

Repression of Dissent in Sri Lanka

May 2014



Inter University Students Union (IUSF) protests in Colombo. 17 peaceful student protesters were detained and several were tortured by the Police on 16th May. (lankauniversity-news photo)

INFORM

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Issues Covered

- A. Arrest of a HRD / political party activist for organizing a protest**
- B. Violations of Freedom of Expression**
- C. Violations of Freedom of Assembly**
- D. Repression of Opposition Political Parties**
- E. Suppression of the Remembrance by the Tamil People**

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:

1st May (May Day), 3rd May (World Press Freedom day) and 18th May (5 years after the end of the war) were three significant days, which exposed the divisions in Sri Lankan society and repression of dissent by an authoritarian government. The May Day rallies indicated a pro-government and anti-government dimension, rather than a united front for worker's rights. On May Day, a Trade Union Alliance critical of the government complained that Police had obstructed their annual May Day rally in Colombo. Striking workers were also attacked later in the month. The Government appeared to have ignored the World Press Freedom Day on 3rd May while media groups organised two major events, a campaign for right to information and public lecture on 'Democratic Governance and Media Freedom'. 18th May events brought out the deep ethnic polarization in Sri Lankan society, with most of those attending the government's "victory parade" being Sinhalese and majority of the Tamils, especially in the North, trying to spend the day solemnly, remembering the dead and disappeared and all the sufferings they had gone through due to war.

May also was a month where youth came into prominence in two contrasting ways. Sri Lankan university students fighting for their right to quality and free education were intimidated to stop their protests, arrested and tortured. At the same time, the government of Sri Lanka hosted youth from hundreds of countries to attend the World Conference on Youth, showcasing it as a major event. Several delegates told INFORM that there was no opportunity to learn about the university students struggles, effects of the war and situation of human rights, rule of law in Sri Lanka, and that some questions on accountability posed by few delegates to top government representatives were brushed off. A Minister banned delegates of the World Conference on Youth from having a press conference about abduction of girls in Nigeria, which led to a protest by some delegates.

Repression of freedom of expression in May also started on May Day with a government Minister pushing away a journalist at a May Day rally. There was also an attempted abduction and assault of a journalist early in the month. Police imposed arbitrary bans on media covering a court case, Military stopped a training workshop for journalists and Police removed a cut-out advertising a new film featuring a leading and award winning actor who is also an Opposition politician. Two websites were added to the list of already blocked websites in May.

The repression of Tamil political parties also continued, with reports of a Tamil politician / Human Rights Defender being arrested, houses of Tamil politicians surrounded by military and attacked and a Government Minister accusing the major Tamil political party, the Tamil National Alliance, of treason. On 18th May, which was 5 years after the end of the war, the government held its annual "victory parade" and celebrations. But in the North, as in the past, Tamil people were inclined to spend the day in mourning; remembering loved ones killed and disappeared. The military and police engaged in brutal crackdown on commemorations, trampling and attacking symbolic items such as flowers and lamps, banning religious events, questioning and stopping clergy and faithful from joining religious events, threatening university students, academics and journalists. Heavy military presence at Tamil political party offices, Tamil newspapers, places of religious worship and generally in the Northern Province served as a blanket intimidation. The University of Jaffna, whose students have a history of trying to organize religious-cultural events to remember those killed, was closed for a week.

Like in previous months and years, Government Ministers, Police and Military were directly responsible for many of the incidents, and they appear to enjoy absolute impunity, despite complaints being made to authorities and availability of clear evidence including widespread media coverage of some incidents.

A. Arrest of a HRD / political party activist for organizing a protest

1. HRD / Organizer of a Tamil Political party arrested

The Kilinochchi organiser of the Tamil National Peoples Front (TNPF), Mr. Thangaraj Jegatheeswaran was arrested on 23rd May 2014 by the Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) at his house at Kilinochchi, according to media reporting quoting the TNPF.

Mr. Jegatheeswaran was arrested for organising a protest planned for 26th May 2014 to demand the government to finish resettlement of displaced Kilinochchi residents and to prevent the military from forcibly taking over their land. After handing over a letter to seek permission from the Kilinochchi police to hold the protest, Mr. Jegatheeswaran was immediately summoned to the Kilinochchi Police station and urged to drop the protest. Police spokesperson, Senior Superintendent of Police Ajith Rohana told media that Mr. Jegatheeswaran was arrested on the suspicions of working to revive the LTTE¹.

