

Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka

July 2024



Despite the Supreme Court (SC) having previously ruled Deshabandu Tennakoon guilty of torturing a detainee, he was appointed as the IGP. The newly appointed IGP visited several leading Buddhist temples around the country seeking blessings from the Sangha, in February 2024 (left). After the SC made another order preventing him from functioning as the IGP, on July 30 Buddhist monks held a protest in Colombo, demanding his continued service as IGP. (Right). Courtesy: Divaina

Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka in July 2024.
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INFORM was established in 1990 to monitor and document the human rights situation in Sri Lanka, especially in the context of the ethnic conflict and war, and to report on the situation through written and oral interventions at the local, national and international levels. INFORM also focused on working with other communities whose rights were frequently and systematically violated. Currently, INFORM focuses on election monitoring, freedom of expression and human rights defenders. INFORM is based in Colombo Sri Lanka, and works closely with local activists, groups and networks as well as regional (Asian) and international human rights networks.

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1. Executive Summary

Context: Excavation efforts at the Kokkuthoduvai mass grave resumed for the third time after a hiatus of over seven months, and reportedly 52 skeletal remains, fragments of artillery, and clothing resembling LTTE uniforms were found.

The presidential election was declared to be held on 21 September 2024 and nominations were accepted till 15 August 2024.

Events commemorating the 41st anniversary of the 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom, commonly referred to as Black July were held in the North, East, and Colombo.

Speaking in Parliament, Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena refused to comply with the court order, contending that the order lacks validity due to practical constraints associated with appointing a new Inspector General of Police following the declaration of an election. The Election Commission subsequently challenged this claim. This may raise serious concerns about how independently the Police will act during this election period.

The Bar Association of Sri Lanka denounced the actions taken by the government to undermine the judicial process concerning the IGP.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe justified the delay of the local government elections for more than two years, claiming they were postponed to rebuild the country's economy.

Election monitoring organisations claimed that the government continues to misuse state funds for election campaigns.

The Lawyers Collective condemned the proposed Bill to amend the maximum duration of the President's and Parliament's tenure during an election period as a manoeuvre to distort the electoral process. It urged all democratic entities to resist it.

The Human Rights Measurement Initiative released its annual scores on Sri Lanka's human rights situation. Summary scores on both Safety from the State Rights (5.4), and Empowerment rights (3.4) in Sri Lanka came under "bad" and "very bad" ranges.

As soon as the Presidential election was announced, Sri Lanka witnessed a wave of disparaging statements targeting the LGBTQI+ community which manifested in media briefings, public statements and silent protests by religious and nationalist groups, and politicians denouncing the ongoing attempts to decriminalise consenting same-sex relationships among adults in Sri Lanka.

Case Update: The Supreme Court dismissed a petition filed seeking an order to prevent the presidential elections from being held since the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was not passed by Parliament.

The Supreme Court decided to hear nine fundamental rights petitions that were filed challenging the appointment of Deshbandu Tennakone as the Inspector General of Police and issued an interim restraining order preventing him from acting as Inspector General of Police till the hearing of those petitions. The Supreme Court ordered President Ranil Wickremesinghe to name a suitable person for the post of IGP during the period the interim order is in effect. Several months before his appointment as the IGP, the SC ruled that he was guilty of torturing a detainee and he was also named an accused in several other ongoing human rights violation cases, including the Easter Sunday Attacks.

A fundamental rights petition was filed claiming that the President and the Constituent Assembly had infringed fundamental rights by not appointing judges to the appellate court slots that are now unfilled.

The Supreme Court's ruling regarding the Economic Transformation Bill presented in Parliament disclosed that the Supreme Court identified multiple provisions within the proposed legislation as being inconsistent with the Constitution.

The Supreme Court gave an interim injunction prohibiting the execution of Community Advisory Committees, which were supposedly designated to carry out government development programs aimed at rural areas.

Nuwara Eliya police was ordered by Nuwara Eliya Acting Magistrate to arrest the Secretary General of the Ceylon Labor Congress and Minister of Estates Infrastructure and Water Transport Jeevan Thondaman and several other individuals and present them to court for forcibly entering into the Nuwara Eliya Pedro Tea Factory.

Repression of Media and Journalists: Jaffna-based senior journalist Tambithurai Pratheepan suffered an arson attack as his residence was torched.

Repression of Freedom of Assembly: The pamphlet distribution program by a group attached to the anti-government protest movement was obstructed by the Moratuwa police. Two courts issued orders preventing a protest organised by several trade unions and some politicians.

