

Human Rights Situation in Sri Lanka

February 2025



Media organizations, trade unions, and civil groups protesting in front of the Attorney General's Department opposing the arbitrary decision to release suspects in Lasantha Wickrematunge's murder case. Source: Lanka e News.

Human Rights Situation in Sri Lanka in February 2025.

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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

Extrajudicial Killings : The shooting incident in Kotahena has ignited significant controversy and raised alarms regarding extrajudicial killings in Sri Lanka, as two suspects in police custody have died.

Recent investigations have brought to light extensive police misconduct and brutality, revealing entrenched corruption, violations of human rights, and a significant absence of accountability within law enforcement. Incidents reported nationwide illustrate occurrences of torture, sexual harassment, abuse of authority, and even fatalities occurring in police custody.

The Matara Magistrate's Court has ordered the arrest of former Police Inspector General Deshabandu Tennakoon and seven others suspected of involvement in a shooting incident outside a hotel in Matara.

Court Shooting in Aluthkade Court Complex: Underworld figure Sanjeewa Kumara Samararatne, alias 'Ganemulla Sanjeewa', was shot dead during legal proceedings in Colombo. He was detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and transferred to Boossa Prison. Video footage circulating on social media raised serious concerns as police officers and prison officials appeared hesitant to assist the wounded Sanjeewa, delaying medical intervention.

Police Misconduct and Brutality: The Vavuniya High Court sentenced ex-SDIG Lalith Jayasinghe to four years in prison for aiding a suspect's escape in the 2015 gang rape and murder case of 18-year-old schoolgirl Sivaloganathan Vidya.

Rights of Vulnerable Groups: The Cabinet spokesman, Nalinda Jayatissa, announced that the government has sanctioned the operation of temporary care homes managed by the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs across ten districts.

The Women Parliamentarians' Caucus recently held a meeting focusing on eliminating workplace sexual harassment and addressing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). The discussions shaped an Action Plan for the caucus. The caucus also discussed increasing women's representation to 25% at provincial level, considering amendments to existing laws,

and engaging political parties to push for greater female representation in local government bodies.

US agency NCMEC has filed a complaint against Sri Lankan children's internet uploads of inappropriate photos and videos, according to the Child and Women Abuse Prevention Unit. LGBTIQ activists in Sri Lanka have called for legal reforms to decriminalize same-sex relationships among consenting adult women, following a 2022 UN statement stating that such practices contravene the CEDAW treaty, prompting the government to implement necessary reforms.

Prisoners' rights activists are concerned about potential involvement of Prisons Department officials in the murder of Sanjeewa Kumara Samararatne, a suspected drug trafficker in remand custody in Colombo.

Nationalist organizations strongly oppose the government's decision to grant refugee status to Rohingyas from Myanmar. They have urged the government to repatriate recent arrivals of Rohingyas in northern Sri Lanka back to Myanmar.

Key recommendations made by the HRCSL included verifying the refugees' status and risks of persecution, enhancing government support for their basic needs, granting UNHCR access to registration and assistance despite its limited presence in Sri Lanka, and relocating the asylum seekers from the Mullaitivu Air Force Camp to a more suitable facility, ensuring better security, nutrition, and care, especially for children.

The Lanka Estate Services Association claimed that three government estate companies have not paid over 500 million rupees in employee provident funds, service trust funds, and gratuities since 2001, affecting estate workers, staff, and executives.

National People's Power MP Sugath Wasantha de Silva submitted a motion to adjourn the house through a note composed in Braille, representing a significant milestone in the parliamentary history of Sri Lanka. MP de Silva, a visually impaired individual, emphasized the significance of inclusivity in governance and advocated for a rights-based welfare empowerment program to enhance the lives of disabled individuals.

A key initiative suggested to enhance disability rights is the creation of an autonomous commission focused on addressing the issues faced by individuals with disabilities.

Legal Amendments and Reforms: A comprehensive law focused on national security and the prevention of terrorism is scheduled to be introduced after the amendment of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The Cabinet of Ministers authorized the formation of a committee led by President's Counsel Rienzie Arsekularatne, tasked with proposing suitable resolutions to enhance the amendments to the draft Bill concerning the prevention of terrorism.

The Government has reinforced its counterterrorism measures by issuing an extraordinary gazette banning 15 terrorist organizations, including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and freezing their financial assets. The Ministry of Defense also published a list of 222 individuals linked to terrorism.

The government has planned to introduce legislation allowing witnesses to provide online statements in court.

The Attorney General has announced plans to introduce amendments to the Online Security Act in response to four fundamental rights petitions.

The Ministry of Labor has launched a thorough review of current labor laws to update and modernize outdated provisions.

The Government has decided to establish an Independent Prosecutor's Office. The Government clarified that the Attorney General's Department would not be abolished. Instead, the Independent Prosecutor's Office would function alongside it to enhance prosecutorial independence and efficiency, addressing concerns about the AG's dual role as legal advisor to the government and prosecutor in criminal cases.

Saroja Savithri Paulraj, Minister of Women and Child Affairs, presented the country's progress since submitting its 9th periodic report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The launch of the Multi-sectoral National Action Plan for 2024-2028 aims to combat Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and online gender-based violence, highlighting the need for urgent action.

In addition, CEDAW urged Sri Lanka to criminalize marital rape under Sri Lanka law. Also urged the removal of the Ministry of Defense clearance requirement for NGOs and said it is seen as a barrier to civil society participation.

The Cabinet of Ministers has approved an amendment to the Personal Data Protection Act, extending its enforcement date by six months.

According to Commissioner Gamini B. Dissanayake, the court directed the Prisons Department to produce the deceased in two cases and initiate a Departmental inquiry under an Assistant Prisons Superintendent. In this context, the Ministry of Defence has directed the Department of Prisons to enhance jamming technology in order to combat drug trafficking and organized crime

within correctional institutions.

Repression of Freedom of Assembly: Tamil political parties and organizations have defied court orders to stage protests for land rights against the alleged construction of Tissa Maha Viharaya on lands rightfully belonging to Tamil people in Jaffna. This act of defiance led to a summons for Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, MP, who had led the protest, for contempt of court. The judiciary has played a key role in facilitating the suppression of protests.

State mechanisms have also targeted individuals expressing dissent through other forms of protest, including cultural expression.

Former Public Security Minister Sarath Weerasekera has called for the arrest of Tamil university students who protested against the hoisting of black flags on Sri Lanka's Independence Day. Victims of the Aragalaya (People's Movement) have demanded the Government to review all pending cases, including arrests, torture, prosecutions, and travel bans. They also requested the Attorney General to review Magistrate's Court and High Court cases initiated during the protests, within six months.

Relatives of the disappeared in Kilinochchi urged public support for the anti-Independence Day protest, arguing that independence celebrations are meaningless as political prisoners remain incarcerated and land grabbing persists.

Eight years of roadside protests have been held in Kilinochchi by Tamil families seeking their relatives who were allegedly forcibly disappeared by security forces.

Tamil families of the disappeared in Vavuniya have been protesting for 3,000 days, calling for international intervention and displaying photos of their loved ones.

The Teacher Principals' Association has protested against the Ministry of Education, requesting that the remaining two-thirds of the teacher-principal salary discrepancy be addressed in the new budget.

The nursing service's overtime rate has been reduced from 1/160 to 1/200 of monthly salary, causing one nursing officer to take on the work of three. This results in a monthly loss of Rs. 6,500 for entry-level officers, prompting calls for demonstrations in public hospitals.