B. Violations of Freedom of Expression

2. Media banned and threatened from covering Defence Secretary's court appearance

In a statement issued on 28th May 2014, the Free Media Movement (FMM) of Sri Lanka expressed serious concern on the ban by the Police on media to cover a defamation case filed by the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence (and President's brother), Mr. Gotabhaya Rajapaksa. The Police did not allow media to cover the cross examination of Mr. Rajapaksa by Attorney-at-law, Mr. M.A. Sumanthiran and warned media not to film Mr. Rajapaksa arriving or leaving the court². Such coverage is normal for any court cases and the FMM questioned in its statement as to why Mr. Gotabhaya Rajapaksa was given a preferential treatment when all other proceedings are open to media. A video clip posted on the BBC Sinhala service shows high ranking police officers threatening media personal that if they dare to film the motorcade arriving at the Mount Lavinia Magistrate Court, they will have to be in detention for months or years³. On 27th May 2014, Mr. Rajapaksa gave evidence in the case filed by him against the Sunday Leader newspaper regarding a series of articles published in 2008 alleging that huge corruption had taken place in buying fighter MiG Jets for the Sri Lanka Air Force. This is a case that has a public interest and banning media to cover the proceedings of the case is also a clear violation of people's right to information.

3. Media training workshop cancelled by the Ministry of Defence

A workshop organized by Transparency International Sri Lanka to train and encourage journalists to write investigative reports on the recommendations made by the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Committee (LLRC) to ensure good governance was cancelled by the Ministry of Defence⁴. A similar workshop for Sinhalese journalists had been held before and the workshop for Tamil language journalists started in Deer Park Hotel, Giritale on 22nd May. Tamil and Muslim journalists from North and Eastern provinces and Colombo were in participation. However, during the conference the hotel management

¹ <https://www.srilankamirror.com/news/15117-tnpf-k-nochchi-organiser-arrested> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

² <http://srilankabrief.blogspot.ch/2014/05/sri-lanka-security-forces-should.html#more> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

³ http://www.bbc.co.uk/sinhala/sri_lanka/2014/05/140527_gotabaya_court_video.shtml (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

⁴ <http://www.tisirilanka.org/?p=11979> (Last accessed on 1st July 2014)

informed the TISL that the workshop could no longer be conducted based on instructions received from the Ministry of Defence.

4. Journalist pushed away by a Minister on May day

On 1st May 2014, Cabinet Minister Arumugam Thondaman pushed away a journalist as he (the journalist) was trying to carry out his duties at the May Day Rally of the Ceylon Workers Congress, led by Minister Thondaman, in Bandarawela in the Badulla district. Speaking to the media on the incident media spokesperson of Tamil Journalists' Alliance, Mr. A. Nixon said that "when a Minister acts in this way, it is evident to us what the plight of democracy and media freedom in this country is"⁵. The incident was captured on video⁶ by fellow journalists and was given wide coverage on Television. To the best knowledge of INFORM, there has been no public apology by the Minister nor has any action been taken against the Minister.

5. Attempted abduction and assault of a journalist

A group of persons attempted to abduct provincial correspondent of the News 1st (MBC/MTV network) in Godakawela (Ratnapura district), Mr. Mahinda Pushpakumara on 1st May 2014, as he attempted to report on the snatching of an elephant calf from the Udawalawe National Park in the night. The network reported that although Mr. Pushpakumara was rescued by the residents and wildlife officers, the cassette containing footage of the incident was stolen. Mr. Pushpakumara was admitted to the Godakawela Hospital and complaints had been lodged with the Godakawela Police and the Inspector General of Police.⁷

6. Website blockade – www.theindependent.lk

Editor of website www.theindependent.lk Subhash Jayawardhana, lodged a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission (HRCSL) on 29th May 2014 that the website has been blocked by all local Internet Service Providing (ISP) companies. In his complaint Mr. Jayawardhana stated that blocking the web site is a violation of fundamental rights granted by 14(1)(a) of the constitution with regard to freedom of expression. The website is being daily updated in all three languages used in Sri Lanka (Sinhala, English and Tamil) and is an independent media institution maintained by "Independent Media Networks (pvt) Ltd, claimed the editor in his complaint. The web site has been blocked since 20th May 2013⁸.

