

2022 June

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This report includes the incidents of the month related to Media Freedom, developments of the past incidents and related observations. The report also considers incidents related to the right to freedom of speech and expression of journalists as well as the public, as well as national and international responses to new legislation, legal reforms and relevant proposals. In June 2022, there were 29 incidents related to the scope/ components covered by the Free Media Movement, in monitoring media freedom. There were 07 incidents related to the safety and protection of journalists, 20 cases under the legal category, one case related to the independence of the media and one case covered under the scope of structural conditions. The majority of incidents were related to the mass agitations that spilled across the country demanding the resignation of the President.

### Incidents reported in June:

1. The rejection of the petition seeking to prevent the eviction of 'GotaGoGama' protesters.
2. A court order was given to remand the defendants in the case related to the disappearance of journalist Prageeth Eknaligoda.
3. Sandhya Eknaligoda, the wife of the disappeared journalist Prageeth Eknaligoda, addressing the 31st Conference of the International Federation of Journalists.
4. The refusal of the court to grant an injunction against a march of the Inter-University Student Federation.
5. Cancellation of the summons issued to former Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa by the Human Rights Commission regarding the attack on the 'GotaGoGama' protesters.
6. Hearing of the petition filed with the Supreme Court demanding compensation from the politicians

- responsible for the attack on the 'GotaGoGama' protest site.
7. The Bar Association letter to the Attorney General expressing concern about the investigation being carried out regarding the attack on 9 May.
  8. Submitting a complaint to the Human Rights Commission regarding the arrest of activists of the people's struggle.
  9. Summoning of attorney-at-law Senaka Perera, an activist of the people's struggle, to the Criminal Investigation Department.
  10. Social media activist Sampath Edirisinghe was arrested by the Kanthale police.
  11. Interrogation of two Kurunegala social activists and one of them arrested.
  12. Summoning of Sister Mary Sonali, an activist of the 'GotaGoGama' protest, to the Wennappuwa Police to obtain a statement.
  13. Matara Magistrate's Court sentencing a protester to three and a half years imprisonment.
  14. Journalist Kanapathipilla Kuman who was trying to report on a public protest in Mullaitivu obstructed by the Navy officers.
  15. Summoning to court a group of trade union activists engaged in a protest.
  16. P.S. Anuranga who was seriously injured in the attack on Galle Face protesters, submitted a complaint to the Human Rights Commission.
  17. The organisation - Hashtag Generation conducting an online conference on 'Investigating crises'.
  18. Journalist Shanmugam Thawaseelan attacked by an unknown person while engaged in reporting near a fuel queue in the Mallavi area.
  19. Social Media Activist Anuruddha Bandara arrested at Galle Face protest site.
  20. Arrest of Amal Salinda, an activist of the people's agitation.
  21. Arrest of 21 activists who were protesting near the Presidential Secretariat.
  22. Court of Appeal rejected a writ application filed by Johnston Fernando, seeking an order to prevent his arrest.
  23. Seven (07) activists of the people's agitation who appeared before the Maradana Police were produced in court.
  24. Yohan Seneviratne, who was an active member of the people's agitation, arrested by the Dambulla police.
  25. Media denied the opportunity to cover the proceedings of the COPE Committee of the Parliament.
  26. Journalist Tharindu Uduvaragedara summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department on a complaint made by the Air Force Intelligence Division.
  27. Professor Nadalagamuwe Dhammadinna Thera who expressed opinions against the government and in favour of the people's agitation, arrested.
  28. The protest held on the Galle Fort interrupted by the army.
  29. Summoning Ravindra Jagoda, the co-convenor of the movement for Civil Citizen Agitation, to the Poddala police and obtaining a statement.

**Table 1: Total number of incidents reported - June 2022**

<b>Covered criteria</b>	<b>Number of incidents reported</b>
Safety and protection	07
Legal conditions	20
Professionalism	01
Structural conditions	01
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>

## Safety and protection

Journalists pursue their careers freely with physical and mental concentration

The existence of an environment for journalists to pursue their careers freely with embodied physical and mental cohesion is an essential factor in media freedom. Similarly, in order to protect media freedom and the freedom of expression, there must be an environment in which citizens can express themselves freely through the media or in other ways without the risk of negative consequences or undue repercussions. Freedom of expression includes peaceful assembly, expressing dissent, and taking part in protests.

