 9 others including a lawyer and a few journalists were arrested. Colombo Fort magistrate issued an order preventing protestors from gathering around 50 metres radius from the SWRD Bandaranaike statue located inside the occupying protest site.

On 31st July 2022 a student activist and an undergraduate student of the University of Kelaniya, Management Faculty was abducted by unidentified people. He was left out at a roadside, after being interrogated about well known student leaders. Cinnamon Gardens Police in Colombo went to the court seeking a restraining order against a protest organised by student activists, which the court rejected.

On 25th July, a travel ban was issued against six prominent activists who have been involved in the Galle Face protest site. On 28th July, another travel ban was issued against 21 protestors who were involved with the Galle Face protest site. Pathum Kerner, a social media activist who claimed to have introduced #GotaGoHome hashtag was arrested on 28th July 2022 for allegedly gathering protestors for a protest that happened in front of the Parliament. On 27th July 2022 a special police team

¹⁶ A large number of properties belonging to ruling politicians were damaged and five persons including one parliamentarian were killed on 9th May, as angry mobs attacked the property of politicians in retaliation to an attack by government supporters on the main occupying protest site in Colombo.

raided a church in Ratnapura searching for Fr. Amila Jeevantha Peiris, who was a prominent figure in the anti-government protest site in Colombo. Colombo Magistrate court issued arrest warrants against two prominent anti-government protest leaders Lahiru Weerasekara and Tempitiye Sugathananda Thero who were at the forefront of GotaGoGama protests. Protesters who were attempting to march towards the Galle Face through the lotus road were blocked by the Sri Lanka Navy and video footage showed that the navy soldiers were attempting to attack the protesters with batons on the evening of 22nd July 2022. On 28th July, another Galle Face protester named Ismat Maulavi got arrested. Thugs attacked and destroyed the anti-government protest site located in the Embilipitiya on 21st July 2022. The police arrested four people who counted and handed over the money to the authorities that was found in the presidential residence when protesters stormed into the Presidential residence on 9th July 2022. Police arrested Udeni Kalutanthri, former port union vice president of Samaghi Sevaka Sangamaya on 29th July for allegedly stealing the president's flag on 09th July 2022. Sahan Ranjaka Weerawardana, a young social media activist was allegedly detained and assaulted by Sri Lankan Air Force troopers, during the military raid on 22nd July. Journalist and student activist of the Inter-University Student Federation Veranga Pushpika was abducted by the police while he was returning on a bus after taking part in a demonstration held in Colombo. Police carried out searches at the office of the Frontline Socialist Party on 29th July.

August 2022

Police issued a press release seeking public assistance in identifying 72 protesters who allegedly "forcibly entered the Presidential Secretariat President's in Colombo on 09 July and damaged its property". Journalist Manjula Samarasekara, who was expected to be appointed as the Media Coordinator of an organisation called the "National Centre for the Struggle" connected with anti-government protests alleged that there is a clear indication that Police is attempting to arrest him. A court order was issued preventing YouTuber Ratindu Senaratne (Ratta) and Convener of the Higher National Diploma Student Federation Haritha Darshana from travelling overseas. 19 protesters were arrested by Sri Lanka Police on 18th August during a protest held in Colombo, demanding the resignation of the government, and solutions to other issues related to socio-economic crisis in Sri Lanka. Inter University Student Federation (IUSF) organised another protest in Colombo, demanding the release of Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) detainees including arrested student activists. It was attacked with tear gas and water cannons and 27 protesters were arrested. Police visited the house of the convener of the Inter Higher National Diploma Student Federation, Haritha Darshana and asked him to report to the police station to record statement. Four Policemen visited the office of Ceylon Teachers union in Colombo and searched for General Secretary Joseph Stalin and inquired about his night routine. Stalin was later summoned to the Mutwal police station, regarding a protest he organised in the previous month. Duminda Nagmauwa, Organising Secretary of Workers Struggle was summoned to the Harbor Police station regarding the same protest. Civil society

