

# Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka

July 2014



*Convener of the Free Media Movement Mr. Sunil Jayasekara explaining the death threats he received for conducting a press briefing to protest and condemn the disruption of a media workshop by a mob (Photo: The Sunday Times)*

**INFORM**

**Human Rights Documentation Centre**

<http://ihrdc.wordpress.com> [informcolombo@gmail.com](mailto:informcolombo@gmail.com)

## Issues Covered

- A. Death threats, intimidation and harassments of leaders of professional bodies, religious leaders and political analysts**
- B. Violations of Freedom of Expression**
- C. Violations of Freedom of Assembly**
- D. Violations of Freedom of Association (Intimidation & Restrictions on NGOs)**
- E. Repression of Student Activists**
- F. Threat to Take Action Against Those Giving Evidence to UN Investigation**
- G. Repression of Opposition Political Parties**

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

## Summary:

July is known as “Black July” in Sri Lanka, due to the anti-Tamil pogrom of 1983, where thousands of Tamils were killed and their properties destroyed. It was a turning point in the ethnic conflict, which saw support for Tamil militancy increase and the birth of Tamil Diaspora. This year’s July, saw a commemoration of “Black July” being interrupted by Police. An event to commemorate the worst riots since then, in June 2014 against Muslims in Aluthgama, was also obstructed by the Police.

July 2014 turned out to be a “Black July” for dissenters. Leaders of the Bar Association and Free Media Movement, a leading political analysts and outspoken Catholic Bishop were threatened, intimidated and subjected to surveillance, while an exiled peace activist, who is now an Australian citizen, was harassed when he applied for a visa to come for his mother’s funeral. Film makers were threatened, several Tamil journalists were threatened, interrogated and obstructed from carrying out their duties when they were covering issues such as sexual abuses and illegal land occupation allegedly committed by the Military. A well-known Al Jazeera journalist was also interrogated. Tamil journalists travelling to Colombo was obstructed in middle of the night by the Police and Army, and the workshop they were travelling to participate had to be cancelled due to threats from a mob that protested outside the venue where the training was due to be held. A protest rally organized in Jaffna also had to be cancelled after the Police obtained a court order against it.

July was also Black month NGOs. The NGO Secretariat, functioning under the Ministry of Defence issued a circular that prohibited NGOs from issuing press releases and organizing press conferences and trainings for journalists. The Department of External Resources also issued a public notice warning about funding for NGOs, and various agencies cooperating with NGOs. USAID was compelled to withdraw funding for voter education programmes after opposition from the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence. The Prime Minister and State Media accused NGOs of being a threat to national security and of having supported terrorism. The government again expressed their opposition to those who may cooperate with the UN’s international investigation, with the official government spokesperson threatening appropriate action against Sri Lankans overseas who may give testimony via skype.

Student Activists were arrested and there were obstructions in getting bail even after a Magistrate ordered them to be released on bail. A student protest was attacked for the third time and Student Unions dissolved. Opposition parliamentarians on a fact finding mission claimed they were obstructed by goons protected by the Police.

The military spokespersons denied there were any attacks against journalists last few years and some government representatives tried to indicate the restrictive circular was only “guidelines” for NGOs. Generally, Police were part of the repression of dissent or choose not to take decisive and firm action to prevent and respond to violations.

But repression was met with resistance and defiance. Even after getting death threats, Sunil Jayasekera, the Convener of the Free Media Movement went ahead with a press conference, exposing the death threats and declaring that “death threats will not deter us”. The President of the Bar Association also choose to publicly expose intimidation and surveillance he was subjected to, along with many other journalists who were threatened, harassed and obstructed. When protest march in Jaffna was stopped, organizers had a meeting in a large public hall, with widespread participation of people affected by abuses, clergy, opposition politicians etc. A film maker summoned by the Police refused to abide, citing his fundamental rights. Lawyers dismissed the circulars and notices related to NGOs as having no legal basis. NGO representatives, concerned persons and groups dumped copies of a circular in a garbage bin and burnt them in public. The courage and determination shown by those subjected to repression and others imminently at risk keeps alive hope for democracy and human rights in Sri Lanka.