In June, Seven (07) serious violations of this fundamental right was monitored.

Table 2: June 2022: Safety and protection - Incidents - 07

Index	Number of reported incidents
Assaults	01
Mental intimidation	06
<b>Total</b>	<b>07</b>

1. **Summoning of attorney-at- law Senaka Perera, an activist of the people's struggle, to the Criminal Investigation Department.**

The summon was issued without giving any specific reasons. He was questioned regarding an audio tape in which the protestors gathered in front of the Fort Magistrate Court on May 25 were given instructions to carry out illegal activities. Attorney-at- law Senaka Perera claims that it is a false accusation.

A demonstration was also held in front of the Criminal Investigation Department on 6 June in protest against this summons.

Source: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

2. **Summoning of Sister Mary Sonali, an activist of the 'GotaGoGama' protest, to the Wennappuwa Police to obtain a statement.**

Sister Mary Sonali, a former principal, was summoned to Wennappuwa police on 7 June to provide a statement related to an investigation into 'an incident of setting fire to a politician's house and property'. The Coalition of Catholic Lay Organisations called a press conference on this and protested strongly, and later the police took action to withdraw the summons.

Source: FMM Media Rights Monitoring Desk  
[www.themorning.lk](http://www.themorning.lk)

3. **Journalist Kanapathipilla Kuman who went to report on a public protest in Mullaitivu obstructed by the Navy officers.**

The Navy has obstructed the reporting of a protest by residents of Vattuvakkal in Mullaitivu district on 7 June, staged against an attempt to capture 250 hectares of land belonging to the Tamil people. The journalist strongly objected to the attempt made by a Navy officer to obtain his media ID card without any authority.

Source: <https://twitter.com/JDSLanka>

4. **Journalist Shanmugam Thawaseelan attacked by an unknown person while engaged in reporting near a fuel queue in Mallavi area.**

The unknown person who assaulted journalist Shanmugam Thawaseelan on 17 June in front of the army and the police officers was arrested 2 days later and released on police bail.

Source: [www.tamilguardian.com](http://www.tamilguardian.com)

5. **Journalist Tharindu Uduvaragedara summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department on a complaint made by the Air Force Intelligence Division.**

The summons was in connection with a complaint made 10 months ago (September 6, 2021) and the reason was not informed in advance.

On 28 June, journalists and activists protested in front of the Colombo Police Headquarters against the summons, and a memorandum was handed over to the United Nations on the 27th.

Source: FMM Media Rights Monitoring Desk

**6. The protest held on the Galle Fort interrupted by the army.**

Army officers broke into a peaceful protest held on 30 June, during the cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia, by a group of civil activists including lawyers. The army officers removed the placards with the slogans "Go Home Gota" and other anti-government slogans. This incident was also criticised by foreign diplomatic officials.

Source: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

**7. Summoning Ravindra Jagoda, the co-convener of the movement for Civil Citizen Agitation, to the Poddala police and obtaining a statement.**

Ajith Kumar, the lawyer who appeared for Ravindra Jagoda, says that

The summons was regarding an allegation of inciting the people to attack the house of a local politician and Ajith Kumar, the lawyer who appeared for Ravindra Jagoda, says that they strongly deny the said allegations.

Source: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

## Legal conditions

**Nineteen (19) cases were monitored that fall under the category of legal conditions related to media freedom during the month of June. Many of these incidents are related to the protests that demand the resignation of the president and the government. It is clear from the monitoring of incidents that the police are trying to suppress the activists of the peaceful agitation by naming them as the defendants for the June 9 violence.**

**Table 3: June 2022: Legal conditions - Incidents 20**

<b>Index</b>	<b>Number of reported incidents</b>
Litigation	19
Impunity for crimes against journalists	01
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>

**1. The rejection of the petition seeking to prevent the eviction of ‘GotaGoGama’ protesters.**

The Supreme Court on 2 June, refused to hear a fundamental rights petition filed by civil engineer Mohamed Husli Hameen seeking an injunction restraining the government from taking action to evict the protesters at ‘Gota Go Gama’ in the Galle Face Green. State Counsel Shamindra Wickrama, who appeared for the Attorney General in the Supreme Court, stated that the Gota Go Gama struggle has been going on for more than 50 days and has not been suppressed by the State by any means as it is a peaceful protest

Source: [www.a5news.lk](http://www.a5news.lk)

**2. A court order given to remand the defendants in the case related to the disappearance of journalist Prageeth Ekmaligoda.**

The Permanent High Court Trial-at-Bar suspended the bail of 09 Intelligence Officers, including Lieutenant Colonel Shammi Kumararatne, who was the Commanding Officer of the Giritale Army Camp, accused in the case filed on the abduction and disappearance of journalist Prageeth Ekmaligoda. The order was issued after suspicion was raised on whether the witnesses in the case had been threatened by the group of intelligence officers. The case was adjourned to 27 July 27.