Repression of Activists and Whistleblowers: Amalaraj Amalanayaki, the Coordinator of the Association for Relatives of the Enforced Disappeared in Batticaloa District, was called in for questioning by the Terrorism Investigation Division.

The secretary of the Kammakkara organisation, which works for the rights of agricultural labourers, Chelliah Krishnarajah was injured in a shooting.

Repression of State Officials: An administrative officer attached to the customs department was assaulted by the police while participating in an environmental conservation activity at the Kalutara beach and hospitalised.

The Chairman of the Road Development Authority resigned from that post due to arbitrary pressure exerted on him by the Secretary of the Ministry of Highways.

Repressive Legal and Policy Action: An amendment to the Online Safety Bill was gazetted. The supply of electricity and petroleum was declared as essential services and it has been a common practice by preceding governments to prevent and discourage trade union actions. Same as in previous months, the President also issued a special order calling the armed forces for the security of the country, indicating the continuing militarization in the country.

Other: The Terrorism Investigation Division summoned Mathimuharasa, the priest of Vedukkunaari Aathi Lingeswarar temple in Vavuniya for interrogation. Reportedly, he was questioned about temple-related issues.

The Kollupitiya police arrested a Muslim youth who took a video from his mobile phone of the convoy in which the President's Senior Advisor and Chief of Staff were travelling.

2. Context

2.1. Kokkuthuduvai mass grave excavation resumes



Ongoing excavations at Kokkuthuduvai mass grave. Photo courtesy: Tamil Guardian

Excavation efforts at the Kokkuthuduvai mass grave resumed for the third time after a hiatus of over seven months, which was caused by insufficient funding (The Leader, 2024). It was reported that Rs. 9.7 million was approved for 10 days of work at the site where as many as 52 skeletal remains, fragments of artillery, and clothing resembling LTTE uniforms were unearthed (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

2.2. Presidential Election gazetted

It was gazetted¹ that the presidential election will be held on 21 September 2024 and nominations were accepted till 15 August 2024 (Ada Derana, 2024; Newswire, 2024).

2.3. Black July commemoration

People gathered in the North, East, and Colombo to commemorate the 41st anniversary of the 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom, commonly referred to as Black July, which is widely regarded as one of the darkest moments in the post-independent history of Sri Lanka (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

At these commemoration events, lamps were lit and a few minutes of silence was observed to remember the thousands of Tamils who were massacred by Sinhala mobs backed by the government in power (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

Tamil enterprises faced looting and destruction, resulting in the displacement of thousands of Tamils due to the violence. Tamil political prisoners confined in Welikada jail were specifically targeted, as prison guards permitted Sinhala inmates to attack and kill them (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

¹ https://elections.gov.lk/en/download/download_circular_Gazette_E.html



Activist Sandya Ekneligoda spoke to the media, and other activists lighting lamps in remembrance of the victims of Black July at one of the commemoration events held in Colombo. Photo Courtesy: INFORM

2.4. MP Prasanna Ranthunga endorses the extrajudicial killings by police in parliament

Prasanna Ranatunga endorsed the extrajudicial killings of people by police and further said that the killing of individuals who are connected to the underworld and crimes needs to be supported by everyone (Chandrasena, 2024).

2.5. Parliamentarian Kavinga Jayawardena apologises in parliament for voting against the OSB

Samagi Jana Balawega (SJB) Member of Parliament Kavinda Jayawardena said that he is sorry for voting against the Online Safety Bill when it was presented to Parliament. He said that he had to vote against the bill based on the party's request and apologised to the Speaker (What News, 2024).

2.6. President addresses the topic of local government elections



People protesting to hold local government elections, near the Elections Secretariat in Colombo on June 8, 2023. Local governments did not happen despite two years delay. Courtesy: AFP

By addressing an event attended by former local government representatives President Ranil Wickremesinghe justified that the local government elections were postponed in order to prioritise the economic recovery of the country (Weeraratne, 2024).

2.7. Election monitors are alarmed by continuing polls-related violations

Rohana Hettiarachchi, the Executive Director of the People’s Action for Free & Fair Elections (PAFFREL), stated that the violation of election laws by politicians would not be possible without the assistance of state officials. He further stated that the Governors of the Uva, Northern, Wayamba, Sabaragamuwa, and North Central Provinces have been assigning candidates for the local government elections to different positions. He stated that they have been in discussions with their legal consultants (Kuruwita, 2024).