activist Chinthaka Rajapaksha was arrested while he was returning home after attending the Inter University Student Federation (IUSF) organised Protest on 18th August 2022. A young protester who joined the protest on July 9 was arrested and questioned by the Colombo Crime division. Four youths who engaged in the recent anti-government protest received the summon notices from the Criminal Investigation Department on 22nd August 2022. National Organiser of Socialist Student Union, Rangana Lakaml Devapriya was arrested by the police. Shalika Rukshan Senadeera, a young performance artist who performed in the recent protest, was arrested at the Vauxhall Street in Colombo by the police on 23rd August 2022. Piyath Nikeshhala and Nuwan Neelamuni, two youth who were involved in the anti-government protests were summoned to the Criminal investigation Headquarters of Police and Slave Island Police Station in Colombo on 22nd August 2022. Young protester Sahaja Madushanka who took part in the recent protest was arrested by the Police on 20th August 2022. Terrorism Investigation Division in Colombo summoned the Mannar based Tamil activist V S Sivakaran on 15th August 2022. Police Special Investigation unit arrested a 38 year old resident in Pannipitiya on 1st August 2022 for forcibly entering the Presidential Secretariat. Former Sri Lankan Swimming champion Julian Bolling and Businessman Jonathan Martenstyn have been summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department on 17th August 2022. Julian Bolling and Transparency International Sri Lanka have filed Fundamental Right petitions against 13 respondents including former Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksha, current President and others. Police officers attached to the Nittambuwa police station have arrested Arjun Amadoru, a resident in France who was involved in organising a demonstration in Paris to show solidarity with the ongoing anti-government protests in Sri Lanka. British National and social media influencer Kayliegh Frazer's passport was seized, and later her visa was terminated and asked to leave the country. Indika Attanayake, a lawyer from Monaragala was summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department on 31st August 2022 and he was questioned about his involvement in the recent anti-government protest movement. Cinnamon Gardens police questioned a lyricist and a professional designer, Sanjaya Epa Seneviratne about his engagements in the recent anti-government protests. A press conference to condemn the police violence organized by a group of trade Unionists and some activists was disrupted by the police who were looking to arrest an activist who was involved with protests. A Police team attached to the Harbor Police station raided a Buddhist Temple in Colombo searching for Koswatte Mahanama Thero, who is the Media Secretary of National Bhikkhu Front.

September 2022

Three including two provincial and local politicians were arrested for participating at a protest against a state backed construction of a Buddhist temple in Mullaitivu. Police arrested 84 protesters including three monks and four women on 23rd September in Colombo city during a protest as authorities claimed that the protest was "illegal" a day after President Ranil Wickremesinghe declared several 'high security zones' in Colombo. It was reported that at least 7 protesters were hospitalised due to assaults

by Police. Sri Lankan military have halted and threatened the travelling memorial dedicated to Thileepan, the former LTTE political wing leader who died fasting unto death in 1987. A number of protesters were summoned to the Criminal Investigation department to question their involvement in the anti-government protests including at least eight trade union members of a state bank and a Central Executive Committee member of Ceylon Teachers Union. Oshantha Prasad Dabare who had been actively involved in the recent protest campaign and brutally assaulted by pro-government mobs on 9th May was summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department in Colombo, to obtain a statement. Former student activist, National organiser of 'Youth for Change' and a leader of anti-government protests Lahiru Weerasekara was arrested on 9th September while returning from a candlelight vigil held in memory of those who lost their lives during the protest movement. Actress Damitha Abeyratne was arrested by the Colombo Crimes Division, while taking part in a protest for unlawfully entering the President's Office during the recent protests in July 2022. Alliance of Trade Unions & Mass Organisations were forced to change the venue of a meeting, as the auditorium belonging to Sri Lanka Ex-Servicemen's Association denied them access allegedly under the orders of the Defence Secretary. A power cut was reported when a public rally organised by the Inter-University student Federation and Alliance of Trade Unions and Mass organisations was happening at Hyde park in Colombo city. Police in civilian clothes attempted to arrest an activist named Nipun during a protest held in Colombo Fort, without providing any legal documents.