## **A. Death Threats, Intimidation & Harassment of Leaders of Professional Bodies, Religious Leaders and Political Analysts**

### **1. Free Media Movement (FMM) Convener threatened with death**

Speaking at a hurriedly convened press conference on 26 July to protest and condemn the disruption of a workshop for Northern Tamil journalists in Colombo, Mr. Sunil Jayasekara, the convener of the Free Media Movement said that he had received a number of death threats during hours preceding the press conference. "It was only two hours before that we, the FMM, informed media institutions about this press conference. One hour after we informed the media I received a call from a phone of which the caller ID was hidden and asked my name. I introduced myself. Then in a threatening and clear voice I was told that if FMM go ahead with this press conference they will not allow me to live. The voice said clearly that I will be killed.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Jayasekara received at least 7 phone calls threatening him with death after the press conference was over according to an alert sent out by the Sri Lanka Brief.<sup>2</sup>

### **2. Bar Association President followed in a threatening manner**

"Mr. Upul Jayasuriya, the President of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) has been followed by an unidentified group [a motor bicycle and a three wheeler] on 15th July 2014 for hours. Mr Jayasuriya has been a strong leader of the Bar, who has spoken strongly and fearlessly against the breach of Rule of Law, abuse of constitutional norms and erosion of democracy in Sri Lanka. Mr. Jayasuriya has made a formal complaint at the Kurunduwatta Police station [Colombo 7] on the same day" the Lawyers Collective said in a press statement. "We have witnessed a regular pattern of surveillance on civil society organisations, human rights defenders and individuals critical of the Government...We consider the threat on the President of Bar Association as a serious indication of the prevailing questionable law and order situation of Sri Lanka" it further said<sup>3</sup>.

### **3. Bar Association President's house subjected to surveillance**

Lodging a second complaint with Thalangama Police, BASL president Upul Jayasuriya alleged that two unidentified motorcyclists had also hovered around his house located at Thalangama.<sup>4</sup> According to his complaint, the suspicious behaviour of two motorcyclists had been spotted by his neighbours on July 15 and 17. The complaint in this regard had been registered on 18<sup>th</sup> July with Thalangama Police.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://srilankabrief.org/2014/07/lets-stand-together-death-threats-will-not-deter-us-fmm/#more-19110> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>2</sup> <http://srilankabrief.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Sri-Lanka-Brief-Alert-Press-Freedom-activist-under-threat.pdf> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>3</sup> <http://srilankabrief.org/2014/07/lawyers-collective-condemns-move-to-intimidate-the-president-of-the-basl-and-calls-for-an-impartial-investigation/> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>4</sup> [http://srilankabrief.blogspot.ro/2014/07/sri-lanka-unidentified-motorcyclists\\_20.html#more](http://srilankabrief.blogspot.ro/2014/07/sri-lanka-unidentified-motorcyclists_20.html#more) [accessed August 22, 2014]

#### 4. Defence Secretary says 'he would have taken action against Bishop Rayappu Joseph for hate speech'.

In an interview to the English language newspaper, the Daily Mirror, the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and brother of the President, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa had said that if there was a definition of hate speech he would have taken action against Bishop Rayappu Joseph: " Its very difficult to identify what hate speech is. If there was such identification I would have taken action against Bishop Rayappu Joseph along time ago."<sup>5</sup> Bishop Rayappu Joseph has been an outspoken critique of the government's policies and practices in relation to Tamil people's rights, making submissions to domestic and international bodies. He is also the Chairman of Tamil Civil Society Forum.