Students at the University of Jaffna protested against Independence Day celebrations, declaring it a 'Black Day' and demanding the end of Tamil occupation and answers for surrendered Tamils. They replaced Sri Lanka's national flag with a black one.

The Medical Faculty Students' Action Committee has given the Government two weeks to clarify its stance on private medical colleges and repeal related Cabinet decisions following a protest in Colombo.

Sri Lankan authorities canceled an environmental impact assessment for a proposed mineral sand mining project in Mannar due to significant resistance from the local Tamil community.

Reconciliation and Accountability: Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath reiterated the country's commitment to human rights, reconciliation, and sustainable development at the 58th UNHRC session in Geneva. The Minister proposed initiatives to improve domestic institutions, including the Office for Missing Persons, Reparations, and National Unity and Reconciliation, and established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

TGTE Prime Minister Rudrakumaran has urged the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to demand that the Sri Lankan State disclose the list of LTTE surrendered members.

Sri Lanka Red Cross Society pledges technical assistance and capacity-building support to the Office on Missing Persons, according to the President's Media Division. Severine Chappaz, ICRC Head, discussed continued assistance for the government's policy framework.

The human rights issue of Tamil political prisoners in Sri Lanka persists, with calls for their release through Presidential Amnesty. Arasu Party MP Sritharan's parliamentary question on Tamil political prisoners emphasized their long-term detention without due process.

Human skeletal remains were discovered again near the Chemmani mass grave.

Archaeologist Professor Raj Somadeva announced that the excavations conducted at the mass graves located at Colombo Port have revealed the remains of 16 individuals, which include the skeletons of two young children.

The Attorney General has paid Rs. 245 million to victims of the Easter Sunday terror attacks, following a Supreme Court order regarding their Fundamental Rights petitions.

Press Freedom and Accountability for Crimes against Journalists: Journalist Shanmugam Thavaseelan was assaulted during an investigation into illegal sand mining in Mullaitivu District, leading Tamil journalists to condemn the incident and urge Sri Lanka's media minister to take action.

The Moratuwa Magistrate acquitted Wijeya Newspapers Ltd. journalist Rekha Tharangani Fonseka of taking photographs in the courtroom. The seven-year case was deemed unfounded due to police failure to provide evidence.

Press Freedom and Accountability for Crimes against Journalists: Journalist Shanmugam Thavaseelan was assaulted during an investigation into illegal sand mining in Mullaitivu District.

Tamil journalists condemned the incident and called for action from media minister Nalinda Jayatissa, arguing it was part of a larger trend. They have also contended these incidents to be seen as part of a larger trend of violence and intimidation targeting journalists in the North-East. The court acquitted Wijeya Newspapers Ltd. journalist Rekha Tharangani Fonseka of taking photographs in courtroom defiance, after seven years of a lengthy case.

AG Parinda Ranasinghe informed the Director CID that the prosecution will not pursue further legal action against three suspects in connection with magisterial inquiry case B/92/2009 of the murder of Lasantha Wickrematunge. The AG instructed the CID Director to report on the court action within 14 days, citing lack of evidence.

Sri Lankan authorities interrogated Tamil journalists Kandasamy Bharathan and Thambithurai Pratheepan for six hours over a Facebook post allegedly promoting the destruction of Tissa Vihara, a controversial Buddhist temple.

Colombo High Court Judge Manjula Thilakaratne has ordered the court registrar to present a report on the investigation into Facebook posts by journalists Poddala Jayantha and Sanath Balasuriya.

Land Rights: Forest Department officials attacked residents of Kattumurivu, Batticaloa, causing a violent attack that set fire to their homes. Officials have claimed jurisdiction over a village, intimidated and assaulted locals, and set fire to their homes, demanding immediate evacuation. The construction of Tissa Viharaya, a Buddhist temple located in Jaffna, has been a subject of continuous controversy, as it is claimed to have been built unlawfully on privately owned Tamil land. This situation has sparked significant protests, political discussions, and involvement from the government.

Jaffna District Secretary Maruthalingam Pratheepan Sri Lanka's military and police are occupying over 2,500 acres of private Tamil land, preventing displaced families from returning home and occupying 2,624 acres of previously designated 'High Security Zones'.

The Deputy Minister of Defense stated plans to release essential lands occupied by security forces, raising concerns about selective and minimal land releases, while large portions of Tamil land remain under state control.

Other: The Local Authorities Elections (Special Provisions) Act No. 01 of 2025 has confirmed that the term of office for Municipal Councils, Urban Councils, and Pradeshiya Sabhas will begin on June 2, 2025.

The Ministry of Justice addressed the serious situation at the Magistrate's Court, stating plans to engage stakeholders to ensure the safety of judges, lawyers, and citizens.

The Coalition Against Partition of Sri Lanka (CAPSL) protested against U.S. Envoy Julie Chung, accusing her of breaching diplomatic protocols and using USAID funds to threaten Sri Lanka's sovereignty

2. Extrajudicial Killings

Custodial deaths and encounter deaths are two common modes that extrajudicial killings happen in Sri Lanka, that has been continuing for many years. Below is a quote from a report by the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL).

“An ‘encounter death’ refers to the extra-judicial, deliberate killing of a person, outside of any legal framework, by a police officer(s). Based on the complaints received and inquiries held by it, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) observed a total of twenty-four cases of custodial deaths and thirteen cases of encounter deaths involving Sri Lanka Police during the period between January 2020 and August 2023. Six custodial deaths and two encounter deaths took place during the first six months of 2023.”

HRCSL(2023), [\[Draft\] General Guidelines and Recommendations to Sri Lanka Police on Preventing Custodial and Encounter Deaths](#)

The recent deaths of two suspects in police custody following the Kotahena shooting incident have sparked widespread controversy and concerns over extrajudicial killings in Sri Lanka. According to police reports, the two individuals were arrested after allegedly killing 38-year-old Shashi Kumar inside a mobile phone shop in Kotahena. The suspects were apprehended by officers while attempting to flee the crime scene on a motorcycle, and both the motorcycle and the firearm used in the murder were seized by the police (Daily News, 2025; The Morning, 2025; Withanage, 2025).

According to official statements, the suspects later provided information about hidden weapons, leading officers to take them to the location to recover the firearms. However, during this operation, police claim the suspects attempted to snatch an officer’s firearm and open fire, forcing law enforcement to retaliate in self-defense. Both suspects were shot and later succumbed to their injuries at the Colombo National Hospital. A police constable was also injured during the incident (Colombo Gazette, 2025; Dinamina, 2025; Suriyaarachchi & Jayasinghe, 2025).

Despite the police’s justification of the shootings as self-defense, concerns have been raised by the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) and human rights organizations regarding the

legitimacy of these actions. The BASL strongly condemned the incident, asserting that extrajudicial killings cannot be a solution to crime. They emphasized that law enforcement authorities must adhere to the rule of law and called for an independent and impartial investigation into the deaths (Sooriyagoda, 2025; The Island, 2025). Patterns of similar custodial deaths, where suspects are taken to undisclosed locations and subsequently killed, have been widely reported, leading to allegations of extrajudicial executions, and contributing to a culture of impunity within law enforcement agencies (SLCAT, 2025). The BASL has also stressed the need for police accountability and legal reform to curb the ongoing trend of custodial killings (The Island, 2025).

3. Police Misconduct and Brutality

Recent reports have highlighted widespread police misconduct and brutality, exposing deep-rooted corruption, human rights violations, and a lack of accountability within law enforcement agencies. Cases across the country reveal instances of torture, sexual harassment, abuse of power, and even deaths in police custody.