7. Web site blockade – www.srilankamirror.lk

Access to website www.srilankamirror.lk was blocked by all the Internet Service Providing (ISP) companies in Sri Lanka from 12th May 2014, claimed its editor Mr. Kalum Shivantha in a petition to National Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL). The petition has called for an immediate inquiry regarding the issue as the constitutionally granted freedom of expression as well as the equality before law has been clearly violated due to these unlawful actions. Mr. Shivantha has told media that the local ISP companies verbally informed him that the blocking was done upon recommendation of the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka⁹.

⁵ <http://newsfirst.lk/english/2014/05/arumugam-thondaman-obstructed-journalist-media-organisations-condemn-behaviour/33439> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pr-bNU1s7lw#t=79> (Please see 1.12- 1.14) (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

⁷ <http://newsfirst.lk/english/2014/05/newsfirst-correspondent-attempted-rescue-elephant-calf-attacked/33442>

⁸ <https://www.srilankamirror.com/news/15185-theindependent-lk-complaints-to-hrc-over-blockade> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

⁹ <http://www.theindependent.lk/index.php/news2/3577-a-petition-to-hrc-against-sl-web-blockade> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

In 2005 a news website www.tamilnet.com was blocked in Sri Lanka for the first time. Since then dozens of news web sites (both Sinhalese and Tamil and those with multiple languages including English) have been banned in Sri Lanka. Most of these have been sites that publish content critical of the government.

A Commissioner for the HRCSL has told media that the Government blocking websites is unconstitutional¹⁰. But to the best knowledge of INFORM, until the above complaints had been filed, the HRCSL has not taken any definite and firm action in this regard ever since this practice has started several years ago, despite being vested with powers to initiate investigations on it's own, give formal determinations about the fundamental right(s) being violated, advising the government on unconstitutional requirements to registers websites etc.



Journalists and opposition politicians posing for a photo after submitting the petition to NHRC-SL (Photo:Sri Lanka Mirror)

Sri Lanka Mirror reported that on 24th May 2014, a series of cyber-attacks has been attempted at the social media accounts of the web site which includes its official Facebook page and Twitter account¹¹.

8. Cut-out of film actor cum opposition politician taken down by the Police

Police removed the large cut-outs erected in front of Ritz Cinema in Borella (Colombo district) to announce the commencement of the screening of the film 'Ranja' on 28th May 2013. Rathnapura district Opposition Member of Parliament Ranjan Ramanayake plays the main role in this film. The cut-outs showed Mr. Ramanayake as a fighter with the words 'Expose Rathupaswala Ranja and kings of anarchy.' Borella police had refused to record a complaint by the Cinema's manager against the removal of the cut-outs¹². Rathupaswala is

¹⁰ <http://www.theindependent.lk/index.php/news/3617-blocking-websites-is-a-violation-of-the-constitution-hrc-chairman> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

¹¹ <https://www.srilankamirror.com/news/15118-cyber-attack-attempts-on-mirror-emails-social-media-accounts> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

¹² <https://www.srilankamirror.com/news/14943-police-remove-ranja-s-cutouts> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

the village where protests against contaminated water led to three persons being shot dead and several injured in August 2013. Mr. Ranmanayaka was also elected as most popular actor for seventh consecutive year by popular vote in early 2014. Media reported that the Police wanted to erase the words 'exposes the enthronement of injustice and the lawless Kings' from the cut-out.¹³

9. Banning of Press Conference organized by the delegates at the World Conference on Youth by a Sri Lankan Minister

Sri Lankan Minister of Youth Affairs was reported to have banned a press conference by delegates to the World Conference on Youth (WCY) on the abduction of nearly 300 school girls by *Boko Haram* militants in Nigeria. WCY was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 6th to 10th May 2014¹⁴. "These people have a different agenda in mind, and this has nothing to do with the Conference. So I don't think we should allow them to hold a press conference," the Minister is reported to have told the media. The youth delegates told that "This is our event; the world must know of our plight and we, the youth wish to propagate this grave injustice to the world". A group of delegates held a protest against the Minister's actions by holding placards that read 'Bring back our girls'



International delegates protest at the World Conference on Youth 2014 in Colombo, against the refusal to hold a press conference. 9th May 2014 (Photo courtesy - Sanka VIDANAGAMA)

