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# 2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sri Lanka

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After the widely contested September 21 presidential elections and November 14 snap parliamentary elections, civil society groups called on the first voter-elected presidential administration since 2022 to build on the demands for good governance and respect for rights expressed in the 2022 “Aragalaya” nationwide protest movement, which resulted in the ouster of the then-president.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary or unlawful killings; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; involuntary or coercive medical or psychological practices; arbitrary arrest or detention; transnational repression against individuals in another country; and serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence and threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests of journalists, and censorship.

The government took minimal steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Section 1.

## Life

### a. Extrajudicial Killings

There were several reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings during the year. There were multiple deaths in police custody; many occurred when police took suspects to the alleged crime scene as part of an investigation or claimed suspects attacked them during interrogation or tried to escape.

In September, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) reported a total of seven cases of custodial deaths during the period between January and August.

Police reported 103 targeted shootings throughout the year, a decrease from 120 in 2023.

On March 10, police arrested Kalahara Dilshan, a former army commando, in connection with the killing of a Buddhist monk at a temple in Malwathuhipitiya on January 23. According to police, the suspect tried to escape by shooting at the officers with a concealed weapon after they escorted him to his hidden cache of firearms and ammunition in Yatawaka. Police returned fire to prevent his escape and wounded him. Dilshan succumbed to his injuries at Wathupitiwala Hospital. Civil society leaders stated these kinds of deaths fit a pattern of police extrajudicial killings, and multiple previous incidents led the HRCSL to issue recommendations in its December 2023 *General Guidelines and Recommendations to Sri Lanka Police on Preventing Custodial and Encounter Deaths* in an attempt to end this trend.

### b. Coercion in Population Control

There were no reports of coerced abortion but civil society reported involuntary sterilization occurred.

Civil society organizations reported involuntary sterilization affected some marginalized communities experiencing acute poverty, especially Tamil plantation workers, when government doctors in state-run hospitals opted for caesareans when delivering babies so that it was possible to perform sterilization at the same time, following consent only from the woman's husband. They reported these doctors did not always obtain consent from the woman.

Section 2.

## **Liberty**

### **a. Freedom of the Press**

The constitution provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, but the government sometimes restricted this right. In its report on the human rights situation in the country, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) observed a persistent trend of surveillance, intimidation, and harassment of journalists and civil society actors, especially those working on enforced disappearances, land seizures, environmental issues, and with former combatants in the north and east.

Authorities restricted hate speech, including insults to religion or religious beliefs, through a police ordinance and the penal code. The government requested media stations and outlets refrain from featuring hate speech in their news items and segments. Restrictions on hate speech were applied selectively, with hate speech against Muslims more tolerated than against other groups. There were also reports authorities attempted to intimidate individuals who criticized the government, including through public statements, questioning by security officials, official visits at their homes, and arrests. Civil society accused the government of using the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Act, which Sri Lanka adopted into domestic law, and penal code provisions against hate speech to curtail freedom of expression. In its August 22 report to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), the OHCHR also reported the government misused the ICCPR Act to stifle freedom of expression.

On June 19, the Colombo Fort Magistrate's Court dismissed comedian Nathasha Edirisooriya's charges of insulting Buddhism during an April performance, a recording of which was posted to the SLVlog YouTube channel on May 23. Police accused her of violating the ICCPR Act, which criminalized advocacy of "national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence" as well as the Computer Crime Act and hate speech provisions of the penal code. On July 6, the Colombo Fort magistrate granted bail to Edirisooriya. The magistrate discharged her and administrator of SLVlog Bruno Divakara, based on the attorney general's opinion that hate speech charges could not be pursued in the case.

### **Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure**

There were reports of harassment and intimidation of journalists covering sensitive topics. Some journalists in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, including citizen journalists, reported harassment, threats, intimidation, and interference from members of state security services, especially when reporting on topics related to the civil war or its aftermath, including missing persons. Tamil journalists reported military officers requested copies of photographs, lists of attendees at events, and names of sources for articles. They also reported the military directly requested journalists refrain from reporting on sensitive events, such as Tamil war commemorations

or land occupation protests, as well as from posting anything related to former Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) leaders, and that they feared repercussions if they did not cooperate.