#### 5. Attempts to intimidate leading dissident

A state-sponsored operation is underway to intimidate journalists, civil society activists and politicians who publicly criticize certain actions of the government, claimed United National Party (UNP) Member of Parliament Mangala Samaraweera. Further he said that there have been many such instances, adding these activists are being intimidated through their neighbours. The Criminal Investigation Department of the Police has called neighbours of senior literary figure Gamini Viyangoda to inquire about him, Sri Lanka Mirror reported<sup>6</sup>.



Gamini Viyangoda is a leading writer and pro-democracy activist (Photo: Face Book)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.dailymirror.lk/top-story/49090-if-proven-i-will-resign-gota.html> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.srilankamirror.com/news/16078-cid-operation-to-intimidate-critics-of-govt> [accessed August 22, 2014]



## 6. Restrictions imposed on exiled peace activist

Mr. Lionel Bopage<sup>7</sup>, a well-known Sri Lanka peace activist living in Australia had to face restrictions and delays when he applied for visa to visit Sri Lanka to pay last homage to his late mother. Mr. Bopage is now an Australian citizen, having immigrated to Australia some 20 years ago. He has been active in Australia and Sri Lanka during and after the war supporting peace based on justice. He and his wife applied for visa to visit Sri Lanka on 1<sup>st</sup> July. Although his wife received on line visa in few minutes, Mr. Bopage had to wait few days to get his visa. Informed sources told INFORM that finally he was given conditional visa, barring him to engage in any political discussions or workshops etc. Funeral of his mothers had to postpone for a few days while awaiting Mr. Bopage's arrival in Sri Lanka.

## B. Violations of Freedom of Expression

### 7. CID questioned Al Jazeera journalist

Al Jazeera online journalist Dinouk Colombage was grilled for four hours by the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) over his reporting during the Aluthgama riots, his lawyers had said. Speaking to BBC Sandeshaya, Police Spokesman SSP Ajith Rohana has said that Colombage had been questioned to clarify death toll numbers he had published in a news report and a tweet during the violence. Colombage's lawyers also say that the CID had questioned him extensively about his relationship with the Al Jazeera network.<sup>8</sup>

### 8. Strict actions against 'social media'

In a announcement posted on its web site, the Ministry of Defence warned that "It has been brought to the notice of this ministry that certain parties with the intent of creating disharmony among communities circulate a false message via SMS and social media, particularly among the Muslim community, promoting violence. There is no truth in the content of such messages and the relevant authorities have been alerted to take action against those who circulate false information with the malicious objective of creating social disharmony. Perpetrators may be arrested for inciting violence"<sup>9</sup>.

### 9. Northern Province Tamil Journalists travel to Colombo obstructed

11 Tamil Journalists from the Northern Province were obstructed by Sri Lankan Police, Army and intelligence joint operation while travelling to Colombo on night of 25<sup>th</sup> July / early morning of 26<sup>th</sup> July, to attend a workshop and a discussion on digital security. This workshop

<sup>7</sup> Some of his writings are available at <http://groundviews.org/author/lionel/> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>8</sup> <http://lankanewsweb.net/news/8130-cid-quizzes-al-jazeera-journalist> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=Strict\\_actions\\_against\\_social\\_disharmony\\_creators\\_20140802\\_03](http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=Strict_actions_against_social_disharmony_creators_20140802_03) [accessed August 22, 2014]

was organized by the organizations 'Rights Now Collective for Democracy' based in Colombo and the Jaffna Press Club from the North. Jaffna Press Club is an independent collective of media personal and registered organization mandated for journalist welfare and empowerment in North<sup>10</sup>.