10. Right to reply denied to NGO by State controlled newspaper Daily News

The well-known Colombo based NGO, the National Peace Council (NPC) of Sri Lanka stated that the government's own flagship newspaper, after making personal vendetta against its Executive Director Dr. Jehan Perera, denied the NPC right to reply. NPC said that "it is a violation of media ethics not to grant the Right of Reply to those who have been

¹³ <http://lankaenews.com/English/news.php?id=14217> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

¹⁴ <http://www.ceylontoday.lk/51-63517-news-detail-african-delegates-protest-at-bmich.html> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

commented upon, both editorially and in the main feature article in a newspaper¹⁵. The context of the personal vendetta was a statement issued by the NPC advocating a national remembrance day instead of a war victory day. The Editor of the Daily News wrote an editorial and published a feature article attacking the NPC and Dr. Jehan Perera.

C. Violations of Freedom of Assembly

11. Obstructing speaker for May Day related seminar in a University

The University of Rajarata (In the Anuradhapura district) administration refused to give permission to a seminar about May Day, scheduled for 5th May 2014, citing the fact that the Convener of the Inter University Student Federation (IUSF) was giving a talk at the event. The seminar had to be thus held outside the University.

12. Police obtaining Court Order against protest by University students

On 6th May 2014, Police had obtained court orders against 17 activists of the Inter University Student Federation (IUSF), banning a protest march to be held on the 7th May 2014. These were served to student's houses on night of 6th May. The reason was the World Conference on Youth which was being hosted in Colombo during this period by the government. The Police had also intimidated the student activists by visiting their houses several times, with some students having been visited as many as six times. Even after 17 students had been arrested and subsequently released on bail, the police had visited the house of the IUSF Convener with a warrant to arrest him.

13. Student protestors arrested and assaulted by the Police

17 university students were arrested on 16th May 2014 and several were assaulted by the Police. Four students were admitted to Colombo National Hospital due to injuries and students claimed that two more injured students were not admitted to hospital, a claim denied by the Police¹⁶.

Speaking to Media, Student Union spokesman Lahiru Madusanka told that "they (students) were taken to the police station by men in civics, and beaten in full view of the public. They were still bleeding when they were produced before Fort Magistrate Thilina Gamage"¹⁷. Students of the faculty of Allied Health Sciences, at the University of Peradeniya, have been engaged in an ongoing protest against the four year Allied Health Science (AHS) special degree being reduced into a three year general degree. Allied Health Sciences Student Union (AHSSU) accuses the Ministry of Higher Education and the University Grants Commission (UGC) of downgrading the degree¹⁸.

¹⁵ <http://srilankabrief.blogspot.ch/2014/05/sri-lanka-govt-flagship-english-daily.html#more> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

¹⁶ <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/140518/news/ahs-undergraduate-activists-assaulted-in-police-custody-and-hospitalised-99597.html> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

¹⁷ <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/140518/news/ahs-undergraduate-activists-assaulted-in-police-custody-and-hospitalised-99597.html> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

¹⁸ <http://www.nation.lk/edition/news-online/item/20986-ahs-students-fight-for-four-year-degree.html#sthash.yEL8BHg8.dpuf> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)



One of the tourtered students (photo: Lanka Truth)

The president of the Federation of University Teachers Associations (FUTA), Mr. Chadraguptha Tenuwara said that 'student's demands and concerns regarding the issue on Allied Health Sciences course quality and the reduction of the course duration are fair. They have been reaching out to the authorities for over a period of three months but have received no response'¹⁹

14. TU coalition deprived of venue for the May Day rally

Trade Union leaders told INFORM that the Police had verbally promised the Joint Trade Union Alliance that the Hyde Park grounds in Colombo city will be allocated for their May Day rally on 1st May 2014, as has been the case in previous years. But according to them, the Police had subsequently allocated the venue to a pro-government Trade Union and obtained a court order prohibiting the Joint Trade Union Alliance from having the May Day rally at the venue. The Police had also obstructed their march on 1st May, stopping them at "Slave Island junction", several kilometres away from the controversial Hyde Park grounds and later charged three Trade Union leaders of violating the court order not to have the May Day rally in Hyde Park grounds. This has also been reported on some websites²⁰.