Reporters alleged authorities, sometimes in government vehicles, surveilled journalists, especially those covering protests.

On February 21, Tamil press reported the army threatened to confiscate and destroy the telephones of three Tamil journalists, Prabhakaran Dilaksan, Sundarampillai Rajeskarar, and Chinnaiya Yogeswaran, as they attempted to cover a gathering of civilians after the military allowed them to visit temples within the “High-Security Zone” in Jaffna. On June 13, a group of unidentified individuals vandalized the house of Tamil freelance journalist Thambithurai Pradeepan in Jaffna, set his motorbike on fire, and damaged his three-wheeler. The damage caused to his property was reported to be more than one million Sri Lankan rupees (\$3,420). Jaffna police deployed four teams, but there was no progress in the investigation. In June, Pradeepan lodged a complaint to the HRCSL regarding the lack of progress in the investigation.

### **Censorship by Governments, Military, Intelligence, or Police Forces, Criminal Groups, or Armed Extremist or Rebel Groups**

Some journalists said the Attorney General’s Department ignored requests for comments but threatened journalists with slander lawsuits when the journalists reported on large-scale corruption cases without comment from the government. Slander was not a criminal offense in the country.

While some online commentators reported occasionally self-censoring because of fears of harassment, threats, and intimidation, more journalists seemed concerned with whether antigovernment reporting might be rejected by publishers who feared losing advertising revenue controlled by the government. Those who worked for smaller media organizations reported increased self-censorship due to fear they would face heightened vulnerability, as they had no institutional backing.

The international nongovernmental organization (NGO) Committee to Protect Journalists reported that on March 5, the Criminal Investigation Department arrested G.P. Nissanka, owner and editor of the news site *Ravana Lanka News*, and detained him until his March 20 release on bail. His mobile phone was seized during his arrest. Nissanka’s arrest followed a complaint by army commander Vikum Liyanage after *Ravana Lanka News* published an article accusing the commander of corruption and malfeasance. Nissanka was accused of violating the Computer Crime Act related to offenses committed against national security and a section of the police ordinance related to spreading false reports to create alarm and panic.

Authorities continued to cite the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), ICCPR act, and penal code to arrest and punish critics of the government and deter criticism of government policies or officials.

On January 24, parliament passed the Online Safety Act (OSA) with the purported aim to curb disinformation and online harassment and establishing a new commission to regulate online speech. The OSA drew sharp criticism from civil society activists, who feared government restrictions on online speech would stifle dissent, as well as from tech sector professionals, who worried the law’s strict requirements would limit social media companies’ ability to freely operate in the country and could force companies to share encrypted data and identification information with the government. In November 2023, the Supreme Court ruled more than half of the provisions in the OSA were unconstitutional and required revisions to the law. The government committed to making revisions but had not done so by the end of the year.

## **b. Worker Rights**

### **Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining**

The law provided for the right of workers to form and join unions of their choice. Exceptions included members of the armed forces, police officers, judicial officers, and prison officers. Workers in nonessential services industries, except for workers in public-service unions, had the legal right to bargain collectively. The law did not explicitly recognize the right to strike, but courts recognized an implied right to strike based on the Trade Unions Ordinance and the Industrial Disputes Act. Labor unions were a key political constituency, and union leaders were also members of the National People's Party, the newly elected president's party.

During the first half of the year, the Department of Labor filed 54 new cases with the courts against companies under the Industrial Disputes Act. In addition, the department filed six cases under the Termination of Employment of Workmen Act.

The Shop and Office Employees Act removed restrictions on night shifts for women in a few specific sectors. Employers, however, had to ensure security, transport, and resting facilities for women employees working night shifts.

The law prohibited antiunion discrimination. Violations could result in a fine. The law required an employer found guilty of antiunion discrimination to reinstate workers fired for union activities, but the company could transfer them to different locations. Penalties for violations were commensurate with those under other laws involving denial of civil rights, such as discrimination. Penalties were sometimes applied against violators.