Manjula Gajanayake, the Executive Director of the Institute for Democratic Reforms and Electoral Studies (IRES), stated that the government has been misusing state funds for election campaigns (Kuruwita, 2024).

2.8. Lawyers Collective on the Twenty-Second Amendment to the Constitution Bill

After reviewing fundamental rights petitions that were filed challenging the efforts to postpone the presidential election, the Supreme Court emphatically dismissed any such efforts. The Lawyers Collective emphasised that reducing the maximum duration of the President's and Parliament's tenure is not at all urgent. The Lawyers Collective condemned the proposed Bill as a manoeuvre to distort the electoral process and urged all democratic entities to resist it (Sri Lanka Brief, 2024).

2.9. HRMI releases annual human rights scores on Sri Lanka

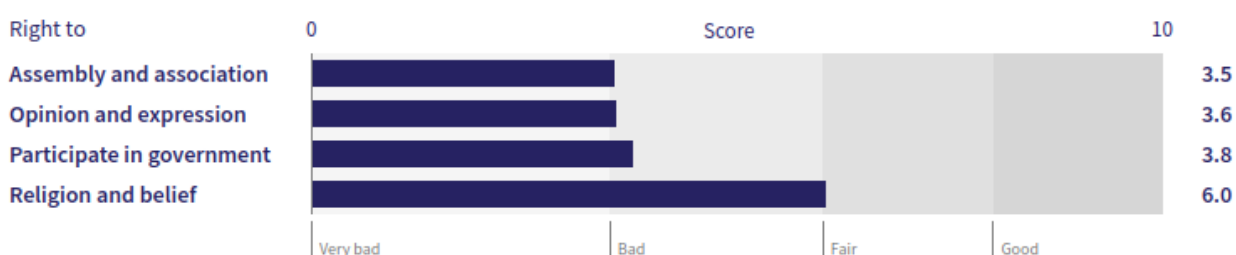
The Human Rights Measurement Initiative released its annual scores on Sri Lanka’s human rights situation. Summary scores relating to Safety from the State Rights (5.4), and Empowerment rights (3.4) in Sri Lanka are in “bad” and “very bad” ranges respectively. Sri Lanka reported scores in the “bad” range on Freedom from Torture and ill-treatment (4.1), Extrajudicial execution (6.1), and arbitrary arrest (4.7) under the Safety from the State Rights. Sri Lanka reported scores in the “very poor” range on Freedom of Assembly and Association (3.5), Opinion and Expression (3.6) and participation in government (3.8) under the Empowerment Rights (HRMI Rights Tracker, 2024).

Empowerment

Civil and Political Rights (2023)

Summary score **3.4**

How well is Sri Lanka's government respecting each right?



Scores on Empowerment Rights. Source: HRMI Rights Tracker

2.10. Disparaging comments made by religious leaders, nationalist groups and politicians targeting the LGBTQI+ community



Religious leaders, including Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, address the media conference titled “Degenerate and immoral LGBTQ Laws (decriminalisation of consenting same sex relationships) destroy civilised society” in the Colombo Archbishop House on July 25. Courtesy: UCAN

A wave of disparaging statements surged targeting the LGBTQI+ community while the presidential election is around the corner. These public statements were made by various groups and individuals such as nationalist politicians including Sarath Weerasekare and Wimal Weerawansa, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, Christian evangelical groups, and Buddhist monks. It was reported that a group named “Mothers’ Movement” staged a demonstration in Colombo in protest of the Private Member Bill which was intended to decriminalise consensual same-sex relations among adults, and a few other legal reforms that were proposed to protect the rights of the LGBTQI+ community. It was further revealed that this group is funded by an American evangelical network known for religious conversions (Lanka Leader, 2024; Lanka News Web, 2024; The Leader, 2024).

Former MP Mervin Silva made multiple statements to the media against the Bill presented to decriminalise consenting same-sex relations among adults. The chief incumbents of the Asgiriya and Malwathu chapters of Siyam Nikaya were visited by him to inform them about these proposed legal amendments and urged them to intervene to stop them immediately (Monara, 2024).

A letter denouncing the proposed Bill was reportedly sent to the presidents by the chief prelates of the three Buddhist sects. Reportedly this letter has stated this proposed Bill is immoral leading to social degradation (Aruna, 2024).