¹⁹ <http://www.lankanewspapers.com/news/2014/5/87995.html> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

²⁰ <http://www.srilankannursing.net/May%20day%202014.html> ((Last accessed on 10th June 2014)) – in Sinhalese



Police blocked the May Day demonstration of the Joint Trade Union Alliance at Slave Island junction (Photo: Nurse Karapitya face book)

15. Striking Holcim employees attacked

Holcim employees, who are on trade union action, requesting to make permanent their service, have been attacked by thugs on 24th May 2014 in front of the Galle (Southern province) factory. The senior vice president of Inter Company Employees' Union, Somadasa Weerathunga had stated that one employee had to be admitted to the hospital as a result of this attack²¹.

Nearly 500 Holcim employees from Aruwakkaruwa (Puttalam district), and Galle district have commenced trade union action due to them not being made permanent employees though they have worked more than 15 years. The Union says that the employees working on a contract basis have been denied an 8 hour work shift, a definite salary, and overtime allowances and there is corruption in providing their contributions for Employees Trust Fund (ETF) / Employees Provident Fund (EPF).

²¹ http://www.unions.lk/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=247:thug-attack-on-holcim-employees&catid=88:news&Itemid=1166 (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

D. Repression of Opposition Political Parties

16. Minister accuses TNA of an act of treason

The Ministry of Defence official website republished an article in the state controlled and owned pro-government English daily newspaper "Daily News", which accused the major Tamil political party, the Tamil National Alliance as having committed treason. The said article quoted the Public Administration and Home Affairs Minister W. D. J. Seneviratna saying that "In passing numerous resolutions and adopting them in the Northern Provincial Council demanding the withdrawal of the ban imposed by Sri Lanka on foreign terrorist organizations and individuals that have links with the Tamil Diaspora, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) members have committed an act of gross treason under the Constitution"²².

17. Jaffna Municipal Council opposition leader's house attacked

On 30th May 2014, an unidentified group attacked the house of Mr. Rajadevan, the leader of the opposition in the Jaffna Municipal Council. Attackers were reported to have come in motorcycles and thrown stones at the front window. Tamil media sited Mr. Rajadevan's involvement in proposing to pay tributes to people who were killed during the final stage of war in Mullivaikkaal as the reason for the attack²³.

18. Military surrounding TNA organizer's house

Military personnel had rounded up the house of Northern Provincial Councillor S. Pasubathipillai in Thirunagar in the Killinochchi district around 4am till about 8.30am, on 28th May 2014 and inspected family documents²⁴.

E. Suppression of the Remembrance by the Tamil People

19. Places of Religion warned; Public remembrance banned

Even though 18th May was a Sunday, a day Christians world over go to Churches for services, some persons including clergy reported to INFORM that they were not allowed to go to Church by the Military. Earlier in the 3rd week of May, the Military banned all temple events and public gatherings to commemorate the dead, stating that no bells should toll on 17th and 18th May 2014²⁵. On 18th May 2014, Military spokesman Ruwan Wanigasuriya told media that no public remembrance events would be allowed, but people would be allowed to have private events in their homes²⁶. Later Sri Lanka Police said those remembrance events were prevented because it was a threat to national harmony²⁷.

²² http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=TNA_Says_UN_BAN_BAN_20140430_01 (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

²³ <http://www.tamilcnn.ca/house-rajadevan-attacked-inviting-mullivaikkaal-remembrance-day.html> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

²⁴ <http://www.lankasrnews.com/view.php?22AOlv2acJ5YAe4e4eMMc02aAmB3dd3PBmc30366AY2e4UY550ca2I0ld3> (Last accessed 5th June 2014)

²⁵ <http://www.globaltamilnews.net/GTMNEditorial/tabid/71/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/107107/language/en-US/article.aspx> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

²⁶ <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/140518/news/memorials-blood-donation-banned-in-north-east-99572.html> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

²⁷ <http://www.adaderana.lk/news/war-remembrance-service-a-threat-to-harmony-police-> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

20. Religious ceremonies banned and disrupted; elected representatives blocked

Mrs. Ananthi Sasitharan, Northern Provincial Councillor from the Tamil National Alliance and the wife of a rebel leader missing since his Tamil Tiger separatists surrendered to the Army on May 18, 2009, said the military used "abusive language" when she tried to enter the Hindu temple in Keerimalai to conduct her usual rituals to remember her relatives killed in the war and her husband²⁸. Military personal had reportedly mingled with Tamil opinion makers and people who gathered to perform religious rituals remembering their dead²⁹.



