

Sri Lanka Brief

Human Rights Round UP

October 2021

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01. OCT 29: President Rajapaksa issued an [Extraordinary Gazette Notification](#) declaring ports, railways, petroleum, the Central Bank, posts, health, and several services as essential services. The gazette has been issued in the background of growing dissent in the country against multiple failures of the government and privatization of important government assets.

02. 29 OCT: United nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Mary Lawlor [releasing UN communication dated 17 August 2021 sent](#) to the Government of Sri Lanka said that that Sri Lanka Government's reply did not answer all questions raised in the communication. The communication has raised questions about threats to 4 HRDs, namely Sudesh Nandimal Silva, Senaka Perera, Tharindu Jayawardhana, Joseph Stalin.

03. 29 OCT: A Police Intelligence and Special Task Force team that had secretly filmed a suspect to be released on bail was [caught red-handed by a group of lawyers](#). Presidential Council Saliya Peris appearing for the suspect had sought protection for the suspect Kelum Indika Sampath as he was in danger. Moratuwa Magistrate Uddala Suwanduragoda has ordered police protection for him upon his release. Why he was filmed by members of the police remain unanswered.

04. 29 OCT: [Health authorities have sought](#) the Attorney General's advice on whether legal action could be instituted against those who refuse to take the anti-COVID vaccine. Medical experts said there were legal provisions to take such action.

05. 28 OCT: [The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka \(HRCSL\) said that](#) it has decided not to give any recommendations over incidents at the Anuradhapura Prison where State Minister of Prison Reforms Lohan Rattwatte threatened to kill Tamil prisoners with his own pistol. Though 6 weeks has passed HRCSL has not concluded its investigation.

06. 28 OCT: Counter Terrorism Investigation Division (CTID) based in Vavunia questioned [social activist Kanagasabai Vimalathas](#) for over 4 hours about his activities & social media presence. He has been asked of posts about LTTE in FB, Viber & WhatsApp.

07. 27 OCT: An employee of the Save the Pearl organisation, Mohamed Sulthan told the Fort Magistrates Court that [he was tortured to implicate detained Human Rights lawyer Hejaaz Hizbullah](#). Sulthan, who has been in detention for nearly 18 months under PTA is currently receiving treatment for his spinal cord injury at the Prisons Hospital and the court has ordered for a Judicial Medical Officer's report.

08. 27 OCT: President Rajapaksa appointed a 13-member [Task Force on One Country One Law](#), headed by Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thero. The PTF has been vested with making a study of the implementation of the concept "One Country, One Law" and make recommendations. Gnanasara Thero leads alt Sinhala Nationalist "Buddhist Power Force" and is a well-known anti Muslim rouble rouser who preaches an extreme version of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. [The PTF will fast track](#) Sri Lanka's slide towards majoritarian authoritarianism backstopped by militarization of government and governance, with deeply alarming consequences for Sri Lanka and Sri Lankans, said Centre for Policy Alternatives. [Issuing a statement All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama](#) (ACJU) said that shocked and dismayed by the appointment of the said monk to lead the PTF.

09. 26 OCT: [The Fundamental Rights petition](#) filed by award-winning writer Shakthika Sathkumara challenging his arrest and detention over an allegation that he propagated religious hatred through a short story titled "Ardha" (Half) has been fixed for argument by Supreme Court. It will be taken up for argument in March 2022.

10. 25 OCT: Activist and Inter-University Students' Federation (IUSF) Convenor Wasantha Mudalige, in a letter, accused Senior Deputy Inspector General of Police (SDIG) – Western Province Deshabandu Tennakoon of threatening him via a phone call on the day of his arrest on 6 August 2021. 'This time I won't let any of you go. I'll destroy all of you. You're overstepping the mark. Be careful,' [SDIG has threatened student leader](#) via land line phone of the police station. Four student activists, including Wasantha Mudalige, arrested for alleged violation of Covid-19 guidelines while protesting is being detained. Next court date is 9 November.

11. 25 OCT: The [Attorney General served an indictment](#) to former Western Province Governor Azath Sally for trying to create disharmony and disarray among different ethnic groups. A day after he was arrested on 17 March 21 Public Security Minister Sarath Weerasekera said that Azath Salley was arrested for links to the Easter Sunday suicide attack & the arrest was made by the CID following the instructions of the Attorney General. Now he has been charged for different offences. He is detained under PTA.

12. 22 OCT: A collection of Tamil parliamentarians wrote a letter addressed to Chamal Rajapaksa, the Sri Lankan Internal Security Minister, [asking him to put a stop to the "artificial alteration of the demographic pattern"](#) of the Northern Province. They claimed that "this

attempt to change the provincial borders have ulterior motive(s) to alter the demographic pattern and systematically weaken Tamils political strength.”