At a press conference organized by Jaffna Press Club, Nandakumar Illankeshwaran details how he was assaulted and tortured by the Police. Photo Courtesy: Tamil Guardian.

Nandakumar Illankeshwaran, a Tamil youth from Jaffna, has filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka after being tortured by police. He suffered severe injuries to his left arm and is now unable to work. This resulted in Nellyyadi police and the Superintendent of Police being called for an inquiry in March (Tamil Guardian, 2025; Tamilwin, 2025).

A 24-year-old father, R.M. Samitha Dilshan, died after being released on bail after being brutally assaulted by Wadduwa Police. Protests led to a high-level investigation, arrests of four police constables, and a complaint from his wife, who claimed he was beaten to death by the police (Balasuriya, 2025; Premathilaka, 2025).

The Supreme Court ruled that Anuradhapura Police officers violated fundamental rights by brutally torturing Sachitta Prabath Wijeratne for theft. The two guilty officers were ordered to pay compensation and cover court costs (Medagedara, 2025).

Police Child and Women Abuse Investigation Bureau investigates allegations of sexual harassment within the force, involving female officers and civilians. Complaints include inappropriate physical contact, verbal harassment, and sexual assault. One notable case involved the OIC of Medirigiriya Police, who was arrested for sexually assaulting a female officer (Samarakoon & Salwathura, 2025).

A police officer in Mullaitivu was arrested for sexually harassing schoolgirls, highlighting police impunity in sexual violence against vulnerable Tamil women, often unreported due to fear of retaliation (Tamil Guardian, 2025; Tamilwin, 2025).

Two intoxicated police officers brutally assaulted a businessman in Eravur, Batticaloa, causing serious injuries. Despite attempts to flee, they were identified as members of the Eravur Police Court Division and have since initiated legal proceedings (Tamil Guardian, 2025; Tamilwin, 2025).

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka has fined and ordered legal action against six officers from Ipalogama Police Station for violating the rights of a female victim. The woman had reported an incident in which her estranged husband and three others had assaulted and sexually harassed her. Instead of taking action against the perpetrators, the police allegedly colluded with the husband, accepting a bribe and detaining the victim instead. Officers further humiliated her by allowing the husband to take videos and upload them to social media. HRCSL ruled that the officers had violated multiple constitutional rights and ordered the IGP to conduct special training for police officers handling cases of women and children (The Island Online, 2025).

A Sub-Inspector and his wife have been arrested for assisting a suspect in an attempted murder case in Koggala, Ambalantota. The suspect, assisted by the SI and his wife, evaded arrest after attempting to kill a man, and has been handed over to Ambalantota Police for further investigation (Jayasekara, 2025).

Four police officers, including the Weeraketiya Police Officer-in-Charge, have been ordered to be interdicted following allegations of torture against Dilshan Madhusankha, who was detained for six days (Daily News,2025; Tamil Guardian,2025).

Acting Inspector General of Police Priyantha Weerasooriya has initiated conducting surprise inspections of police stations to identify corruption, including manipulation of crime statistics, falsified complaint records, and high-ranking officers possessing wealth beyond legal earnings (Weerasinghe, 2025).

The Vavuniya High Court sentenced ex-SDIG Lalith Jayasinghe to four years in prison for aiding a suspect's escape in the 2015 gang rape and murder case of 18-year-old schoolgirl Sivaloganathan Vidya. The court ruled the prosecution's allegations were proven beyond reasonable doubt, and issued open warrants for Sri Gajan, a former Sub-Inspector implicated in the suspect's escape (Daily Mirror, 2025; The Island, 2025).

The primary suspect, known as 'Swiss Kumar', was initially captured by local residents and handed over to the police, but he later escaped custody and fled to Colombo before being recaptured and returned to Jaffna. Investigations revealed that Jayasinghe had played a direct role in facilitating his escape, exacerbating public anger and deepening distrust in the Sri Lankan law enforcement system (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

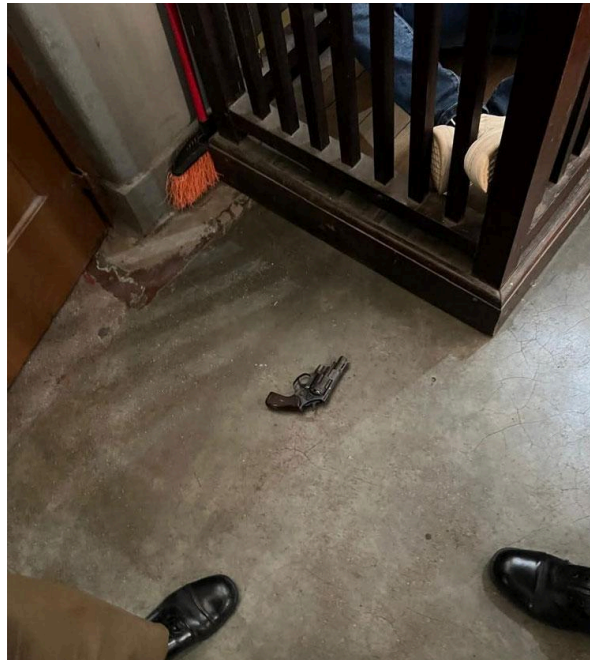
In 2017, a tribunal sentenced seven men, including Swiss Kumar, to death for Vidya's rape and murder. Jayasinghe's conviction is a rare case of a high-ranking Sri Lankan police official being held accountable for aiding criminals. This is Jayasinghe's second conviction; he previously received four years in prison for trying to protect a former state minister linked to a double murder in Kahawatta. He is reportedly appealing that sentence (Padmasiri, 2025).

The Matara Magistrate's Court has issued an order for the arrest of former Inspector General of Police Deshabandu Tennakoon, along with seven other individuals believed to be accountable for the shooting incident that occurred outside the W15 Hotel in Weligama, Matara in 2023 (The Island Online, 2025).

4. Court Shooting in Aluthkade Court Complex

Notorious underworld figure Sanjeewa Kumara Samararatne, alias 'Ganemulla Sanjeewa', was shot dead inside the Hulftsdorp Court Complex when he was presented before the Colombo Magistrate's Court for ongoing legal proceedings on February 19th. Authorities had previously detained him under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) before transferring him to Boossa Prison (Balasuriya, Randunu & Palihawadana, 2025). According to police reports, the gunman, disguised as a lawyer, opened fire at Sanjeewa while he was inside the accused dock (Farzan, 2025; Newswire, 2025; Times Online, 2025).

Video footage circulating on social media raised serious concerns as police officers and prison officials appeared hesitant to assist the wounded Sanjeewa, delaying medical intervention. Social media users criticized the lack of availability of emergency medical equipment, such as stretchers or defibrillators, within the court premises (Newswire; 2025).



Underworld figure Ganemulla Sanjeewa being shot dead inside a witness stand at the Colombo Hulftsdorp Court Complex. Photo Courtesy: Daily Mirror Online.

The Colombo Crimes Division (CCD) launched an investigation following the incident, while the Department of Prisons confirmed that Sanjeewa had been brought to court under a valid production order. Authorities identified the shooter as a former Special Forces deserter with ties to criminal syndicates (Divaina, Randunu & Palihawadana). SSP Buddhika Manatunga acknowledged security lapses in the case, citing a lack of searches for lawyers and a focus on protecting the judge (Randunu & Palihawadana; 2025).