Labor laws did not cover domestic workers employed in the homes of others or informal-sector workers, but there was an active domestic workers' union. The law allowed unions to conduct their activities without interference, but the government enforced the law unevenly. Nonunion worker councils tended to represent labor in export-processing zone (EPZ) enterprises, although several unions operated in the zones. According to the Board of Investment, which operated the EPZs, if both a recognized trade union with bargaining power and a nonunion worker council existed in an enterprise, the trade union would have the power to represent the employees in collective bargaining.

Under emergency regulations, the president had broad discretion to declare sectors "essential" to national security, the life of the community, or the preservation of public order, and to revoke those workers' rights to conduct legal strikes. The law also allowed the president to declare services provided by government agencies as "essential" public services. The law prohibited retribution against striking workers in nonessential sectors.

Seven workers might form a union, adopt a charter, elect leaders, and publicize their views, but a union had to represent 40 percent of workers at a given enterprise before the law obligated the employer to bargain with the union. Unions that did not meet the 40 percent threshold could merge with others and operate as one. The law did not permit public-sector unions to form federations or represent workers from more than one branch or department of government. The labor ministry could cancel a union's registration if it failed to submit an annual report for three years.

Only the Department of Labor could bring antiunion discrimination cases before a magistrate court, not those individuals or organizations alleging such discrimination. The department reported no new cases were filed with the courts against companies under the Industrial Disputes Act during the year. Four previously filed cases were closed, and nine cases remained pending. Citing routine government inaction on alleged violations of labor rights, some unions pressed for standing to sue, while some smaller unions did not want that ability because of the cost of filing cases. The department reported that during the year workers filed six cases under the Termination of Employment and Workmen Act and 684 cases under the Payment of Gratuity Act.

The Industrial Dispute Act did not apply to the public sector, and public-sector unions had no formal dispute resolution mechanism. In addition, most large-scale private firms in the services sector, other than banks and hotels, prohibited forming or joining a labor union within work premises and included it as a binding clause in the letter of appointment or contracts signed between the employee and the firm; this practice transgressed the country's legal framework.

The government generally respected workers' freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively. Unions alleged that employers often indefinitely delayed recognition of unions to avoid collective bargaining, decrease support for unionization, or identify, terminate, and sometimes assault or threaten union activists. The Ministry of Labor required labor commissioners to hold union certification elections within 30 working days of an application for registration if there was no objection, or within 45 working days if there was an objection.

In July, approximately one million public-sector employees held a national two-day strike on July 8-9 to oppose government spending cuts and demand a higher monthly allowance. They were joined by an estimated 250,000 public school teachers on July 9. The action, called by more than 200 unions, brought most day-to-day activities at state offices and schools to a halt.

## **Forced or Compulsory Labor**

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

## **Acceptable Work Conditions**

### **Wage and Hour Laws**

The national minimum wage law included a daily minimum wage and provided different minimum wages for different industries. The Department of Labor's wage boards set minimum wages and working conditions by sector and industry in consultation with unions and employers. The minimum private-sector and public-sector wages were above the government's official poverty line. Amendments to the Wages Board Ordinance were made to establish minimum wage standards across various sectors. The amendments aimed to address wage disparities and improve living standards for workers.

The law prohibited most full-time workers from regularly working more than 45 hours per week (a five-and-a-half-day workweek). In addition, the law stipulated a rest period of one hour per day. Regulations limited maximum overtime hours to 15 hours per week. Overtime pay was 1.5 times the basic wage and was paid for work beyond 45 hours per week and work on Sundays or holidays. The provision limiting basic work hours was not applicable to managers and executives in public institutions. The law provided for paid annual holidays. Amendments to the Shop and Office Employees Act focused on regulating working hours and ensuring fair wages for employees in shops and offices. The changes were to promote work life balance and protect employee rights.

Civil society organizations and local politicians maintained that in the tea estate sector, companies kept real salaries low by offering employees fewer days of work per month and using contracted laborers who did not receive benefits. The minimum wage for tea pickers was 1,700 rupees (\$5) per day, but workers stated some companies refused to pay the minimum wage.