NPC councillor Annathi Sashitharan staged a one women protest against the military blocking her to perform religious rituals for her disappeared husband (Photo: Tamil Gaurdian)

As shown by the video footage posted by several Tamil online media, Tamil politicians were abused and coconuts used for the religious rituals were forcibly trampled by a gang. Breaking coconut into shreds in front of temples is an emotional expression of Saiva devotees³⁰. In Vavuniya, TNA MPs had booked the Cooperative Hall to conduct a commemorative meeting, but the booking was cancelled on the instructions of the Police.³¹

21. Provincial Council Secretariat blocked; floral tributes trampled upon

Police officials trampled on the floral tributes remembering the dead, placed in front of the Northern Provincial Council (NPC) Secretariat at Kaithadi in the Jaffna district. As shown by the short video footage posted by online news media, Police officers smashed the camphor lamp lit by Tamil political leaders. Police had barricaded the NPC building to prevent politicians entering to have a remembrance event³².

²⁸ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/18/us-sri-lanka-war-celebrations-idUSBREA4H09B20140518> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0iqbamHavc> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-WVvMXDidOU> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

³¹ <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/140518/news/memorials-blood-donation-banned-in-north-east-99572.html> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

³² <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=37215> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

22. Newspaper and political party offices blocked by the military

The office of the leading Tamil daily published in Jaffna, the Uthayan, was surrounded by the Military and the two entrances leading to the office from the Navalar Road and Kasthuriyar Road were blocked. All those who entered the roads were questioned and some people were turned away³³. Another Tamil daily the Yal Thinakkural office in Jaffna too was blocked by the Military³⁴. On the morning of 18th May 2014, offices of the Tamil National People's Front (TNPf)³⁵ and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) were blocked by the heavily armed soldiers³⁶. In Kilinochchi the TNA office was surrounded by the military and prevented people entering the office to take part in a remembrance event. People gathered at the Krishnan Hindu Temple to perform religious rituals in remembering the dead³⁷.

23. Blood donations banned; Blood bank of Jaffna hospital closed

Even the blood donation campaigns were banned on 18th May 2014. The Police had instructed the Jaffna and other hospitals in the North not to assist such campaigns. The Military is reported to have closed the blood donation centre at Jaffna teaching hospital to prevent people donating blood on the 18th May 2014³⁸.

24. Jaffna University closed

On the 5th May 2014, the Registrar of Jaffna University sent out letters announcing the closure of the University from 16th to 20th May with no explanation³⁹. But the timing and the fact that Jaffna university students had been organizing commemorations for those killed during the war indicated that this closure was to prevent such commemorations being organized.

25. Death threats to Tamil Academics, Students & Journalists in Jaffna

Open death threats were issued against selected members of the teaching staff of the University of Jaffna, Students leaders and journalists over their attempts to remember the war dead⁴⁰. Posters headlined as "last warning" by the "Troops to safe guard motherland" were pasted in the Jaffna university compound on 18th May. Names of Jaffna university professors, student's leaders and newspaper journalists were included in thee posters.⁴¹

On the 7th May 2014, leaflets were posted on the University premises making death threats against professors and student leaders charging that they support terrorism. On the 8th May 2014, Major General Udaya Perera told university officials, including the Vice

³³ <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/47226-roads-blocked-in-jaffna.html> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

³⁴ <http://www.globaltamilnews.net/GTMNEditorial/tabid/71/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/107107/language/en-US/article.aspx> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

³⁵ <http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=10940> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

³⁶ <http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=10942> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

³⁷ <http://www.globaltamilnews.net/GTMNEditorial/tabid/71/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/107076/language/si-LK/article.aspx> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