At a media briefing conducted in Colombo, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith denounced the legislative moves that aim to support the decriminalisation of consenting same-sex relations among adults. He further added that such legislative reforms are undermining traditional family values. Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith’s said remarks with regard to the rights of LGBTQI+ persons were a stark divergence from the more inclusive and empathetic attitude of Pope Francis, the supreme leadership of the Catholic Church (Lanka News Web, 2024). Not to be overlooked

are the dubious claims made by Cardinal Ranjith in 2018 that downplayed the importance of human rights by claiming that they are a Western concept that is not relevant to Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka Brief, 2024).

All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama also issued a statement declaring that they “vehemently condemn the legalisation of the practice of seeking sexual gratification through immoral means” in reference to proposed legislative moves that aim to decriminalise and provide legal protection to the LGBTQI+ community. In addition, this public statement urged the president to refrain from encouraging the ‘legalisation’ of same-sex relations that could bring about moral degradation (All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama, 2024).

In the background of these debates, there was an emerging trend of queerphobic media reporting. For example, “Aruna” Sinhala language newspaper ran a conspicuously queerphobia article concerning the Bill in question in which it said “We believe it is not necessary to pass laws to grant legal recognition of homosexuality’ (Aruna, 2024)

3. Case Updates

3.1. Two FR petitions filed in an alleged attempt to postpone the election

The Supreme Court dismissed² a fundamental rights petition filed by a lawyer named Aruna Laksiri, seeking an order to prevent the presidential elections from being held (Abeyasinghe & Perera, 2024). It was requested in his petition to postpone the presidential election as the 19th amendment to the Constitution is yet to be properly passed in Parliament (Newswire, 2024). A businessman named Chamindra Lenawa filed a fundamental right petition before the Supreme Court requesting an interpretation of the tenure of the current President in accordance with the Constitution (The Island, 2024).

3.2. Sri Lanka SC barred convicted torturer Deshabandu Thennakoon from functioning as IGP

The Supreme Court decided to hear nine fundamental rights petitions that were filed challenging the appointment of Senior Deputy Inspector General of Police Deshabandu Tennakoon as Inspector General of Police³ and issued an interim restraining order preventing him from acting as Inspector General of Police till the hearing of those petitions (Sri Lanka Brief, 2024). The said cases had been fixed for hearing on 11th November, 2024, with the consent of all parties including the Attorney General and all counsel (Sri Lanka Brief, 2024). The Supreme Court ordered President Ranil Wickremesinghe to name a suitable person for the post of IGP during the period the interim order is in effect (What News, 2024).



Despite the Supreme Court having ruled Deshabandu Tennakoon guilty of torturing a detainee, he was appointed as the IGP. The newly appointed IGP visited several leading Buddhist temples around the country seeking blessings from the Sangha, in February 2024 (left). On July 30, Buddhist monks held a protest in Colombo, demanding continued service of the IGP (Right). Courtesy: Divaina

²The decision was made in response to a resolution presented by President Ranil Wickremasinghe himself to the Council of Ministers, which called for an amendment to Article 83(b) of the Constitution with a reform bill to address an alleged inconsistency on the president's term of office and allow for a possible extension from five to six years.

³ President Ranil Wickremesinghe appointed Tennakoon as Sri Lanka's 36th IGP on February 26 after the Constitutional Council (CC) cleared the official who along with three other police officers were asked by the Supreme Court to compensate 2 million rupees in a fundamental rights case last year.

Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, making a special statement in Parliament, stated that the court has no power to suspend the office of the Inspector General of Police. The Prime Minister said that there is no legal provision to order the President to appoint a new IGP to oversee the work⁴ (Lanka C News, 2024).

The Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) firmly denounced the actions taken by the government to undermine the judicial process concerning the interim orders issued by the Supreme Court regarding the appointment of Inspector General of Police, Deshabandu Tennakoon. The assertion that the Supreme Court lacks the authority to challenge appointments made by the President, which have received approval from the Constitutional Council, is, according to the BASL, entirely indefensible (Sri Lanka Brief, 2024).

The Union of Young Journalists stated that the cabinet's decision to take two days to study the interim order given by the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka preventing Deshbandhu Tennakoon from working as the Inspector General of Police is an undermining of the law and the judicial system of Sri Lanka. It was further indicated in the announcement that without further threatening the supremacy of the country's law, immediately appoint a suitable person as acting police officer and if the government tries to act arbitrarily without doing so, it will not hesitate to take all possible measures within the framework of the law (What News, 2024).