### **10. Media workshop disrupted by a government organized mobs**

The Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association (SLWJA) condemned the act of intimidation of media by the government orchestrated mobs who sabotaged a planned media workshop for Jaffna journalists scheduled at the Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI) on 26<sup>th</sup> July. The workshop on Digital media Security for a group of media personnel from Jaffna was to be held at the Sri Lanka Press Institute. However, on 26<sup>th</sup> morning, a group of government organized mobs have gathered in front of the SLPI, threatening to storm the institution should the workshop be held. The organizers were forced to abandon the workshop.<sup>11</sup>



Tamil journalists' staged a sit in protest at Omanthai against the intimidations on the false charges on wee hours of, 26<sup>th</sup> July (Photo: Twitter)

### **11. Mob warning against any training for Tamil journalists**

Leader of the mob which disrupted the media workshop that was to be held in the auditorium of the Sri Lanka Press Institute warned that " if this institute allows any such training in the future don't say we are bad boys". He was referring to the workshop where Tamil journalists from the North were invited. The mob leader further warned that if such workshops are held anywhere in the country they will be there to stop them. These statements were a clear

<sup>10</sup> <http://srilankabrief.org/2014/07/12-northern-sri-lankan-tamil-journalists-impeded/> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>11</sup> <http://srilankabrief.org/2014/07/sabotage-of-media-workshop-and-death-threats-are-govt-orchestrated-slwja/#more-19122> [accessed August 22, 2014]



warning that they are even ready to use the violence against Tamil journalists if they come to participate in training workshops anywhere in Sri Lanka.<sup>12</sup>



Screen shot of the [video](#) (Photo: SLB)

## 12. Journalists called to appear in Police

Journalists who protested against military intimidation on their way to Colombo to attend a media workshop on 26<sup>th</sup> July were called for questioning by the Omanthai Police. One of the journalist tweeted that seven journalists who protested against the military had been called in for police questioning.<sup>13</sup>

## 13. Journalists threatened and followed

Two journalists had to face intimidations, threats and assaults when they tried to cover illegally kept three baby elephants. On 18<sup>th</sup> July, journalists Mr. Shamal Liyanaarachi of 'Janarala' and Mr. Udeni Chandrasiri of 'Divaina' went to the 'Dawaram Wehara' temple in Pannipitiya (suburb in Colombo district) to find out story of three baby elephants kept there. While Mr. Sharmal Liyanaarachi was threatened, chased away and followed by the crowd gathered at the temple<sup>14</sup> Mr. Udeni Chadrasiri was hit by stone thrown at him. Later Mr. Chandrasiri was hospitalised due to the injuries he received. The crowd had blocked 10 other journalists too entering the temple premises to cover the issue.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> <http://srilankabrief.org/2014/07/dont-say-we-are-bad-boys-next-time-thugs-warn-to-slpi/#more-19126> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=11670> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>14</sup> Source: according to the interview conducted with the Editor *Janarala* newspaper and *Janarala* news paper, p.3, 27th July 2014

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.divaina.com/2014/07/19/news25.html> [accessed August 22, 2014]

#### **14. Journalists documenting appropriation of Tamil land threatened**

The “Tamil Guardian” news website reported that journalists who went to report on the pre-emptive surveying of private Tamil land were threatened by the Sri Lankan Navy on Friday (referring to 11<sup>th</sup> July). Threats were made to the journalists as they attempted to photograph and document the Sri Lankan Navy surveying private Tamil land that the government was in the process of appropriating, reported the “Uthayan”. “This is our region, you cannot take photographs within this,” warned Navy personnel, whilst taking photographs of the journalists.”<sup>16</sup>

#### **15. Journalist threatened in Manner**

The Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) of the Sri Lanka Police continued to harass Tamil journalist S.R. Lambart from Mannaar in the month of July. Lambart had been asked to appear at the TID in Colombo on 14 July 2014 through an instruction written in Sinhala. He was asked to disclose his email password for the second time while claiming they had tapped a news story as originating from his email address. The journalist was first interrogated by the Sri Lankan TID on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2013. During the first interrogation, Mr Lambart was shown around 40 news stories that the intelligence operatives claimed as reported by Mr Lambart. The TID operatives had also displayed log entries of phone numbers belonging to the people who were in touch with him.<sup>17</sup>