Attorney-at-Law Senaka Perera, Executive Director of the Prisoners' Rights Protection Committee, requested an immediate report on the security officers protecting the premises. He urged the government to investigate the officers' duties. Perera stated that detainee security needs stricter measures and expressed concerns about political interference in law enforcement (Imbulana & Navodya, 2025).

5. Rights of Vulnerable Groups

5.1 Women's Rights and Welfare

The Cabinet spokesman, Nalinda Jayatissa, announced that the government has sanctioned the operation of temporary care homes managed by the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs across ten districts. The speaker emphasized the need for the government to provide temporary assistance to women and their children who are victims of harassment due to gender-based inequalities (Samarawickrama, 2025; Udagedara, 2025).

The Women Parliamentarians' Caucus recently held a meeting focusing on eliminating workplace sexual harassment and addressing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). The discussions shaped an Action Plan for the Caucus, chaired by Prime Minister Dr. Harini Amarasuriya and Minister of Women and Child Affairs Saroja Savitri Paulraj (The Island Online, 2025). The caucus discussed increasing women's representation to 25% at provincial level, considering amendments to existing laws, and engaging political parties to push for greater female representation in local government bodies (The Morning, 2025).



Deputy Co-Chairpersons of the Caucus SJB MP Chamindrani Kiriella and NPP MP Samanmali Gunasinghe at the caucus meeting. Photo Credit: The Island Online.

5.2 Child Rights

The US government's NCMEC agency, which works for children, has filed a complaint alleging that inappropriate photos and videos of Sri Lankan children have been uploaded to the internet. The Child and Women Abuse Prevention Unit informed the Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court that the company in question has filed several complaints (Tamilwin, 2025).

5.3 LGBTIQ+ Rights

A group of activists lobbying for LGBTIQ rights urged the government to make necessary legal reforms to decriminalize same-sex relationships between consenting adult women in Sri Lanka, as stated by the NPP policies to improve the welfare of the LGBTIQ community. This conversation was prompted by the 2022 statement from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) under the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR), which indicated that the criminalization of consensual same-sex relationships among adult women in Sri Lanka contravened the CEDAW treaty. The Government of Sri Lanka was consequently encouraged to implement the required legal reforms (Kariyakarawana, 2025).

5.4 Prisoners' Rights

The Committee for Protecting the Rights of Prisoners (CPRP) expressed apprehensions regarding the possible involvement of specific officials from the Prisons Department in the murder of Sanjeewa Kumara Samararatne, also known as 'Ganemulla Sanjeewa,' who was a suspect in organized crime and drug trafficking and was in remand custody at the time of his murder inside a courtroom in Colombo. CPRP Chairperson Senaka Perera raised further inquiries regarding the rationale behind bringing the deceased suspect to court, particularly in relation to the standard procedure for extending the duration of the suspect's remand (Jayakody & Tennekoon, 2025).

5.5 Rohingya¹ Refugees

Nationalist organizations strongly oppose the government's decision to grant refugee status to Rohingyas from Myanmar. These groups have written an open letter to Minister of Public

¹ The Rohingya are a stateless ethnic minority from Myanmar and refugees are often escapees of the Rohingya genocide and the ongoing conflict in the country.

Security and Parliamentary Affairs Ananda Wijepala, urging the government to repatriate recent arrivals of Rohingyas in northern Sri Lanka back to Myanmar (The Island Online, 2025).

They further highlighted Sri Lanka is gradually crawling out of a crisis that was officially declared as an economic bankruptcy. The government faces a significant challenge in prioritizing the resolution of issues affecting its citizens. Since 2021, there have been 121,000 Sri Lankans displaced due to natural disasters, in addition to 11,000 refugees from a 30-year armed conflict who remain in refugee camps without resettlement. It is imperative for the Sri Lankan government to tackle these pressing issues as a priority (The Island Online, 2025).

Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath's office stated that Sri Lanka will continue to hold the Rohingya refugees who arrived in December in its care until they can be relocated to a country willing to grant them at least temporary citizenship (Weerasinghe, 2025).

Key recommendations made by the HRCSL at the initial meeting with the Department of Immigration and Emigration included verifying the refugees' status and risks of persecution, enhancing government support for their basic needs, granting UNHCR access to registration and assistance despite its limited presence in Sri Lanka, and relocating the asylum seekers from the Mullaitivu Air Force Camp to a more suitable facility, ensuring better security, nutrition, and care, especially for children (HRCSL, 2025; Weerasinghe, 2025). The Department of Immigration and Emigration failed to implement these recommendations nearly a month after the meeting. Further recommendations were made by the HRCSL for efficient aid distribution, access to child protection and mental health experts, increased safety measures for female refugees, and adequate sanitation facilities (Weerasinghe, 2025).

5.6 Labour Rights

The Lanka Estate Services Association alleged that three government estate companies have not paid more than 500 million rupees in employee provident funds, service trust funds and gratuities. It was emphasized that this situation has existed since 2001 regarding the Employees' Provident Fund, the Employees' Trust Fund, and the service gratuity payments payable to all three sectors - estate workers, staff and executives (Fernando, 2025).

5.7 Disability Rights

In a groundbreaking event, National People's Power MP Sugath Wasantha de Silva submitted a motion to adjourn the house through a note composed in Braille, representing a significant milestone in the parliamentary history of Sri Lanka. MP de Silva, a visually impaired individual, emphasized the significance of inclusivity in governance and advocated for a rights-based welfare empowerment program to enhance the lives of disabled individuals (Adea Derana, 2025; The Morning, 2025).

A key initiative suggested to enhance disability rights is the creation of an autonomous commission focused on addressing the issues faced by individuals with disabilities. The Disability Organizations Joint Front (DOJF) has urged the government to recognize sign language as a national language and implement a targeted healthcare program for women with hearing impairments (The Island, 2025).

They further called for the re-establishment of the 'Parliamentary Caucus for Persons with Disabilities' to ensure that disability-related issues receive sustained legislative attention. Speaker Wickramaratne confirmed that MP de Silva, Sri Lanka's first visually impaired MP, has requested the establishment of the caucus, which will be implemented promptly (The Island).

The government has allocated Rs. 200 million to establish a specialized treatment center at Lady Ridgeway Children's Hospital, aiming to meet international standards and serve as a model for future centers (The Island, 2025).

Prime Minister Dr. Harini Amarasuriya emphasized the government's commitment to providing advanced learning opportunities for special needs, announcing a 2025 budget allocation for autism education and a social security system for orphans, and implementing systemic reforms to ensure inclusive education for disabled children (Prime Minister's Media Division, 2025).

6. Legal Amendments and Reforms

6.1 Prevention of Terrorism Act

A comprehensive law focused on national security and the prevention of terrorism is scheduled to be introduced after the amendment of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The Cabinet of Ministers authorized the formation of a committee led by President's Counsel Rienzie Arsekularatne, tasked with proposing suitable resolutions to enhance the amendments to the draft Bill concerning the prevention of terrorism (Cabinet Office, 2025; The Morning, 2025).

The Colombo Crimes Division informed Colombo Chief Magistrate that steps were taken to detain and question for 72 hours, the suspect involved in the murder of criminal gang member Ganemulla Sanjeewa and the driver who assisted in taking him away. The facts presented to the court revealed that the investigating officers took steps to file charges against the suspects under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Firearms Ordinance (Shantha, 2025; The Morning, 2025). In one of her X posts, former Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, Ambika Sargunathan, condemned the government for misusing the Prevention of Terrorism Act (Tamilwin, 2025).