October 2022

15 protesters were arrested in Nawalapitiya in Kandy District during a protest organised by the Opposition party Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), while Sri Lanka Podjuana Peramuna also organised a rally in the same area, under the patronage of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. Police disrupted a demonstration held at the Galle Face, to commemorate whose lives were lost in Aragalaya protests. The Police claimed that the protesters had not obtained prior approval from authorities before entering the area where the demonstration was held. At least 8 student activists were arrested by police, including student union president of Kelaniya University, during a protest organized by Inter-University Student Federation (IUSF). Faizan Ahmed, a youth activist involved with the recent protest movement was arrested by the Police and released after 4 hours of interrogation. Colombo District Member of Parliament Mano Ganesan alleged that Police is collecting personal information and visiting houses of 'Aragalaya' activists' in Colombo.

November 2022

Police have obstructed and arrested some members of the Samagi Vanitha Balawegaya, the Women's Front of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) who were marching in a protest to the United Nations office in Colombo on 14th November, in commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against

Women. In another case, two women who were marching in protest demanding the release of the long-detained student activists, were arrested.

When a mass protest was organized by trade unions, student unions and political parties on 2nd November demanding the release of detained student activists and actions to resolve the economic crisis, Police issued a letter of warning saying that the permission would not be granted to go ahead with the protest, and protest was prevented using Police force, teargas and water cannon attacks. The day before the protest, Government MPs had a press briefing to condemn the protest, in which one of the MPs labelled the protesters as traitors. Several days before the protest, a group of business chambers also issued a joint statement asking to call off the protest as it would undermine the efforts being taken to resolve the current economic crisis.

On 18th November, police fired tear gas and water, near the Nelum Pokuna theatre in Colombo to disperse a protest march organised by the Inter-University Student Federation (IUSF). Police were also deployed to prevent protesters from entering the UN compound to demand international pressure. On 11th of November, Police attempted to disperse a satyagraha campaign launched near the United Nations office in Colombo. Lawyers of Aragalaya, Attorney Manoj Nanayaklara alleged that the Minister of Public Security has ordered the Inspector General of Police to arrest the Rev. Fr. Jeewantha Peris, a leader in the recent anti-government protests. During a protest that was held near the Terrorism Investigation Division on 16th November, a high-ranking police officer has allegedly informed the demonstrators that they cannot use megaphones as it has been banned. On 27th November, Police destroyed the decorations made at a memorial event in Mullaitivu to mark the Great Heroes day to remember former Tamil rebels. On 26th November an unidentified person visited the Batticaloa District Civil Society Forums President S. Sivayoganathan at his residence and mainly inquired about his plans for “Great heroes’ day.”

December 2022

A large presence of Police personnel was seen when the #GoGotaGama anti-government protesters organised an event to remember the fallen protesters. Police also tried to disrupt the collection point of books and stationery items organised by #GoGotaGama library to distribute among children in low income families. Dilan Senanyake, a Social Media Activist actively involved with Aragalaya, was stabbed by two masked men at his office in Nugegoda in Colombo suburbs on 14th December.

6. Legal and policy changes

Postponing elections

In January 2022, Local government elections were postponed for another year.

State of emergency and curfew

Amidst anti-government protests in Sri Lanka, the state of emergency was declared three times, from April to July 2022, along with multiple curfew orders that ordered that no should be on public spaces, including roads.

On 1st of April, as the anti-government protests started in Mirihana, the President declared a state of emergency in Sri Lanka,¹⁷ and the order was revoked on 5th April 2022.¹⁸ On 2nd of April, the President declared curfew stating that “no person shall be on any public road, railway, public park, public recreation ground or other public ground or the seashore in such areas, from 6pm on 2nd April to 6am 4th April.¹⁹

On 6th of May, the president again declared a state of emergency.²⁰ Multiple orders declaring curfew were issued, following the violence that occurred throughout the country, after the pro-government mobs attacked peaceful protesters. A curfew was ordered from 7pm on 9th May to 7am on 12th May 2022.^{21 22} Curfew was again declared at 2pm on 12th May to 6am on 13th May²³. Curfew was again declared at 2pm on 13th May until 6am on the 14th of May.²⁴ Curfew was again ordered at 6pm on 14th May until 5am on 15th of May.²⁵ Curfew was again ordered from 11pm on 16th May, until 5 am on 17th May.