#### **16. Journalists threatened and evicted from the court room**

Sri Lankan military personnel on 25<sup>th</sup> July threatened and evicted journalists from the court room where the inquiry into the gang rape of two Tamil school girls, aged 11 and 9, in Karainagar in the Northern Province allegedly by Sri Lankan Navy personnel was taking place. Dressed in civilian uniform, the military officers had confiscated cameras and mobile phones from the journalists, and deleted any photographs that had been taken. The media personnel were told not publish news related to the incidents and the parents of the victims were offered money and threatened to drop the case. Over 11 members of the Sri Lankan Navy have now been implicated in the gang rape.<sup>18</sup>

#### **17. Military denies there was a single attack on a journalist past few years**

According to a report in the “island” newspaper, the Military spokesman, Brigadier Ruwan Wanigasooriya, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, has stated that there has not been a single attack on journalists reported in the past few years.”<sup>19</sup> Contrary to this statement, there

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=11529> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=37303> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=11637> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.island.lk/index.php?page\\_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code\\_title=107618](http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=107618) [accessed August 22, 2014]

have been numerous attacks on journalists in 2014 and previous years, many of which have been reported, and formal Police complaints made. Several such attacks have been reported in this report, previous reports on “Repression of Dissent” and in other media.

### **18. Tamil Film threatened in Jaffna**

Producer of the film 'Maaru Thadam', S. Ramanan told media that the screening of his film on the day to life of people in the North of Sri Lanka was disrupted by the Police in Jaffna. The Police had entered the cinema hall the film was being screened and taken Mr. Ramanan, the film and the projector to the police. Although he was released on the same day, his film equipment was not released. Mr. Ramanan told BBC Sinhala service that he is being threatened by unknown persons and he is living with fear.<sup>20</sup> Police had responded that the Producer was arrested for screening a film without a proper permission and that he was released after being warned and that the equipment would be handed over to him. Mr. Ramanan however had told that when he had approached the National Film Corporation for permit to screen the film, he had been told no such permit was necessary.

### **19. Religious police hunting a film maker**

In a letter address to the Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) in charge of the Religious Conflicts at the Ministry of Buddhist Affairs, Mr. Sirimal Wijesinghe, writer and a film director said that he will not obey a request for him to go and record a statement at the said Police unit, pertaining to a complaint lodged by certain religious organizations. He goes on to say that he “considers it a blatant violation of the right of the citizen to express views as guaranteed by the constitution of Sri Lanka” and that although he is accused of “producing a film, such production has not taken place yet. I have only published a press statement regarding it. The press statement was followed by a series of threats from religious extremists and I have been compelled to go hiding for my safety.”<sup>21</sup>

## **C. Violations of Freedom of Assembly**

### **20. Police interrupts campaign “no to another black July”,**

Police interrupted a banner-signing campaign held in Borella (Colombo 8), which was one of a series of awareness programs held island-wide on 23<sup>rd</sup> July by the Movement for Equal Rights (MER). The MER had begun the program entitled “no to another black July”, around 9am in the town of Borella, when Police officers attached to the Borella Police station arrived at the location and informed them to stop the campaign and remove the banner. Later, Police

---

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/sinhala/sri\\_lanka/2014/07/140728\\_lanka\\_ramanan\\_film.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sinhala/sri_lanka/2014/07/140728_lanka_ramanan_film.shtml) [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>21</sup> <http://srilankabrief.org/2014/07/religious-police-hunting-a-film-maker/> [accessed August 22, 2014]

officers had forcibly taken away the banner, and had got ready to arrest the members of the MER who were involved in the program.<sup>22</sup> “Black July” refers to riots in different parts of Sri Lanka in July 1983, in which many Tamils were killed and their properties destroyed.