6.2 Counterterrorism Measures

Additionally, the Government has reinforced its counterterrorism measures by issuing an extraordinary gazette banning 15 terrorist organizations, including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and freezing their financial assets. The Ministry of Defense also published a list of 222 individuals linked to terrorism. The government emphasized that these organizations have been involved in financing and supporting terrorism-related activities (Fernando, 2025; The Morning, 2025).

6.3 Protection of Witnesses

The government has planned to introduce legislation allowing witnesses to provide online statements in court following a fatal shooting at Hulftsdorp Court Complex (Perera, 2025).

6.4 Online Safety Act

The Attorney General has announced plans to introduce amendments to the Online Safety Act in response to four fundamental rights petitions, including Transparency International Sri Lanka's (Daily News, 2025; Mawbima, 2025).

6.5 Labor Laws

The Ministry of Labor has launched a thorough review of current labor laws to update and modernize outdated provisions. A committee is being formed to review regulations, incorporate government consultations, and address external pressures of balancing labor rights with economic and investment priorities (The Morning, 2025).

6.6 Independent Prosecutor's Office

The Government has decided to establish an Independent Prosecutor's Office, fulfilling a key election pledge of the National People's Power (NPP). The Justice Ministry is forming an expert committee composed of representatives from the Attorney General's Department, the Secretary to the Ministry of Justice, a senior judge, and the President of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL). This committee will draft a concept paper for public consultation before finalizing the office's structure (Siriwardana, 2025; Dayaratne, 2025; The Island, 2025).

The Government clarified that the Attorney General's Department would not be abolished. Instead, the Independent Prosecutor's Office would function alongside it to enhance prosecutorial independence and efficiency, addressing concerns about the AG's dual role as legal advisor to the government and prosecutor in criminal cases (Tennekoon, 2025; Samaraweera, 2025).

6.7 Constitutional Reforms

The government has postponed drafting a new constitution due to economic challenges, prioritizing stability before large-scale legal reforms, and ensuring democratic participation through public consultation (Tamilwin, 2025).

6.8 Reinstating Death Penalty

Ravi Seneviratne, Secretary to the Ministry of Public Security, announced the government is considering the reinstatement of the death penalty to combat rising serious crimes (Daily News, 2025).

6.9 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)



Saroja Savithri Paulraj, Sri Lanka's Minister of Women and Child Affairs addressing CEDAW session in Geneva.
Source : Permanent Mission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland.

Saroja Savithri Paulraj, Sri Lanka's Minister of Women and Child Affairs, presented the country's progress since submitting its 9th periodic report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Minister Paulraj announced the election of 22 female parliamentarians from diverse backgrounds, including working class and marginalized communities, and the appointment of the third female Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. The launch of the Multi-sectoral National Action Plan (NAP) for 2024-2028 aims to combat Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and online gender-based violence, highlighting the need for urgent action (Daily News, 2025).

In addition, CEDAW urged Sri Lanka to criminalize marital rape under Sri Lanka law. Also urged the removal of the Ministry of Defense clearance requirement for NGOs and said it is seen as a barrier to civil society participation (Doloswala, 2025).

6.10 Personal Data Protection Act

The Cabinet of Ministers has approved an amendment to the Personal Data Protection Act No. 9 of 2022, extending its enforcement date by six months. The South Asian legislation, the first of its kind, aims to safeguard citizens' data rights and promote digital economy growth (Daily Mirror Online, 2025; The Morning, 2025).

7. Repression of Freedom of Assembly

7.1 Demonstrations to claim Land Rights

In Jaffna, Tamil political parties and organizations have defied court orders to stage protests for land rights. One prominent example is the protest outside the Kankesanthurai Tissa Raja Maha Viharaya, where demonstrators—joined by several Muslim groups—argued that the 14-acre land on which the Buddhist temple stood rightfully belonged to local Tamil families. Despite a court order prohibiting protests at the site, demonstrators raised black flags and chanted slogans in a show of resistance, determined to reclaim their land and heritage. This act of defiance led to a summons for Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, MP, who had led the protest, for contempt of court (Rathugamage, 2025).

7.2 Curtailment of Religious Freedom

The annual Shivaratri observance at the Adilingeswarar Temple on Vedukkunari Hill was curtailed by authorities, limiting the sacred all-night vigil to just five hours. This was widely condemned by Tamil Hindus as an infringement on their religious freedoms and cultural expression. This act of suppression is seen by many as part of a broader campaign to undermine Tamil religious and cultural identity (Gamage, 2025).

7.3 Judiciary Suppression of Protests

The judiciary has played a key role in facilitating the suppression of protests. In some instances, such as the case involving former MP Hirunika Premachandra, the legal system has been used to revoke warrants or dismiss charges, as seen when the Chief Magistrate in Colombo revoked an arrest warrant against her after she appeared in court for road-blocking incidents during a protest. In other cases, courts have ordered further police action against individuals or groups involved in protests, exemplified by the summons issued to Ponnambalam and investigations into protests involving sensitive political issues such as temple demolitions (Abeynayake, 2025; Daily News, 2025).

7.4 Repression of Dissent

State mechanisms have also targeted individuals expressing dissent through other forms of protest, including cultural expression. In Killinochi, for example, teacher Innasimuttu

Sathyaseelan was summoned by Counterterrorism Officials after he and his students created an art installation depicting traditional Tamil territories. This is a part of a broader pattern of repression of dissent on the part of the state (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

7.5 Threats to Political Freedom and Expression

Former Public Security Minister Sarath Weerasekera has called for the arrest of Tamil students of Jaffna University who protested against the celebration of Sri Lanka's independence by replacing national flags which were hoisted with black flags on Independence Day. The propensity for criminalization of dissent is evident in these inflammatory rhetoric and threats against Tamil parliamentarians like S. Shritharan and Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam (Gamage, 2025).



Jaffna university students replacing national flags with black flags to declare Independence Day a 'Black Day' for the Tamil community. Photo Courtesy: Daily Mirror Online.

7.6 Police Summons, Interrogations and Interventions

The summoning of Tamil political leaders, activists, and journalists by police over protests against the Tissa Vihara construction continued to raise concern. The frequent police actions

and extended interrogations could be perceived as efforts to intimidate demonstrators and stifle opposition (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

7.7 Aragalaya (People's Struggle)

Victims of the Aragalaya protests have demanded the Government to review all pending cases, including arrests, torture, prosecutions, and travel bans. They also requested the Attorney General to review Magistrate's Court and High Court cases initiated during the protests, within six months. The review aims to understand the context and make legal recommendations (The Morning, 2025).

7.8 Tamil Families of the Disappeared

Relatives of the disappeared Kilinochchi urged public support for the anti-Independence Day protest, arguing independence celebrations are meaningless as political prisoners remain incarcerated and land grabbing persists (Tamilwin, 2025).

Tamil families of the disappeared marked eight years of continuous roadside protests in Kilinochchi, as they continue to search for their relatives who were allegedly forcibly disappeared by security forces (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

Tamil families of the disappeared in Vavuniya have been protesting for 3,000 days. Protestors, primarily mothers and elderly relatives, displayed photographs of their loved ones who were last seen in military custody in May 2009. They called for international intervention by waving flags of the United States and the European Union, emphasizing that Sri Lanka's domestic mechanisms have failed to deliver justice (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

7.9 Teachers' Protest

The Teacher Principals' Association has protested against the Ministry of Education, requesting that the remaining two-thirds of the teacher-principal salary discrepancy be addressed in the new budget (Daily Mirror Online, 2025).