## **Occupational Safety and Health**

Except for the Factories Ordinance of 1942, there was no national law addressing occupational safety and health (OSH) in the country. Nonetheless, the government set OSH standards through guidelines and regulations that were generally appropriate for the main industries in the country. Workers had the right to remove themselves from dangerous situations, but many workers had no knowledge of such rights or feared they would lose their jobs if they did so. OSH standards in the rapidly growing construction sector, including infrastructure development projects such as port, airport, and road construction, as well as high-rise buildings, were insufficient. Employers, particularly those in the construction industry, increasingly used contract employment for work of a

regular nature, and contract workers had fewer safeguards. Labor regulations applied whenever a company had at least one permanent employee, but seasonal workers were not necessarily covered.

### **Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement**

Penalties for violating minimum wage and hours of work laws were a fine, six months' imprisonment, or both. Penalties for wage, hour, and OSH violations were commensurate with those for crimes such as fraud or negligence. Penalties were sometimes applied against violators.

Labor ministry inspectors verified whether employers fully paid employees and contributed to pension funds as required by law. Unions questioned, however, whether the ministry's inspections were effective. The Labor Department used a computerized labor information system application designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of inspections, but officials and trade unions said the system was not well maintained.

Authorities did not effectively enforce OSH standards in all sectors. The labor ministry's inspections and remediation efforts were insufficient. The number of labor inspectors was insufficient for the country's workforce. Civil society organizations accused the Labor Department of being "lax with regards to the tea estate sector" and not thoroughly investigating labor complaints.

According to the 2021 Labor Force Survey (most recent data available), approximately 58 percent of the country's workforce was employed in the informal sector. In agriculture, approximately 89 percent of employment was informal. Labor inspectors did not monitor wages or working conditions or provide programs or social protections for informal-sector workers.

## **c. Disappearance and Abduction**

### **Disappearance**

There were no reports of enforced disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities. The Office on Missing Persons (OMP) reported it had not received any new complaints of missing persons or enforced disappearances during the year.

There was little progress investigating allegations of abuses from the 1983-2009 civil war or from the 1988-89 Marxist insurrection. Impunity and lack of accountability for war-era abuses remained a problem. Disappearances during the war and its aftermath were unresolved. Families of disappeared and missing persons were frustrated with the lack of progress investigating cases and the lack of answers from the government or the OMP.

In an August report to the UNHRC, the OHCHR stated the OMP, despite its mandate and investigative powers, had prioritized assessing victim families' financial assistance eligibility, reducing duplicate database entries, and closing files through preliminary inquiries. The OHCHR expressed concern that this approach burdened families to provide more evidence, which retraumatized victims. The OHCHR reminded the government of the Committee on Enforced Disappearance's ability to receive information under article 31 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance while also stating concerns with the OMP's technical and financial capabilities to conduct exhumations in line with international standards. As of July, the government reported payments totaling 40.6 million rupees (\$126,000) of relief to 203 families of persons from the north and east.

There were 15 reported mass graves in the country pending investigation, with most in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The OMP was legally empowered to act as an observer during excavations, exhumations, and other proceedings related to suspected grave sites. The OMP provided legal counsel associated with the excavation of mass graves in Mannar and Mullaitivu. Further, the OMP

took steps to digitalize a database of missing persons and interlink with the families and relatives of the missing person.

There was no progress on the “Navy 11” case of the abduction and disappearance of 11 individuals from Colombo in 2008 and 2009 involving former navy Commander Wasantha Karannagoda.

During July 4-15 excavations at a suspected mass grave discovered in June 2023 in Kokkuthoduvai, Mullaitivu District, forensic archeologists exhumed 12 skeletal remains, bringing the total to 52. Families of the disappeared, civil society, local politicians, and the press observed excavations following the court ruling allowing their presence. The OMP reported the mass grave originated from 1994 to 1996 and the remains were of former LTTE cadres, mostly women. The OMP awaited a bone analysis report and forensic report to confirm the time period of the grave. Local NGO Center for Human Rights and Development said many bodies showed signs of being riddled with gunshots and evidence of clothes being torn from bodies, representing a clear case of violence and abuse, constituting human rights violations. The Mullaitivu Magistrate Court ordered the mass grave closed after a forensic archeologist confirmed there were no more skeletal remains. Civil society and the OMP reported government intelligence officers were present and questioned some of the observers.