### 21. Tamil politician victimized for supporting protest

A member of the Thenmaraadchi Divisional Council (in the Northern province), Mr. Rasiah Theivendrampillai's wife was threatened at gunpoint and his property damaged by military intelligence operatives for supporting a Tamil mother who protested against the land surveyors who came to her land situated along the A9 Road, at Mirusuvil in Thenmaraadchi of the Jaffna district. The group had entered his house while Mr. Theivendrampillai was at the protest and burnt his bankbooks and land deeds also.<sup>23</sup>

### 22. National Fisheries Solidarity Movement march banned in Jaffna

A court banned the protest march organized by the National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO), based on a request by the Police. The protest was planned to be held in front of the Jaffna bus stand on 15<sup>th</sup> July to demand the implementation of 10 recommendations submitted to the government and to hand over a petition to the Jaffna District Secretariat. Police had obtained a court order saying that the march may cause disturbances to the general public. Hundreds of people gathered for the protest held a meeting at the Jaffna Weerasingham hall as the protest could not happen<sup>24</sup>.



Section of the participants in the meeting after the march was banned (Photo: LankaSri)

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.lankaviews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=11771:equal-rights-awareness-campaign-disrupted-by-police&catid=35:local&Itemid=48](http://www.lankaviews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11771:equal-rights-awareness-campaign-disrupted-by-police&catid=35:local&Itemid=48) [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>23</sup> <http://tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=37309> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.lankasrinews.com/view.php?22AOlv2acT5YAe4e4yMCc02aAmB3dd3PBmc30366AY2e4UY5f0ca2lOed3> [accessed August 22, 2014]

## D. Violations of Freedom of Association (Intimidation & Restrictions on NGOs)

### 23. NGOs banned from doing media related activities

Sri Lanka has banned activist groups and NGOs from holding press conferences, issuing press releases and organizing trainings for journalists, according to a circular<sup>25</sup> from the NGO Secretariat under the Defence Ministry. According to the Bar Association of Sri Lanka, “the contents as well as the implications of the circular is against the directive principles of state policy enshrined in the Chapter VI of the constitution as well as violation of freedom of Expression and Speech, freedom of Assembly and Association, Freedom of occupation as guaranteed by the Article 14 of the Sri Lankan Constitution. We observe that this attempt is nothing but yet another effort to silence the alternative public opinion of the society through inculcating fear psychosis among the section of the society enhancing the autocratic writ to a fearful height.”<sup>26</sup> However, many NGOs rejected this letter, burning it and dumping it in a garbage bin during a public protest held in the heart of Colombo city.<sup>27</sup>

### 24. Some NGOs are threat to National security – Prime Minister

Prime Minister D. M. Jayaratna had said that some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) had armed and assisted the LTTE during the war. He made this comment when speaking in Parliament on 11<sup>th</sup> July on the controversy over the circular issued by the NGO Secretariat of the Ministry of Defence. He said that in recent times the intelligence units had unearthed information on some NGOs which were operating in a manner which threatened National security.<sup>28</sup>

### 25. Most of the International NGOs supported Tigers – State Media

‘The Government’s decision to check INGOs and NGOs is commendable’ wrote the state controlled “Sunday Observer” in a hard hitting article against the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). It said that “Most of these INGOs tarnished the country’s image by pumping oxygen to Tiger terrorists who had shown no mercy to human life during Sri Lanka’s humanitarian operation which had rescued over half a million civilians from the clutches of the LTTE. ..The Government has taken the right decision and the most appropriate step to discipline errant INGOs and NGOs. Although the NGO goons here, who thrive on international funding and shout from the rooftops, are ready to betray the country for a mess of pottage.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> <http://srilankabrief.org/2014/07/sri-lanka-bans-ngos-engaging-in-public-communications-and-conducting-training/> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>26</sup> <http://srilankabrief.blogspot.com/2014/07/sri-lanka-basl-slams-mod-circular-to.html> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.srilankamirror.com/news/16048-activists-burn-sri-lankan-warning-notice-to-ngos> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>28</sup> <http://colombogazette.com/2014/07/11/some-ngos-armed-the-ltte-says-pm/> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2014/07/13/main\\_Editorial.asp](http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2014/07/13/main_Editorial.asp) [accessed August 22, 2014]