The overtime rate paid to the nursing service, that is, the hourly rate paid, has been reduced from 1/160 to 1/200 of the monthly salary, and due to the shortage of nurses, the work that should have been done by 3 nursing officers is being done by one nursing officer. As a result of the reduction in the overtime rate for the nursing service, which provides 24-hour continuous services, an entry-level nursing officer will lose about Rs. 6,500 per month, said Saman Ratnapriya, Chairman of the Government Nursing Officers' Association. It was followed by a call for demonstrations to be held in front of all public hospitals across the island to protest against the said budget proposals that negatively affect nursing officials (Algewatte & Fernando, 2025).

7.10 University Students' Protests

Students of University of Jaffna protested against the Independence Day celebrations in front of the university. The student protestors declared Independence Day as a 'Black Day' to mark their protest and demanded the end of occupation of lands rightfully owned by Tamils, and answers for the fate of Tamils who surrendered at the end of the armed conflict. Student protestors also replaced the national flag of Sri Lanka with a black flag at the entrance of the university premise (Sukinthan, 2025; Tamil Guardian, 2025).



The Students' Union of the Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Peradeniya staged a protest in Colombo today urging the authorities to implement a proper recruitment policy. Photo Courtesy: Pradeep Dilrukshana.

Following a protest held in Colombo, the Medical Faculty Students' Action Committee gave the Government two weeks to clarify its stance on private medical colleges and repeal related Cabinet decisions (The Morning, 2025).

7.11 Protest of Co-operative Society Depositors

Depositors of the Dehiwala-Mount Lavinia Multi Purpose Services Co-Operative Society held a protest in front of the Western Province Multi Purpose Services Co-Operative Society office against the fraud of 135 million LKR from depositors of 13 rural banks (Dinamina, 2025).

7. 12 Protest against the Land Mining Project

A fresh effort to carry out an environmental impact assessment for a proposed mineral sand mining project in the Konnaiyan settlement area of Mannar was stopped due to significant resistance from the local Tamil community, leading Sri Lankan authorities to cancel their inspection for the third occasion (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

8. Reconciliation and Accountability

8.1 United Nations Human Rights Council



Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath addressing the 58th Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Photo Courtesy: Tamil Guardian.

Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath spoke at the 58th regular session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva, reiterating Sri Lanka's commitment to human rights, reconciliation, and sustainable development. The Minister additionally detailed initiatives aimed at enhancing domestic institutions, including the Office for Missing Persons (OMP), the Office for Reparations, and the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR). He proposed the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sri Lanka to combat racism and religious extremism, ensuring inclusivity and trust across the society (Daily News, 2025).

He stated that significant focus has been directed towards enhancing the socio-economic conditions and addressing essential needs, including resettlement, housing, compensation, and

infrastructure development, in the conflict-affected Northern and Eastern Provinces (Daily News, 2025).

8.2 Easter Sunday Bombings

The Attorney General informed the Supreme Court that Rs. 245 million has been paid in compensation to the victims of the Easter Sunday terror attacks as per the order issued concerning their Fundamental Rights petitions filed over the failure to take action to prevent the attacks (Abeynayake, 2025; Nanayakkara, 2025; The Morning, 2025).

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has resumed an independent, unbiased, and equitable investigation into the Easter Sunday attacks, which had been on hold until recently. The Catholic Church expresses confidence that the current Government is not intervening and has granted CID the autonomy needed to carry out thorough investigations aimed at uncovering the truth behind the incident, ensuring that this process concludes without any political or other forms of interference (Dayaratne, 2025; Tennekoon, 2025).

8.3 War Crimes

Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) Prime Minister Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran has sent a letter to the United Nations (UN) Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances “urging it to compel the Sri Lankan State to publicise the list of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) members who were made to surrender to the Sri Lanka Army, including children who surrendered along with their families” (The Morning, 2025).

Addressing the 58th Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva, Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath expressed the government’s willingness, at the UNHRC in Geneva to initiate talks on setting up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate acts of violence caused by racism and religious extremism (The Island Online, 2025).

The President’s Media Division (PMD) has announced that the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society has committed to providing technical assistance and capacity-building support to the Office on Missing Persons (OMP). In a meeting with President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, Severine Chappaz, the Head of Delegation for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC),

addressed the continued assistance for the Government's policy framework (The Morning, 2025; The Island Online, 2025).

8.4 Tamil Political Prisoners

Situation of Tamil political prisoners in Sri Lanka continues to be a significant human rights concern, with persistent calls for their release through the Presidential Amnesty. Sri Lanka Tamil Arasu Party MP Sritharan's parliamentary question on Tamil political prisoners highlighted their long-term detention without due process. Minister Harshana Nanayakkara promised a response, but no concrete action has been taken (Parliament of Sri Lanka, 2025).

Tamil political prisoners, including Vigneswaranathan Parthiban, who has been imprisoned for 30 years without a clear conviction, were excluded from Sri Lanka's Independence Day amnesty. Despite 285 prisoners being freed, those under draconian laws, like the Prevention of Terrorism Act, remain behind bars, despite President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's assurances (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

The Poraalihal Welfare Association has submitted a petition to President Dissanayake, urging him to release Tamil political prisoners detained under the PTA. The petition highlights the historical struggles of the Tamil people and the president's party's history of fighting against state oppression (Tamil Guardian).

8.5 Mass Grave

Several human skeletal remains were once again discovered near the Chemmani mass grave, which originally caused a great stir in 1995. There is a cemetery right next to this Chemmani mass grave, and human skeletons were found while making the foundations for a new crematorium for that cemetery (Dinamina, 2025).

Tamil National People's Front leader and Member of Parliament Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam issued a warning that failure to safeguard the Chemmani mass grave in Jaffna might lead to the destruction of crucial evidence and the perpetuation of injustices (Tamilwin, 2025).

Archaeologist Professor Raj Somadeva announced that the excavations conducted at the mass graves located at Colombo Port have revealed the remains of 16 individuals, which include the skeletons of two young children (Daily News, 2025; Ratnayake, 2025).

9. Press Freedom and Accountability for Crimes against Journalists

9.1 Freedom of the Press

Journalist Shanmugam Thavaseelan was assaulted while probing into unlawful sand mining activities in the Mullaitivu District. Two motorcycle assailants attempted to seize a photographer's camera, physically assaulted him, and threatened death, forcing him to flee. Tamil journalists have condemned such attacks and urged media minister, Nalinda Jayatissa, to take action. They have also contended that these incidents ought to be viewed not as isolated occurrences, but as components of a larger trend of violence and intimidation directed at journalists in the North-East (Tamil Guardian, 2025; Tamilwin, 2025).

Amid the repression of Tamil journalists, a rare legal victory was seen when Moratuwa Magistrate Uddala Suwan Durugoda acquitted Wijaya Newspapers Ltd. journalist Rekha Tharangani Fonseka. She had been charged with taking photographs inside the courtroom in defiance of instructions from a public official. The case, which dragged on for seven years, ended with the court ruling that the police had failed to provide evidence supporting the allegations. Former Moratuwa Magistrate's Court registrar Siriyawathie Fonseka testified that she did not witness the journalist taking photographs and had not filed a direct complaint, further weakening the case against the journalist. With no concrete evidence, the court ruled in favor of Fonseka's acquittal (The Sunday Times, 2025).