### **Prolonged Detention without Charges**

The law prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of any persons to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. The government generally did not observe these requirements.

The HRCSL received 838 complaints of arbitrary arrest or detention between January and August, including the arrests of journalists and politicians. According to the HRCSL, authorities notified the HRCSL of 46 cases of arrests and detentions under the PTA between January 2023 and March 2024. Police sometimes held detainees incommunicado, and lawyers had to apply for permission to meet clients, with police frequently present at such meetings. In some cases, unlawful detentions reportedly included interrogations involving mistreatment or torture. Despite the government’s stance of a de facto moratorium on the use of the PTA since 2022, there were reports of at least 10 arrests under the PTA. As of February 8, courts released all 13 individuals arrested under the PTA in November 2023 for alleged use of illegal symbols or images glorifying the LTTE during participation in LTTE Great Heroes Day, an annual event to commemorate fallen LTTE fighters.

According to civil society sources, during the year at least three PTA detainees, including convicted prisoners, were released by court on bail, had charges against them dropped, or were acquitted. As of September, civil society groups estimated that those who remained incarcerated under the PTA consisted of 42 convicted and pretrial detention prisoners, including 14 Tamils for offenses related to the LTTE and 28 Muslims in relation to the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks.

Pretrial detainees comprised approximately two-thirds of the detainee population. Inability to post bail, lengthy legal procedures, judicial inefficiency, and corruption often caused delays in releasing pretrial detainees. Legal advocacy groups asserted that for those cases in which pretrial detention exceeded 24 hours, it was common for the length of pretrial detention to equal or exceed the sentence for the alleged crime.

A person could legally challenge an arrest or detention and obtain release through the courts. The legal process took years, however. Human rights groups reported the perceived lack of judicial independence and minimal compensation discouraged individuals from challenging an arrest or detention in the courts.

### **d. Violations in Religious Freedom**

See the Department of State's annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

## **e. Trafficking in Persons**

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Section 3.

## **Security of the Person**

### **a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

The constitution and law prohibited such practices, but there were credible reports government officials employed them.

Human rights and civil society organizations alleged torture and excessive use of force by police, particularly to extract confessions and to root out perceived terrorist elements, was endemic. The International Truth and Justice Project Sri Lanka, an international NGO documenting ongoing human rights violations in the country, confirmed that it had documented six cases in which individuals were abducted, detained without formal arrest or charges, held incommunicado for several days, subjected to torture, coerced into signing confessions, and later released. Anecdotally, male arrestees more often reported facing torture than female arrestees.

On June 26, speaking at an event to mark the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, Gehan Gunatilake, the HRCSL commissioner, stated only 115 cases had been filed under the 1994 Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment Act, resulting in fewer than 10 convictions. On August 2, Justice S. Thurairaja, chairman of a three-judge Supreme Court bench, during the hearing of a fundamental rights petition by two university students subjected to humiliating treatment during a protest in 2009, stated that despite various court orders, warnings, and guidelines aimed at preventing torture and abuses during police arrests, such incidents continued unabated. The National Police Commission and the inspector general of police had not addressed these issues nor issued any reports concerning them, the judge stated.

On November 9, security forces in Jaffna allegedly physically assaulted several Tamil civilians, including a woman and her child, age two months, causing protests outside the local police station.

Between January 2023 and March 2024, the HRCSL documented 2,845 complaints of torture and 675 complaints of degrading treatment. In response to allegations of torture, the HRCSL carried out routine visits to detention centers and established a Rapid Response Unit to conduct immediate visits and inquiries. From January to June, the HRCSL conducted 992 police station visits and 36 prison visits and met 2,293 detainees at police stations. In addition, the commission operated a 24-hour hotline for individuals to report any human rights violation including torture, illegal arrest, and detention.