3.3. Mahindananda Aluthgamage's carrom board corruption case

The case filed against former minister Mahindananda Aluthgamage and current trade minister and then chairman of Sathosa Naleen Fernando was called, where they were accused of causing a loss of nearly 53 million rupees to the government through the purchase of 14000 carrom boards through Sathosa to be distributed among sports associations during the 2015 presidential election (srilankanews.lk, 2024).

The case filed by the Bribery Commission was called before the three-member High Court bench of Amal Ranaraja, Pradeep Hettiarachi and Mahen Weeraman (What News, 2024). Case was postponed to 23rd August, and the court decided to call defence witnesses (Ada Derana, 2024).

3.4. FR case for not appointing Court of Appeal judges

A fundamental rights petition was filed claiming that the President and the Constituent Assembly had infringed fundamental rights by not appointing judges to the appellate court slots that are now unfilled. The Supreme Court granted permission to hear the petition (What News, 2024).

3.5. Supreme Court declares Economic Transformation Bill is inconsistent with the constitution

The Supreme Court's ruling regarding the Economic Transformation Bill presented in Parliament disclosed that the Supreme Court identified multiple provisions within the proposed legislation as being inconsistent with the constitution (Sri Lanka Brief, 2024).

3.6. Supreme Court issues an interim injunction preventing the implementation of Community Advisory Committees

⁴ He further said that the court has no authority to intervene in the affairs of the parliament or to issue orders and therefore the injunction issued by the court regarding the appointment of the Inspector General of Police is not valid.

The Supreme Court issued an interim injunction prohibiting the execution of Community Advisory Committees (CAC)⁵, which were designated to carry out government development programs aimed at rural areas (Sri Lanka Brief, 2024).

Various stakeholders expressed apprehensions regarding the formation of Community Advisory Councils (CACs), with numerous individuals claiming that the government was pursuing this initiative to gain an advantage in the forthcoming Presidential Election (Sri Lanka Brief, 2024).

3.7. Nuwara Eliya Magistrate orders to arrest Minister Jeewan Thondaman

The Nuwara Eliya Acting Magistrate Jayamini Ambagahawatta ordered the Nuwara Eliya Police to arrest several suspects, including the Secretary General of the Ceylon Labor Congress and Minister of Estates Infrastructure and Water Transport Jeevan Thondaman, and present them to court for forcibly entering into the Nuwara Eliya Pedro Tea Factory belonging to the Kelani Weli Estate Company and acted in violation of the Penal Code (Xposure, 2024).

⁵ President Ranil Wickremesinghe ordered the establishment of Community Advisory Committees to oversee development initiatives and programs carried out in rural areas.

4. Repression of Media and Journalists

4.1. Jaffna-based Tamil Journalist faces an arson attack

Jaffna-based senior journalist Tambithurai Partheepan suffered an arson attack as his residence was torched and his vehicles were vandalised in Achuveli, Jaffna. It was reported that five unidentified individuals were involved in this attack (Ceylon News, 2024; Lanka Files, 2024).



Partheepan's residence being torched. Photo courtesy: Ceylon News

5. Repression of Freedom of Assembly

5.1. Moratuwa police obstructs PSA's distribution of leaflets

The second day of the pamphlet distribution program which started from Moratuwa under the theme of 'People's Struggle Alliance - with the people' started on July 7 was obstructed by the Moratuwa police (What News, 2024).



Police obstructed activists who were distributing the leaflets. Courtesy: whatnews.lk

5.2. Court orders against a group of protestors

Two courts issued orders against a group of protestors including several trade unionists, and several politicians. These orders were issued by the Fort Magistrate Court and the Maligakanda Magistrate Court. According to reports, this protest was organised by the All Ceylon Agrarian Federation, Conservation Centre for Milk Farmers, and joint trade unions (What News, 2024).

6. Repression of Activists and Whistleblowers

6.1. Lionel Wendt management discriminates against Tamil-speakers

Political cartoonist Pradeep took to his X to share the incident of how one of his friends and himself who helped to set up an exhibition related to Sri Lanka's truth and justice process at Lionel Wendt were subjected to discriminatory comments from its staff. He said that the security and staff were making disparaging racist comments. It was also said that the manager of the establishment had made things unnecessarily inconvenient for them (Pradeep, 2024).