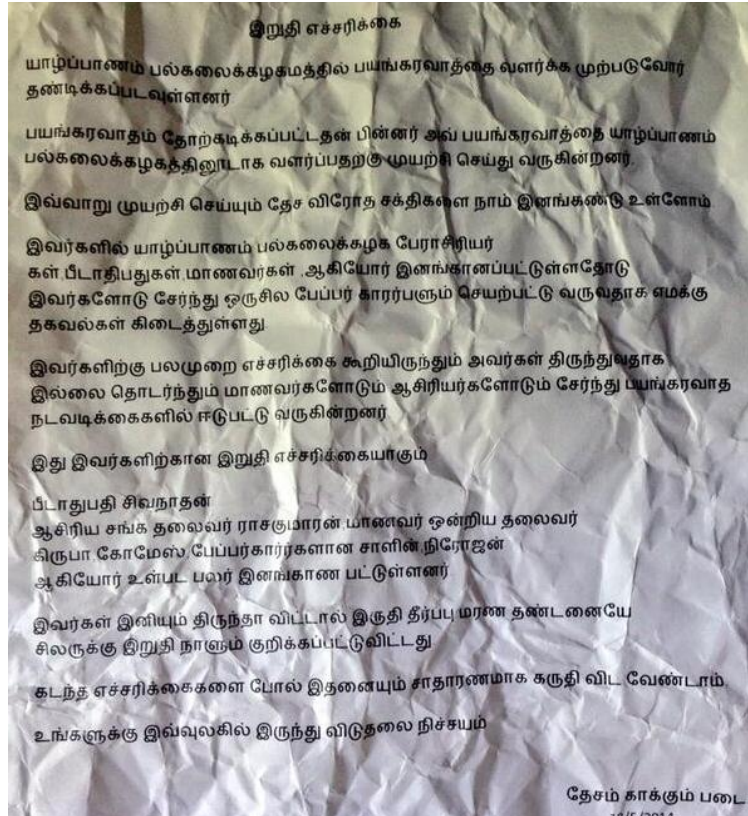
³⁸ <http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=10945> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

³⁹ <http://srilankabrief.blogspot.ch/2014/05/why-should-tamil-speaking-of-war-be.html> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

⁴⁰ <http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=10974> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

⁴¹ <http://www.lankasrinews.com/view.php?224YY5n2202SmBBd4eeoOOldcca0C6AAedddAeMMeaacallOU3e44ZBmm3003c55YO23> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

Chancellor, deans, and student leaders that no observance in the University would be permitted on the 18th May.



The last warning by 'Troops to safe guard motherland' (Tamil Canadian)

Further he told them that any observance will be considered as extolling the LTTE leader Prabhakaran and inducement to terrorism⁴².

The threatening notices in the University had again singled out the Dean of Arts, Prof. Sivanathan, as trying to revive the LTTE. The Dean was reported to have been the only member of the Council to oppose, as he had done before, the recent recruitment as Computer Application Assistants, persons from a list of unqualified persons at the behest of a political party that virtually runs the Council. He had rebuked the Council that this was a 'malpractice'⁴³.

26. Jaffna University Teacher's Association President questioned

On the 20th May 2014, students of the University of Jaffna held a remembrance event. Jaffna University Teachers Association (JUTA) President, Dr A. Rasakumaran was questioned by the TID for his involvement in organising the remembrance event⁴⁴.

⁴² <http://srilankabrief.blogspot.ch/2014/05/why-should-tamilis-speaking-of-war-be.html> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

⁴³ <http://srilankabrief.blogspot.ch/2014/05/why-should-tamilis-speaking-of-war-be.html> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

⁴⁴ <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/140525/news/juta-president-dr-rasakumaran-decries-tid-questioning-for-organising-commemoration-ceremony-100254.html> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)

27. Catholic Priest questioned by Military about annual memorial service

A Catholic Priest, who serves as the Parish Priest of Uruthirapuram Church in the Killinochchi district, was questioned by military two days before an annual commemoration held at the Church for the former Parish Priest, who died on the last day of war, and for other people who had died during the war⁴⁵. According to a priest living and working in the North who had attended the commemorations from its initiation in 2010, "Despite difficulties and such a repressive environment, the local population was able to build this small memorial near the church of Uruthirapuram where Fr Sarathjeevan served as a parish priest. Two days before the commemoration, some soldiers came to the Church of St Fatima Uruthirapuram and questioned the Parish Priest. They asked whether outsiders were coming for our event. On the 17th (May) many soldiers were deployed on the road between Kilinochchi and Uruthipuram to control who came."

⁴⁵ <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/In-the-north,-Tamils-defy-government-to-remember-Fr-Sara,-who-died-during-the-Civil-War-31197.html> (Last accessed on 10th June 2014)