On 17th of July acting President Ranil Wickramasinghe again declared a state of emergency.²⁶

¹⁷ http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/4/2273-86_E.pdf

¹⁸ http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/4/2274-10_E.pdf

¹⁹ http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/4/2273-89_E.pdf

²⁰ http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/5/2278-22_E.pdf

²¹ http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/5/2279-11_E.pdf

²² http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/5/2279-13_E.pdf

²³ http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/5/2279-16_E.pdf

²⁴ http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/5/2279-19_E.pdf

²⁵ http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/5/2279-22_E.pdf

²⁶ http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2022/7/2288-30_E.pdf

Calling for armed forces

Monthly Gazettes calling on the armed forces to maintain public order were issued throughout the year, except in July and September. The order issued under the powers given to the President under section 12 of the Public security ordinance (chapter 40), provides the military with additional powers to intervene in civilian affairs. Similar gazettes have been issued for several years now.

Restrictions on Right to information

In January 2022, the Parliament Secretariat appealed to the Court of Appeal against an order issued by the Right to Information Commission to release the information on asset declarations of the members of parliament, based on a Right to information request made by a journalist. The Personal Data Protection bill was passed by the parliament that restricts RTI and restricts journalists' access to information. In September, the Sri Lanka Police refused to provide information on the number of citizens arrested and detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act during a hearing at the Right to Information Commission. Wasantha Kumara Kotiakumbura, the police inspector and lawyer of the Police Legal Division, who represented the Inspector General of Police, refused to provide information saying that it could be a serious prejudice to national security, while a number of persons have been arrested under the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) for taking part at anti-government protesters in the recent past.

Anti-Terror laws

In January 2022, the government gazetted some amendments to the draconian law Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). However, the changes were minimalistic, and inadequate and do not address the key issues lying with the PTA, according to the human rights groups. In August 2022, Sri Lanka's minister of justice announced the introduction of a new 'national security act' with more "relaxed" provisions to replace the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

Proscript list for terrorism and terrorism financing

Sri Lanka de-listed six international Tamil diaspora organisations including the UK-based Global Tamil Forum (GTF) and 316 individuals from the proscript list of individuals allegedly involved in terrorism and terrorism financing, while the poet Ahnaf Jazeem was freshly included in the list, under the United Nations Regulations Act No. 1 of 2012.

Declaration of High Security Zones preventing protests in Colombo city

On 23rd of September, a Gazette notification was issued declaring new High Security Zones in Colombo including a number of key government buildings under the Official Secret Act. Issuing a press release, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) stated that the Official Secret Act cannot be adopted to declare High-Security Zones. Issuing a tweet, UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Association, Clement Voule also raised concerns.

Bureau of Rehabilitation Act

In September, a controversial draft Bill titled "[Bureau of Rehabilitation Act](#)" was gazetted. Human rights activists and others held that the bill was an attempt to target those who participated in the recent protests, to send them through a forcible process of rehabilitation, without following the judiciary procedures.

Essential Services

In early July, a gazette notification was issued declaring several services as essential services. Such declarations are a well-known tactic to prevent trade union actions. Curfew was imposed in the commercial capital of Colombo for several days. On 3rd October, a gazette notification was issued by the President declaring all the services connected to the supply of electricity, the supply and distribution of fuel and petroleum and providing healthcare as essential services, On 12th of December, the Department of Posts announced that leave of all postal staff has been cancelled as the Joint Postal Trade Union Alliance has started an island wide token strike from 4 pm on the previous day to 12 midnight on 12th December based on several demands. On 3rd of December, the President issued a gazette notification declaring all services connected to the supply of electricity, the supply or distribution of petroleum products and fuel, and health services as essential services. Declaration as essential services is a tactic that has been historically used to prevent trade union actions.