Source: FMM Media Rights Monitoring Desk

**3. Sandya Ekneligoda, wife of the disappeared journalist Prageeth Ekneligoda, addressing the 31st Conference of the International Federation of Journalists.**

Sandya Ekneligoda, who participated as a special guest, delivered a lecture on 'impunity for crimes committed against journalists in Sri Lanka' based on her experience, which attracted special attention at the conference.

The conference was held in Muscat, Oman from 31 May to 3 June 2022, with the participation of 400 invited representatives from 156 countries. Representing Sri Lanka, Lasantha Silva the Free Media Movement convener, Duminda Sampath the President of the Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association and Dharmasiri Lankapeli the secretary of the Federation of Media Employees' Trade Unions participated in this conference.

Source: FMM Media Rights Monitoring Desk

**4. The court refuses to grant an injunction against a march of the Inter-University Student Federation.**

Colombo Chief Magistrate Nandana Amarasinghe, rejecting the request made by the Cinnamon Gardens Police on 2 June, to issue an order to prevent the protesters from entering several roads, stated that there is a right to conduct demonstration peacefully under Article 14 of the Constitution.

Source: <https://runews.lk>

**5. Cancellation of the summons issued to former Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa by the Human Rights Commission regarding the attack on the 'GotaGoGama' protesters.**

The former prime minister was summoned to appear before the Human Rights Commission on 1 June, however, the commission stated that the relevant summons has been postponed since they have not completed recording statements from the police officers and the victims regarding the incident.

Source: [www.newsfirst.lk](http://www.newsfirst.lk)

**6. Hearing of the petition filed with the Supreme Court demanding compensation from the politicians responsible for the attack on the 'GotaGoGama' protest site.**

This case (SCFR /168/2022) requesting an order

for each respondent to pay compensation of Rs 500 million from their personal wealth for violating the Fundamental Rights of the Citizens through the attack on the 'GotaGoGama' protest site was heard on 01 June. Attorney-at-Law Nagananda Kodituwakku has filed this case.

Source: FMM Media Rights Monitoring Desk

**7. Submitting a complaint to the Human Rights Commission regarding the arrest of activists of the people's struggle**

The complaint has been submitted by the Young Journalists' Association and the Young Lawyers' Association. They have stated out that over 200 people have been arrested after the 'Gotagogama' attacks and accused of involvement in the violence that broke out across the country. They point out that since these arrests are being implemented in the form of a state repression, a serious crisis has arisen regarding democracy and basic human rights in the country.

Source: FMM Media Rights Monitoring Desk

**8. Arrest of social media activist Sampath Edirisinghe by the Kanthale by police.**

A social media activist and the administrator of the Mother Trinco Facebook page, Sampath Edirisinghe, was arrested by the Kanthale headquarters police on 6 June on the charge that he circulated a video of a protest held in front of the house of ruling party MP Kapila Athukorala through social media. He was released on bail after being produced before the Kanthale Magistrate's Court on 7 June.

Source: [twitter.com/JDSLanka](https://twitter.com/JDSLanka)

**9. Interrogation of two Kurunegala social activists and one of them arrested.**

Two activists associated with the Kurunegala 'Gothagogama' protest movement, Adeepa Ekanayake and Prince Jayasuriya, were summoned to the Kurunegala DIG office on 7 June. They were detained and interrogated. Adeepa Ekanayake was arrested and produced before the Kurunegala Magistrate's court and released on bail.