6.2. TID summons the Coordinator of the Association for Relatives of the Enforced Disappeared in Batticaloa



Amalaraj Amalanayaki speaks about how she was interrogated by the TID. Courtesy: Lanka Files⁶

Amalaraj Amalanayaki, the Coordinator of the Association for Relatives of the Enforced Disappeared in Batticaloa District, was called in for questioning by the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) (Kumanan, 2024; Tamil Guardian, 2024).

The UN High Commission for Human Rights Office published a report earlier this year describing the abuses faced by the Tamil families of the disappeared.

The same TID had summoned seven Tamil political activists in the Northeast for interrogation over the past three months, and it seems to be a reflection of the state's continued repression of the rights of the people in the North and East (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SrsBmswj_k

6.3. Shooting in Mullaitivu seriously injures agricultural labourer activist

The secretary of the Kammakkara organisation, which works for the rights of agricultural labourers, Chelliah Krishnarajah, 42, was hurt in the shooting that took place in the Mullaitivu district's Thunukkai area.

Approximately at 3 AM, a contingent of unidentified assailants approached and opened fire on him. He was promptly taken to Mallavi Hospital and, due to the severity of his injuries, was later transferred to Kilinochchi District Hospital for further treatment.

7. Repression of State Officials

7.1. Police attack on customs administration officer

A spokesperson of the Kalutara Teaching Hospital said that an administrative officer of the Department of Customs, who was participating in an environmental conservation activity at the Kalutara beach, was assaulted by the police and hospitalised (Pothupitiya, 2024).

7.2. RDA Chairperson resigns due to pressure from the Secretary of the Ministry

C.P. Athaluwage who served as the Chairman of the Road Development Authority resigned from that post. In a letter to the President's Secretary, he informed that the decision was made based on the arbitrary pressure exerted by the Secretary of the Ministry of Highways (Lanka C News, 2024).

8. Repressive Legal and Policy Action

8.1. Amendments to the OSB have been gazetted

The Cabinet of Ministers approved an amendment to the Online Safety Bill to gazette and table in parliament (Xposure, 2024). Despite the widespread criticism, the Online Safety Act, No. 9 of 2024 was passed in January this year, and it happened in a context where civil society activists and organisations repeatedly warned about the far-reaching negative impact of this bill on civil liberties and rights⁷ (Tamil Guardian, 2024).

8.2. Gazette has been issued making several public services essential

A special gazette notification⁸ was issued making the supply of electricity and petroleum essential services. In Sri Lanka, this has been a common practice by the government to prevent trade union actions enabled by trade unions related to said services (Lanka C News, 2024).

8.3. Armed forces are being called up to maintain the Public Security Ordinance

The President issued a special order⁹ to call the armed forces for the security of the country. The decision was made according to the powers assigned by Section 12 of the Public Security Act which is the 40th authority.

⁷ In May this year, the Commander of Sri Lanka's Army Vikum Liyanage filed legal action against an individual under the newly legislated act, after a social media post accused him of war crimes and corruption.

⁸ http://documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2024/7/2392-53_E.pdf

⁹ http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2024/7/2394-02_E.pdf

9. Other

9.1. TID summons the priest of Vedukkunaari Aathi Lingeswarar Hindu temple



A group of nationalist monks accompanied by a group of military soldiers visited the Hindu Temple in February 2024, sending a warning to Hindu devotees. Courtesy: Tamil Guardian

The Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) summoned Mathimuharasa, the priest of Vedukkunaari Aathi Lingeswarar temple in Vavuniya for interrogation. Reportedly, he was questioned about temple-related issues (Satkunanathan, 2024; Tamilwin, 2024). Vedukkunaari Aathi Lingeswarar temple is a sacred site where both Buddhist and Hindu devotees make contested claims over their ownership. The Department of Archaeology claims it is a Buddhist archaeological treasure named Vaddamana Pabbathaya Vihara (CPA, 2024). The former Human Rights Commissioner Satkunanathan questioned, “How is conflict related to the religious space within the purview of TID?” (Satkunanathan, 2024). It seems that TID attempted to intimidate Hindu devotees and religious leaders who claim ownership of the site.

9.2. Police arrest a young individual over video recording the vehicle entourage of a government politician

The Kollupitiya police arrested a 21-year-old Muslim youth who took a video from his mobile phone of the convoy in which the President's Senior Advisor and Chief of Staff Sagala Ratnayake was travelling. According to police sources, the suspected individual had come to the Dubai Embassy with a 44-year-old resident of Pottuvil and had not seen a VIP convoy travelling under police protection before, so he stated during questioning that he had taken the video (Xposure, 2024).

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