9.2 Case of Assassination of Lasantha Wickrematunge

AG Parinda Ranasinghe in his letter dated on January 27, 2025 to the Director CID stated that the prosecution does not intend to pursue further legal action against the three suspects; Staff Sergeant Prem Ananda Udalagama of Army Intelligence Unit, former OIC Crimes Mt. Lavinia Police Sub Inspector Tissasiri Sugathapala and retired DIG Prasanna Nanayakkara, in connection with the magisterial inquiry case number B/92/2009. Further, the AG has instructed the CID Director to report on the Court action upon being informed of the same to him (AG) within 14 days of the receipt of this letter. Justifying the discharge, the AG had cited a lack of evidence (Aravinda & Kariyakarawana, 2025).

It was reported that President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has summoned Attorney General Parinda Ranasinghe and stated that if the Attorney General's Department fails to fulfill its great responsibility in ensuring democracy and the protection of the human rights of the people and in delivering justice and fairness, then there is no point in sitting in those chairs any longer (Herath, 2025).

Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya announced that the government would refile indictments against suspects in the journalist Lasantha Wickramatunge murder case if necessary. She added, the government would also consider launching a fresh investigation if required and look into the Attorney General's Department without politicizing matters (Perera & Siriwardana, 2025).

Ahimsa Wickrematunge, daughter of journalist Lasantha Wickrematunge, has called for the impeachment of Attorney General Parinda Ranasinghe following the release of three suspects linked to her father's murder (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

The Free Media Movement, Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association, Federation of Media Employees' Trade Union, and Young Journalists Association - Sri Lanka have condemned the Attorney General's letter indicating no further legal action against three key suspects in the Lasantha murder case (Aravinda & Kariyakarawana, 2025).

The Police Department is in the process of examining the files of two cases associated with the murder of Wickrematunge, as stated by the Police Media Spokesperson, following the decision made by the Attorney General's Department. He verified that the two individuals who were instructed to be released had been detained in relation to the kidnapping of Wickrematunge's driver and the loss of his field notebook (Shaheid, 2025).

AG Parinda Ranasinghe remarked that the investigations into the murder of Wickrematunge are still ongoing. The individuals who were requested to be released were reportedly implicated in the abduction of their driver approximately eight months later, which is unrelated to Wickrematunge's murder. The only link between them is that he was Wickrematunge's driver. This incident was distinct and isolated, which is the basis for our decision on the matter (Shaheid, 2025).

The Attorney General has notified the Mount Lavinia Magistrate that the recent recommendation concerning three suspects linked to the murder case of Lasantha Wickrematunge will be temporarily put on hold. In a letter signed by Attorney General Parinda Ranasinghe, it was stated that the decision had been taken to further review the instructions previously issued to the Director of the Criminal Investigation Department. Consequently, the court will not proceed with the release of the three suspects (Abeynayake, 2025; Daily News, 2025; The Morning, 2025).

The Legal Officer's Association of the Attorney General's Department firmly asserted that the Attorney General and officials involved in the relevant decision-making process have exercised their independent professional judgment in line with the esteemed traditions of the Attorney General's Department regarding recent recommendations to discharge the three suspects in a case (Daily Mirror Online, 2025; Daily News, 2025; The Morning, 2025).

Dr. Nalinda Jayatissa, Cabinet Spokesperson and Mass Media Minister, stated that the government is committed to delivering justice for all crimes and has no intention of interfering with ongoing investigations (Tennekoon, 2025).

The Attorney General's office also dropped another high-profile case, the Mahara Prison massacre, in which 11 inmates were killed and another 117 were injured. The Welisara Magistrate questioned its actions, but was unable to prevent suspects from freeing themselves (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

9.3 Social Media Surveillance of Journalists

Tamil journalists Kandasamy Bharathan and Thambithurai Pratheepan were interrogated for six hours at the Palaly Police Station by Sri Lankan authorities. The inquiry was linked to a Facebook post allegedly urging the destruction of Tissa Vihara, a controversial Buddhist temple in Jaffna, which was said to be a focal point of Sinhalization efforts (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

Colombo High Court Judge Manjula Thilakaratne directed the court registrar to present a report on the investigation concerning Facebook posts published by journalists Poddala Jayantha and Sanath Balasuriya. They had published posts on Facebook regarding High Court Judge Manjula

Thilakaratne, who is currently presiding over the infamous Krrish transaction case involving MP Namal Rajapaksa. The court registrar had formally notified the judge in writing that these statements were perceived as contempt of court and requested suitable orders. In response, Judge Thilakaratne instructed the registrar to compile a report, including the relevant Facebook posts, so that an appropriate decision could be made (Ada Derana, 2025; Newswire, 2025; News First, 2025).

Poddala Jayantha and Sanath Balasuriya, who have been residing overseas following incidents of abduction and assault during the tenure of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, are the journalists in question (Ada Derana, 2025; Newswire, 2025; News First, 2025).

10. Land Rights

10.1 Government Officials beat locals in Batticaloa

Residents of Kattumurivu, a village in the Vakaraï region of Batticaloa, were assaulted by Forest Department officials in a violent attack that set ablaze their homes. The officials claimed jurisdiction over the area, had reportedly intimidated and physically assaulted locals, and even set fire to their homes. Witnesses reported that officials from the Forest Department arrived in the village and began demanding the immediate evacuation of locals (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

10.2 Tissa Viharaya in Jaffna

The construction of Tissa Viharaya, a Buddhist temple located in Jaffna, has been a subject of continuous controversy, as it is claimed to have been built unlawfully on privately owned Tamil land. This situation has sparked significant protests, political discussions, and involvement from the government.



Sarath Weerasekera

11 February · 🌐



I tell MP Sritharan not to touch Tissa Vihara or face consequences!

The matter was almost settled when I was the Chairman of the Oversight Committee on National Security in **Parliament of Sri Lanka**

I warn him & Gajen Ponnambalam & supporters not to test the patience of Sinhalese **#Buddhist** in **#srilanka**

Enough is enough!

#Buddhism #TissaVihara See less



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Former Minister of Public Security, Sarath Weerasekera threatened MP Sritharan and Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam through a Facebook post referring to the disputed temple Tissa Viharaya.

The main concern regarding Tissa Viharaya pertains to its purported illegal construction on six acres of privately owned Tamil land, along with intentions to further develop by obtaining an additional eight acres (Tamil Guardian; 2025). Reports indicate that the temple was built by the Sri Lankan military in 2018 under the direction of former Northern Province Governor Reginald Cooray (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

The Northern Provincial Governor has confirmed that a temple was erected without proper permits and allocated lands elsewhere, raising concerns about the government's property rights enforcement in the Tamil-majority region (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

Minister of Buddhist, Religious, and Cultural Affairs, Hiniithuma Sunil Senevi, stated that religious sites cannot be removed, but proposed alternative land for affected landowners (Tamilwin, 2025).

Ministry Secretary A.M.P.M.B. Atapattu stated that the temple is currently under Army control, but discussions are underway to transfer its administration to the Commissioner General of Buddhist Affairs (The Daily Morning, 2025).

Tamil political leaders, including ITAK and TNPf, criticized unauthorized construction of the temple, accusing the government of enforcing double standards. Protests calling for the prompt removal of the said temple received backing from multiple organizations (Ratugamage, 2025; Tamilwin, 2025; The Morning, 2025).