## 26. New Restrictions for NGOs in receiving funding

The Finance and Planning Ministry has informed all Non-Governmental Organisations that they should receive prior approval from the Ministry prior to obtaining foreign funds. The “Notice” published in most of the national newspapers is addressed to “All government agencies, local institutions, civil society organizations, and the general public that due diligence be observed on the utilization of funds received from foreign funding agencies, INGO’s and any other source”. The notice comes in the wake of a controversial circular issued by the Ministry of Defence earlier, banning Non-Governmental Organisations from issuing press releases, conducting press conferences and trainings for journalists.<sup>30</sup> According to the Lawyers Collective noted that “This Notice is yet another intimidatory tactic of the Government, manipulated outside the legal framework, to create suspicion in the minds of the general public on the pro-democratic positions taken by the NGOs as well as their contribution to uplift socio-economic status of the masses. There is overwhelming evidence to infer that the Government is planning, through its agencies such as military, to take control of civil society organizations and to make the advocacy programmes of NGOs ineffective. The Government is also taking extra judicial measures to thwart the regular contributions of the civil society to protect and promote human rights, democratic values and ideals in Sri Lanka. The Lawyers Collective requests the public not to be misled by misinformation campaigns by the Government, which is fast moving towards authoritarianism.”<sup>31</sup>

## 27. USAID made to withdraw funding on voter education

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) cancelled funding for a voter education program after the Sri Lankan Government raised objections. In an email to prospective applicants on 4<sup>th</sup> July, USAID had said that “The Sri Lanka USAID Colombo Office will no longer be accepting applications for this opportunity.” In an interview with a daily newspaper on the same day, Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa had expressed concerns about USAID announcing a funding opportunity titled ‘Election Support through Voter Education’ and called it an “attempt to undermine the Government of the host country”. The Defence Secretary also vowed that all those receiving funds for the implementation of projects under the USAID grant program would be investigated.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/50038-no-foreign-funds-without-approval-ministry.html> [accessed August 22, 2014]. The full notice is available at the official website of the Department of External Resources, <http://www.erd.gov.lk/files/ERD%20Final%20English.jpg> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1407/S00260/sri-lanka-resources-department-misleading-public.htm> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.ft.lk/2014/07/05/us-axes-lankan-voter-education-funding-amid-controversy/> [accessed August 22, 2014]



## E. Repression of Student Activists

### 28. Arrest of Student Activists

On the 2nd and 3<sup>rd</sup> of July, 4 student activists, including the President of the Main Student Union had been arrested by the Police.<sup>33</sup> According to Students for Human Rights (SHR), they had been arrested for violating the Prohibition of Ragging and Other Forms of Violence in Educational Institutes Act No. 20 of 1998.<sup>34</sup> 31 other students had been produced before a Magistrate by the Police on charges of forcibly restricting the Vice Chancellor of the University, and about 20 students had been remanded (including three who had been initially arrested), as they could not get bail, even though the Magistrate had ordered them to be released on bail.<sup>35</sup> SHR report indicated difficulties for relatives to obtain bail, as the relationship to the students had to be proved, and in some cases, the Village Officers (Grama Niladari) had refused sign the certificates confirming the relationship, saying they because they were not under a legal obligation to do so and the Magsitrate had not given them instructions or an order to do so. SHR further stated that the Birth Certificates issued by the government are not admitted to prove the relations between the students and their parents.

### 29. Student Unions of Rajarata University dissolved

The Administrative Board of the Rajarata University has decided to dissolve the main Student Union and Faculty Unions temporarily. Vice Chancellor Professor Wijewardane said that the decision has been taken after Lecturers at the University decided to withdraw from all educational and administrative services since last Monday in protest over the recent incidents at the University.<sup>36</sup>