Impunity was a significant problem. Government officials, military, paramilitary, police, and other security-sector officials were not held accountable for abuses. Civil society organizations asserted the government, including the courts, was reluctant to act against security forces alleged to be responsible for abuses.

The law did not prohibit female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) for women and girls. Some of the country's Muslims historically practiced FGM/C. There were no recent statistics on the

prevalence of FGM/C in the country, but one NGO reported it was highly prevalent among the small Dawoodi Bohra community (fewer than 3,000 persons), where it was considered an essential ritual, and common among Moor and Malay communities.

## **b. Protection of Children**

### **Child Labor**

See the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings/>.

### **Child Marriage**

Civil law set the minimum legal age for marriage at 18, although girls could marry at age 16 with parental consent. The government effectively enforced the law. The Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act, which applied only to Muslims, permitted the marriage of girls as young as 12 with the consent of the bride's father, other male relatives, or a *quazi* (Islamic judge). According to the penal code, sexual intercourse with a girl younger than 16, with or without her consent, was statutory rape. The provision, however, did not apply to married Muslim girls older than 12.

## **c. Protection to Refugees**

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, or asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern.

### **Provision of First Asylum**

The law did not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status and the government did not have a system for providing protection to refugees. Remaining in the country as a recognized refugee was not permitted. A 2005 memorandum of understanding allowed UNHCR to operate in the country to conduct refugee registration and status determinations. With no legal or policy framework on asylum in the country, however, entering the country to seek asylum remained difficult. UNHCR also facilitated durable solutions for refugees in the form of resettlement to third countries. The government relied on UNHCR to provide food, housing, and education for refugees in the country and to pursue third-country resettlement for them. Asylum seekers, however, had to rely on the support of NGOs for basic needs.

According to UNHCR, the office planned to close operations in the country at the end of the year and would maintain a liaison presence from 2025 onward. On January 2, a group of Rohingya refugees staged a protest in front of UNHCR's office against closure of the office, saying they feared losing their living allowance once the agency's office closed. The protesters also demanded to be resettled in another country because Sri Lanka did not allow them to live there permanently.

According to UNHCR, as of December, there were 163 registered refugees and 251 registered asylum seekers. Among these persons were 110 Rohingya refugees and many asylum seekers from the Ahmadiyya community. UNHCR stopped processing asylum applications and facilitating permanent resettlement of an estimated 250 asylum seekers and refugees who had arrived in the country after March 31, 2022. UNHCR announced in June that 176 asylum seekers who were registered with UNHCR Sri Lanka at that time would not be considered for third-country resettlement by UNHCR and would likely remain in the country beyond the end of the year. UNHCR discontinued the monthly subsistence allowance and education assistance to refugees and asylum seekers on December 31, 2023, following an 11-month advance warning. The HRCSL

reported the continued protection and promotion of the human rights (including the right to an adequate standard of living, to health care and education, and to engage in a lawful occupation) of the remaining refugees, registered asylum seekers, and those who sought asylum but had not been formally registered, now required the attention of the government.

#### **d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement**

There was a small Jewish population living in different parts of the country. There were no known reports of antisemitic incidents.

#### **e. Instances of Transnational Repression**

The government engaged in transnational repression against Tamil and Muslim diaspora organizations as well as certain individuals, primarily Muslims, living abroad.

#### **Threats, Harassment, Surveillance, or Coercion**

On June 3, the Ministry of Defense renewed the proscription of nine Tamil diaspora organizations and six Muslim groups for allegedly supporting and funding terrorism, allegations the organizations continued to deny. It also renewed the banning of 118 individuals, including diaspora Tamil members, former LTTE and individuals arrested released on bail or detained under the PTA, and Muslims, mostly arrested and released on bail or detained under the PTA for the Easter Sunday attack, including those living overseas.

On July 26, the government removed a ban on five of the 11 Muslim groups proscribed in 2021 under the PTA. The delisted organizations were United Thawheed Jamma'ath, Ceylon Thawheed Jamma'ath, Sri Lanka Thawheed Jamma'ath, All Ceylon Thawheed Jamma'ath, and Jamiyathul Ansari Sunnathul Mohomadiya.