7. Repression of Civil Society

Statements against protests and trade unions

In January, the Minister of Justice stated that some labour strikes should be banned and constitutional amendments should be brought to do so. In February 2022, Matale District MP, the Minister of Ports and Shipping Pramitha Bandara Tennakoon stated that the Trade Unions and other opposite political parties are sort of epidemic in Sri Lanka. In the same month, MP Tissa Kuttiarachchi also made a controversial statement claiming that people should assault the trade union activists. In March, the controversial monk Gnanasara holding the position of a chairperson of a Presidential Task Force speaking at a press conference, proposed that the President should act like Hitler and should ban the protests and trade union actions.

Reprisals against Human Rights Defenders

President Ranil Wickramasinghe addressing the parliament on 24th November, mocked the human rights defenders and also argued that the Human Rights Commission has no right to obstruct the duties of the Police officers and other state security officials. In February 2022, Sri Lanka Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement claiming that the testimony given by the former Human Rights Commissioner and current Chairperson of the Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust Ambika Satkunanathan at the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights on 27 January, 2022 was misleading.

In February 2022, Shehan Malaka Gamage activist who raised his voice for justice to the Easter Sunday Bomb attack was arrested by CID of Police. The president of Right to life of Organisation (Tamil Thesiya Valvurimailayakkam) V S Sivakaran residing in Mannar, was summoned to TID head office in Colombo and interrogated for 5 hours. Activist Manorama Weearsinghe was also summoned by the CID, without mentioning why he was summoned. Unidentified persons have searched personal details of secretary of Committee to Protect Rights of Prisoners (CPRP) Sudesh Nandimal. Police officers from TID have visited several non-governmental organizations and requested them to provide details of the staff and funders. President of Batticaloa District Civil Society Forum Sabaratnam Sivayoganathan was summoned by the Police both in September and October. In December, Civil society activist Chirantha Amarasinghe filed a Fundamental Rights (FR) petition seeking an order preventing his arrest claiming that Police is conducting an inquiry seeking to implicate him falsely with the violence that occurred during protests on 9th July 2022 and tense situation occurred during a protest organised by fishermen on 28th November that he was covering to publish in his social media. Speaking at a press briefing, he also said that he was threatened, and his phone was snatched by pro-government mobs when he was recording the protest, while a Police officer has threatened him of arrest.

8. Other incidents

Reprisals against state officials and public representatives

In February 2022, Land commissioner Keerthi Gamage stated that a powerful politician in Hambantota district had been attempting to sack him from his position. In the same month, it was reported that the Prime Minister and ruling government ministers have discussed the importance in taking actions against company chairpersons at government owned Litro Gas company and the Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka (PUCSL) for criticising the government at media interviews and press briefings. In April, the Army commander requested the Inspector General of Police to launch an inquiry against the Police officers who interrupted and questioned the masked armed military men, riding motor bikes with no vehicle registration numbers in a manner intimidating the protesters. In September, the Health Minister threatened to take action against the President of Public Health Inspectors' Union of Sri Lanka (PHIUSL), M. G. Upul Rohana who revealed the higher doses of aflatoxin detected in the government distributed nutrition supplement 'Thriposha'. In October, MP M. A. Sumanthiran representing Jaffna district, and MP Shanakiyan Rajaputhiran Rasamanickam representing Batticaloa district, belonging to Tamil ethnic minorities were reported to have been followed by intelligence officers while they were attending a meeting in separate vehicles.

Other incidents

In February, a group of persons who identified themselves as state intelligence had attempted to abduct Nishanthan, the Youth Wing Assistant Secretary of the political party - Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK), using a white van. In June, activist Minshath Mubarak was brutally assaulted by the police while he was in a fuel station in Beruwala on 28th June 2022. In September, Laxmanarajani Jeyapragash, human rights activist based in Batticaloa, and Kanthaiya Kalaivani, attached to political party Tamil National Alliance were summoned to the Counter Terrorism Investigation Division in Colombo.