### 30. Student's protest fast attacked

The temporary hut that sheltered Rajarata University student protesters was burnt for the third time early the morning of 10th July. Rajarata University Students Federation member Lasantha Priyankara said a group of men came in a van and hurled a bottle of petrol and set the hut ablaze. However, students staying inside the hut at the time of the incident have not been injured by the blaze. The Student Sathyagraha which has demanded the university authorities to lift the class suspension on 28 students would complete 213 days today (referring to 10<sup>th</sup> July 2014)<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> [http://www.lankaviews.com/sn/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=21131%3A2014-07-03-08-55-23&catid=100%3A2014-06-19-06-05-56&Itemid=151b](http://www.lankaviews.com/sn/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=21131%3A2014-07-03-08-55-23&catid=100%3A2014-06-19-06-05-56&Itemid=151b) [accessed August 22, 2014] and <http://www.lankadeepa.lk/index.php/articles/247644> [accessed August 22, 2014]

(Both in Sinhalese)

<sup>34</sup> Monthly Update on Repression of Students in Sri Lanka – July (2014), published by Students for Human Rights

<sup>35</sup> <http://nethfm.com/article/24987/neth> [accessed August 22, 2014](Sinhalese)

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/49222-rajarata-uni-student-unions-dissolved.html> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.hirunews.lk/87125/rajarata-uni-students-sathyagraha-hut-burnt-for-third-time> [accessed August 22, 2014]



The burned shelter (Photo: Hiru news)

## F. Threats and Attacks on Threat to Take Action against Those Giving Evidence to UN Investigation

### 31. Appropriate action" for those using skype and IT to give evidence to UN

The Government of Sri Lanka while rejecting moves by the ongoing UN Human Rights Council War Crimes Probe against it and the LTTE, has threatened to take appropriate action if "Skype" is used as a means of leading evidence from Sri Lankan witnesses.<sup>38</sup>

## G. Repression of Opposition Political Parties

### 32. Opposition party office attacked

United National Party (UNP) election campaign office at Hali-Ela was attacked on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, just days before the Uva Provincial Council was to be dissolved. According to reports from the Campaign for Free and Fair Election (CaFFE), the UNP office in Hali-Ela was attacked by a gang using tar and waste oil. UNP Uva Provincial Councillor and organiser Jayantha Kannangara and members of the party have lodged a complaint with police regarding the incident.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.island.lk/index.php?page\\_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code\\_title=106183](http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=106183) [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/140706/news/attack-on-unp-office-bodes-ill-for-uva-poll-105962.html> [accessed August 22, 2014]

### 33. Opposition parliamentarians fact finding mission prevented

A group of opposition Parliamentarians from the United National Party (UNP) who were on a fact finding mission to the Sapugaskanda Oil Refinery (in the Colombo district) was prevented from entering by a group of Ceylon Petroleum Corporation employees. UNP Parliamentarian Harsha de Silva, who was at the location, said that “hundreds of goons protected by the Police blocked the entrance”. Another UNP MP, said, the incident was pre-planned and the goons were fully prepared to hinder the UNP delegation.<sup>40</sup>

### 34. Peace march attacked



Srithunga Jayasuriya requesting permission to proceed from a Police officer (Photo: Daily Mirror)

Issuing a press statement, Siritunga Jayasuriya, General Secretary of the United Socialist Party (USP) condemned the attack on their initiative of “Socialist Peace March against Racism & Communalism”. He said that they “irrespective of the party flag and identities stand for a peaceful, united country where all religions, languages and ethnic minorities can live in harmony with full dignity as equals. Hence to decry the growing attacks both physical and ideological on these values of our society, we the USP launched the initiative marching against racism through a Motor Cycle Rally to Aluthgama-Dharga town from Colombo-Narahenpita.” The attack took place on 26 July in Aluthgama.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.asianmirror.lk/news/item/2074-unp-mps-prevented-from-entering-sapugaskanda-refinery/2074-unp-mps-prevented-from-entering-sapugaskanda-refinery> [accessed August 22, 2014]

<sup>41</sup> <http://srilankabrief.org/2014/07/an-injury-to-one-is-an-injury-to-all-lets-fight-the-racism-communalism/#more-19212> [accessed August 22, 2014]