Sinhala Buddhist nationalist organizations defended the construction of Tissa Viharaya, and accused Tamil politicians of inciting ethnic tensions. Former Public Security Minister Sarath Weerasekera insisted that the government must ensure the temple's safety. Retired General Jagath Dias urged the authorities to arrest Sritharan for his threats to destroy the temple, contending that such remarks contravene the Sri Lankan Constitution (Divaina, 2025).

The All Ceylon Buddhist Congress (ACBC) has pushed for an expansion of the temple complex to 14 acres, including additional Buddhist structures and facilities (Tamil Guardian, 2025; WSWS, 2025).

Despite an ongoing court case, the temple was officially opened on June 3, 2023, triggering further protests. Tamil parties, including ITAK, EPDP, and TNPf, have continued to call for demonstrations. However, the Sri Lankan police obtained a court order banning protests, which was openly defied by Tamil activists (WSWS, 2025). Meanwhile, former military officials such as

Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekera and General Jagath Dias have demanded strict action against Tamil politicians and protesters, warning of escalating unrest (WSWS, 2025).

The Tissa Viharaya land grab is part of a larger pattern of Sinhhalisation in Tamil-majority areas. Previous governments have facilitated the construction of Buddhist shrines on Tamil lands, often with direct military involvement (Tamil Guardian, 2025; WSWS, 2025).

A 2023 report from the Divisional Secretariat also confirmed that the Vihara was built illegally, the military continues its activities with impunity (Tamil Guardian, 2025; WSWS, 2025).



Section of land owners, villagers and politicians protesting against illegal erection of a Buddhist temple named Tissa at Thayitti village in Jaffna. Photo Courtesy: World Socialist Web Site.

10.3 Military Occupation of Tamil-Owned Lands

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya faced confrontation from Tamil landowners in Jaffna, demanding answers on the stalled land release process. Despite peaceful protests, he was removed (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

Fisheries Minister Ramalingam Chandrasekar promised time for discussions on land reclamation in Keppapulavu, but security personnel blocked landowners from raising concerns during an event in Mullaitivu (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

Jaffna District Secretary Maruthalingam Pratheepan revealed that Sri Lanka's military and police occupy over 2,500 acres of private Tamil land, preventing displaced families from returning home. Over 2,624 acres of private land, previously designated as 'High Security Zones', remain under military control, preventing displaced families from returning home (Tamil Guardian).

The Deputy Minister of Defense stated plans to release essential lands occupied by security forces, raising concerns about selective and minimal land releases, while large portions of Tamil land remain under state control (Parliament of Sri Lanka, 2025).

10.4 Land Grabs for Infrastructure Projects

The Centre for Environmental Justice has criticized ex-military personnel's involvement in land grabs, warning of environmental destruction and livelihood loss. Infrastructure projects, including power plants and wind power, have caused flooding and economic hardship (Tamil Guardian, 2025).

11. Other

11.1 Local Government Polls

Speaker Dr. Jagath Wickramaratne informed Parliament that the Local Authorities Elections (Special Provisions) Bill could be passed with a simple majority if the amendments proposed by the Supreme Court were incorporated into the Bill. However, the Supreme Court ruled that certain clauses of the Bill were unconstitutional and required a special majority for passage. The Speaker announced that two out of three Judges on the Bench held that Clauses 2 and 3 were inconsistent with Article 12(1) of the Constitution and thus required the special majority stipulated under Article 84(2) (Daily News, 2025; Perera, 2025).



The Speaker, (Dr.) Jagath Wickramaratne while endorsing the certificate on the Local Authorities Elections (Special Provisions) Bill. Photo Courtesy: Parliament of Sri Lanka / Nuwan Duminda via The Island.

Following this, the Bill was debated in Parliament. Despite the initial constitutional concerns, it was ultimately passed with a special majority without amendments. The second reading debate was held on February 17 and Speaker Wickramaratne endorsed the certificate on the Bill the

same day, in accordance with Article 79 of the Constitution (Daily News, 2025; The Island Online, 2025). Following the enactment of the Local Authorities Elections (Special Provisions) Act No. 01 of 2025, an Extraordinary Gazette was issued to confirm that the term of office for Municipal Councils, Urban Councils, and Pradeshiya Sabhas would commence from June 2, 2025. This order was issued by the Minister of Public Administration, Provincial Councils, and Local Government A. H. M. H. Abayaratne under Section 10(1)(b) of the Municipal Councils Ordinance, Chapter 252. The new term will apply to 27 Municipal Councils, 36 Urban Councils, and 274 Pradeshiya Sabhas (Daily News, 2025; Perera, 2025).

11.2 Security in Courts

In the aftermath of the deadly shooting inside the Magistrate's Court at the Aluthkade Courts Complex, the Ministry of Justice stated that it would engage with the relevant stakeholders to ensure the security of judges, lawyers, and citizens. Minister of Justice Harshana Nanayakkara stated during a visit to the court premises that the situation is extremely serious and that the relevant authorities are treating it with the utmost seriousness (Mawbima, 2025; The Morning, 2025).

The Minister of Justice added that armed guards would be deployed inside courts for special prisoners after discussions with the Judicial Services Commission, police, and the Prisons Department. Currently, armed security is not allowed inside courts (The Morning, 2025).

11.3 Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC)

A Fundamental Rights Petition has been filed before the Supreme Court seeking a ruling that the recommendation submitted to the President by the Constitutional Council to appoint High Court Judge Ranga Dissanayake as the new Director General of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption and that the appointment is invalid. The petitioners alleged that this was a premeditated appointment made for political purposes, and stated in the petition that the credibility and respect of the Constitutional Council was being severely challenged (Mawbima, 2025).

11.4 USAID Freeze

The National NGO Secretariat sought a meeting with the USAID to discuss the potential impacts of the new US administration's decision to halt USAID funding on NGOs. Civil society activists have voiced concerns that the new US administration's choice to suspend funding from USAID could significantly impact the initiatives supported by this financial assistance (Chamara, 2025). The National NGO Secretariat in Sri Lanka has not decided to initiate a probe into USAID-funded projects, despite concerns over their objectives following the USAID freeze (Chamara, 2025).

Speaker Jagath Wickramaratne announced to Parliament his intention to address the requests put forth by Members of Parliament concerning the allegations related to USAID funding in Sri Lanka (Siriwardena, 2025). Opposition MP Dayasiri Jayasekara pointed out that SLPP MP Namal Rajapaksa had addressed a letter to the Speaker, requesting the establishment of a Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) to look into allegations regarding improper USAID funding within the nation. He raised concerns about the likelihood of such a committee being created and whether the issue would be thoroughly investigated (Indrajith, 2025).



Nationalist groups protest before the U.S. Embassy against U.S. Envoy Julie Chung, accusing her of violating diplomatic protocols, while former Minister of Public Security, Sarath Weerasekara addresses the media. Photo Courtesy: Pradeep Dilrukshana.

The Coalition Against Partition of Sri Lanka (CAPSL) organized a demonstration outside the U.S. Embassy, targeting U.S. Envoy Julie Chung for purportedly breaching diplomatic protocols. The demonstrators further claimed that USAID funds were being utilized to jeopardize Sri Lanka's sovereignty and foster divisions within its communities. They urged U.S. officials to withdraw Chung from her position (Daily Mirror Online, 2025).

11.5 Gnanasara Thero Granted bail

The Colombo High Court has approved bail for Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thero, the General Secretary of Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), who received a nine-month prison sentence for making defamatory remarks about Islam (Daily Mirror, 2025; Daily News Online, 2025; Mawbima, 2025; The Morning, 2025).

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