- 10. Matara Magistrate's Court sentencing a protester to three and a half years imprisonment.**
- E.D. Nirajan Lakshan (30), a resident of Matara Maddawatta, was arrested on charges of blocking a road and 'damaging property' during a protest held in Matara on April 19 against the shortage of fuel. He was sentenced to 3 and a half years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs.56,000 by the Matara Magistrate on Monday 6 June.
- Source: [www.newswire.lk](http://www.newswire.lk)
- 11. Summoning to court a group of trade union activists engaged in a protest**
- Summons were handed over on 7 June to five activists of the people's struggle, including trade union activists, to appear in the Fort Magistrate's Court on 13 June on the charge of obstructing police duty during a demonstration held on 25 May against the non-implementation of the law regarding the 9 May attacks. There was strong opposition from trade unions and Civil society organizations.
- Source: FMM Media Rights Monitoring Desk
- 12. P.S. Anuranga who was seriously injured in the attack on Galle Face protesters submitting a complaint to the Human Rights Commission**
- P.S. Anuranga claims that even though a month has passed since the attack, justice has not been served to more than 30 people, including himself, who were victims, and the police have failed to enforce the law against the main perpetrators of the attacks.
- Source: [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)
- 13. Social Media Activist Anuruddha Bandara arrested at Galle Face protest site.**
- The court ordered the release of social media activist Anuruddha Bandara, was arrested on 20 June and produced before the court. His charge was for circulating posts on social media that would incite and cause unrest among the public. President's lawyer Saliya Peiris, who appeared on his behalf, pointed out that the charges against the suspect cannot be maintained.
- Source: [www.adaderana.lk](http://www.adaderana.lk)  
[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)
- 14. Arrest of Amal Salinda, an activist of the people's agitation.**
- Amal Salinda was arrested on 20 June, and detained at the Harbour Police and was placed in remand custody after he was produced to the Fort Magistrate. The lawyers say that he had requested legal assistance while in custody, but the police denied the request.
- Sources: [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)  
[thesinhalanews.lk](http://thesinhalanews.lk)
- 15. Arrest of 21 activists who were protesting near the Presidential Secretariat.**
- Twenty one (21) activists were arrested on the morning of the 20th on several charges including the complete obstruction to access the Presidential Secretariat and after being presented to the Fort Magistrate's Court in the afternoon, they were released on a surety bail of Rs 500,000 each. Police Media Division announced that a monk, 16 men and 04 women were among the arrested.
- Sources: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)  
[ceylontoday.lk](http://ceylontoday.lk)
- 16. Court of Appeal rejected a writ application filed by Johnston Fernando, seeking an order to prevent his arrest.**
- The Court of Appeal rejected a writ application filed by Parliamentarian Johnston Fernando on 21 June, who was seeking an order to prevent his arrest. in connection with the attack on the Galle Face protest.
- Regarding the related incident, the Criminal Investigation Department named the MP as a suspect and accordingly the Fort Magistrate Court issued a warrant for his arrest on the 10th. He had submitted this petition to the Court of Appeal seeking an order to prevent it.
- Source: [www.newsfirst.lk](http://www.newsfirst.lk)
- 17. Seven (07) activists of the people's agitation who appeared before the Maradana Police were brought to court.**
- Activists Lahiru Weerasekera, Jagath Manuvarna, Jehan Appuhami, Rathkarawe Jinarathana Thero, Dhammika Munasinghe, Eranga Gunasekara and

Rathindu Senaratne were produced in court on 22 June and was ordered to be remanded until July 01. Charges were filed against them for causing damage to public property during the protests held in Fort and Thalangama areas on June 9 and 10.

Source: <http://sinhala.adaderana.lk>

Yohan Seneviratne was arrested by the police on 27 June on charges of damaging government property. The Dambulla Magistrate's Court granted him bail after rejecting the request of the police to remand him. A group of lawyers, including attorney-at-law Nagananda Kodituwakku appeared on behalf of Yohan Seneviratne to defend his rights.

Source: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

**18. Media denied the opportunity to cover the proceedings of the COPE Committee of the Parliament.**

MP Johnston Fernando, the Chief Organizer of the ruling party, stated in Parliament that the media would not be allowed to cover the proceedings of the Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) of the Parliament. The Free Media Movement emphasized that this is a usurpation of a right held by the media as well as a violation of a fundamental right of the people, the right to know information. It was pointed out that this is in violation of the good governance principles of transparency and accountability, and requested the relevant officials to suspend the decision immediately.