13. 22 OCT: Tamil National Alliance [MP Sivagnanam Sritharan told](#) Sri Lankan parliament that “39 Tamils were arrested in North-East during the last three months.

14. 22 OCT: A [Sri Lankan police officer was seen brutalising](#) two Tamil citizens in Batticaloa, kicking one individual and dragging and slapping another individual on a motorcycle. The two Tamil men, Thissasekaram Dilip and Thillainathan Kalairasan from Chenkaladi, were attacked by a traffic police constable attached to Eravur police, for not stopping their motorcycle. (Video)

15. 21 OCT: Former Sri Lankan Minister Patali [Champika Ranawaka made a revelation](#) in parliament, when he pointed fingers at the Criminal Investigation Department claiming they had tapped his mobile phone, including his WhatsApp phone conversations. He claimed that he felt this was happening after he was questioned on certain points by the CID in a recent interrogation.

16. 19 OCT: The Public Security [Ministry would introduce a piece of legislation](#) to exonerate policemen automatically from any allegation of violating Fundamental Rights (FR) if and when the complaints against them by anyone are not inquired and concluded in six months, Public Security Minister Rear Admiral (retired) Sarath Weerasekara . Minister “seems to be more worried that 35 police officers who have been accused of violating fundamental rights of the citizens of this country and have not received their promotions, rather than the violations of fundamental rights which is enshrined in the Constitution of the country,” [Daily Mirror Editorial said](#).

17. 19 OCT: [Government is using the police to intimidate](#) striking teachers, stated Joseph Stalin, head of the Ceylon Teachers’ Union. ” During the past few days policemen had been calling principals and teachers asking whether they would report for work on Thursday, Stalin said.

18. 18 OCT: A [politically motivated tirade](#) based on unsubstantiated charges was launched against former head of the Crime Investigation Department Sharni Abeysuriya while he was coming out of Gampaha Magistrate Court. Abeysuriya, who investigated major human rights violations was transferred, dismissed, and detained under Rajapaksa government. No action has been taken on the complaint he made regarding the verbal attack.

19. 12 OCT: The [Attorney General informed the Court of Appeal](#) that the indictments filed against former Navy Commander Wasantha Karannagoda at Colombo High Court Trial-at-Bar in connection with the abduction of eleven persons will be withdrawn. The Senior State Counsel informed the Court that this decision is to be conveyed to the High Court in due course. Amnesty International issued a press released condemning the AG’s decision, captioned [Sri Lanka: Authorities falter on accountability in ‘Navy 11’ case](#) .

20. 11 OCT: 17 organizations passionately committed to protect Child Rights formed '[Child Protection Alliance' in Sri Lanka](#). The Alliance's first target is to request The Parliament to pass a bill on implementing judicial reforms on ending violence against children and implement the Supreme Court directive of February 2021 to unequivocally prohibit corporal punishment in Sri Lanka. Sexual abuse of children is on the rise in Sri Lanka.

21. 10 OCT: Thushan Gunawardena, the former Executive Director of the Consumer Affairs Authority [lodged a complaint with the Kirulapone Police](#) regarding suspicious behavior by an unidentified group in a white van near his house. Gunawardena alleged that although he had complained to the CID about a month ago that he had received death threats, the police have not recorded any statement from him.

22. 08 OCT: Government gazetted the [Bill to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure Act, published in the Gazette on the 8th of October 2021](#). It will open up a Pandora's box of serious abuses. [In essence what the Bill proposes](#) is to allow Magistrates to dispense with the personal attendance in court of a suspect or accused. The same principle is extended to High Court Judges, including the right to dispense with the personal attendance of an accused even during trial. It will open up Pandora box of abuses, claimed HRD Basil Fernando.

23. 04 OCT: [The PTA will face some necessary amendments within the next six months](#). The Cabinet Subcommittee appointed to make recommendations with regard to this is done with almost 95% of its work, according to government sources.

24. 03 OCT: [The Editors' Guild of Sri Lanka \(TEGOSL\) condemned](#) the attempt by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to question three senior editors of newspapers and several journalists over articles published in their respective newspapers on the 'Sathosa Garlic Scam'.

25. 02 OCT: Model [Chula Padmendra was asked to come to Criminal Investigation Department](#) to record a statement. She was summoned to the CID to question about Keerthi Ratnayake, a journalist who is currently in custody. Keerthi, a defence and political analyst at Lanka e-News was arrested for allegedly giving information to the Indian Embassy in Colombo concerning a possible terrorist attack.

26. 02 OCT: [I will have to take harsh measures against Union](#) or other groups who protest while the country remains open during the pandemic period, as the Minister of law and order for the well-being of the people. Day before [Minister Weerasekara had said that](#) in a televised interview that the authorities had been too soft on teachers who engaged in massive protests in July and August over unresolved salary anomalies and continue to boycott online teaching.

Compiled from the verified news reports published by English and Sinhala language media in Sri Lanka.

The end.