Source: [www.ada.lk](http://www.ada.lk)

**20. Professor Nadalagamuwe Dhammadinna Thera who expressed opinions against the government and in favour of the people's agitation, arrested**

Gampaha Police arrested Ven. Nedalagamuwe Dhammadinna, a professor in the department of modern language of the Kelaniya University on 27 June, accusing him of influencing and leading people to attack the house of Minister Prasanna Ranatunga on 9 May. The thera was released on bail after he was produced before the Gampaha Chief Magistrate's Court.

Source: JDS Lanka reports

**19. Yohan Seneviratne, who was an active member of the people's agitation, arrested by the Dambulla police.**

## Structural conditions

'Structural conditions' are an important component of media freedom considerations. This dimension includes six potential indicators that relate to the overall scope and structure of the media system as well as to the overall environment in which media freedom is activated. One incident was monitored in June under one indicator among structural conditions, which is 'active support for media freedom by monitoring groups'.

**Table 4: June 2022: Structural conditions - Incidents 03**

<b>Index</b>	<b>Number of reported incidents</b>
Active support for media freedom by monitoring groups	01
<b>Total</b>	<b>01</b>

1. The Bar Association letter to the Attorney General expressing concern about the investigation being carried out regarding the attack on 9 May.

The Bar Association has pointed out in its letter to the Attorney General that although it is clear who led the attack and who were the top police officers

who did not prevent the attack, the law does not seem to be enforced against them and the Criminal Investigation Department has not acted according to the instructions of the Attorney General.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com>

## Professionalism

This component includes six indicators such as education and training of journalists, the understanding of the journalists about their professional scope, recognition for the media profession, etc. Among them, one incident under to the above-mentioned first indicator was observed in the month of June.

Table 5: June 2022: Professionalism - Incidents 01

Index	Number of reported incidents
Journalists have a sound education and training	01
<b>Total</b>	<b>01</b>

1. The organisation - Hashtag Generation conducting an online conference on 'Investigating crises'.

The focus was on the role investigative journalism can play in holding officials in an accountable process. The keynote address held on 15 was delivered by an

international media trainer, Pervez Khan, and the other resource persons were Shaheer Anees, Kamanti Wickramasinghe and Sandun Arosha Fernando.

Source: FMM Media Rights Monitoring Desk

Table 6: Press freedom incidents reported to FMM from January 2022 to June 2022

Covered criterion	January-May 2022		June 2022
	New Incidents	Developments of the previous incidents	
Security and safety	28	-	07
Legal conditions	26	11	20
Independence of media	04	-	01
Structural conditions	10	-	01
Professionalism	02	-	01
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>13</b>

[FMM Press Freedom Reports - from January-May 2022 from here](#)

**Postscript:** FMM recognizes press freedom as a human right based on national and international conventions and judgments. Freedoms of thought, conscience, religion and knowing others' opinions are human rights. On that basis, FMM identifies press freedom as a collection of the following ten components. 1) Freedom of thought 2) Freedom of having opinions 3) Freedom of expression 4) Freedom to meet peacefully 5) Freedom for information 6) Freedom of audiovisual recording and storing records 7) Freedom of publication 8) Press freedom 9) Freedom of the electronic media 10) Freedom of the internet. These freedoms are inter-connected, and blocking one freedom disturbs the enjoyment of all other freedoms. Therefore, FMM also emphasizes that misuse of these freedoms in an irresponsible and hateful manner is a wrongful practice.

These monthly reports are prepared by FMM based on the study and analysis of information available for the organization. For this analysis, FMM uses criteria selected through seven internationally recognized elements that cover the ten components mentioned above.

Media Freedom Rights Monitoring Desk Supported by Program on Independent Journalism



Free Media Movement

Convener: Lasantha De Silva +94 71 166 7938, +94 77 810 7620 | Secretary: Hana Ibrahim +94 77 741 2995  
Treasurer: Ananda Jayasekara +94 77 312 4850  
No 96, Bernard Soysa Mw, Colombo 05. Tel: +94 112368895 Fax: +94 112368895;  
Web: [www.fmmsrilanka.lk](http://www.fmmsrilanka.lk), [www.mediareform.lk](http://www.mediareform.lk)  
Email: [fmmsrilanka@gmail.com](mailto:fmmsrilanka@gmail.com) | Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/fmm.srilanka>  
Twitter: [#FMM25](https://twitter.com/FMMsrilanka)