

05th February, 2022

Statement of Condemnation
In Solidarity with human rights lawyer and advocate, Ambika Satkunanathan

We, the undersigned civil society individuals and organisations, are deeply concerned by the response of the Foreign Ministry, dated 4th February, 2022, to the statement made by human rights lawyer and advocate, former Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, and Chairperson of the Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust, Ambika Satkunanathan, at the hearing of the European Parliament's sub-committee on human rights, on the 27th of January, 2022. In her submission, Ms. Satkunanathan made a critical assessment of the human rights situation in Sri Lanka and its international and national obligations to its citizens, and provided recommendations to European Union member states.

Rather than engage substantively with the issues raised, the Sri Lankan Government instead chose to cast aspersions on an individual with an unimpeachable record of principled research, advocacy and public service for the improvement of human rights in Sri Lanka. The attempt by the Foreign Ministry to draw an analogy between the independent advocacy of a Tamil activist and researcher with the claims of the LTTE is both unwarranted, mischievous and chilling. The insinuation that pointing out the differential impact of government policies, state institutions and their practices on Tamil and Muslim communities is in some way 'stoking hatred among communities' and harmful to 'social harmony' is also deeply troubling. Given how the PTA and ICCPR Act have been used in Sri Lanka in the recent past by the State to target critical individuals and members of minority communities, this characterisation is ominous.

Retaining or losing GSP+ trade privileges is entirely based on the European Union's assessment of the conduct of the Sri Lankan Government with respect to labour rights, human rights, environmental protection and good governance. The suggestion that it is human rights advocacy that jeopardises GSP+ trade privileges which are crucial for the Sri Lankan economy is highly disingenuous.

We consider the targeting of outspoken members of civil society by a government institution using dangerous insinuations to be a form of intimidation aimed at stifling dissent and freedom of expression. Statements such as this by the Foreign Ministry, we believe, aim to constrain civil society engagement as an independent interlocutor with the international community on democracy and rights issues, standing up for the rights and protection of affected communities and individuals.

Like Ms. Satkunanathan, many in civil society have been raising concerns regarding the operational environment for civil society organisations and activists, and the threat of a repressive new law. We note with deep concern the continuing incidents of harassment of victim-survivors, human rights activists, media workers and civil society

organisations by state actors. Creating an enabling environment for civil society will require more than mere assertions that civil society is treated as a partner, and the shifting of the NGO Secretariat to a new Ministry. We remain willing to engage with the government in an honest, principled and constructive dialogue on this, and the other substantive issues raised by Ms. Satkunanathan, which we share and stand-by. However, the targeting of civil society activists in this manner by the Foreign Ministry does not inspire confidence or trust.

We condemn this statement of the Foreign Ministry, and stand in solidarity with Ms. Ambika Satkunanathan and all other civil society activists engaged in the processes of promoting and protecting human rights, democracy and genuine reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

Signatories;

Individuals

1. A.R.A. Ramees
2. Ainslie Joseph - Convenor, People's Movement for Good Governance (PeMOGG)
3. Amalini De Sayrah
4. Aameena Hussein
5. Ameer Faaiz
6. Aneesa Firthous
7. Anithra Varia
8. Anthony Jesudasan
9. Anthony Vinoth
10. Anuratha Rajaretnam
11. Anushani Alagarajah
12. Anushaya Collure
13. Aruni Jayakody
14. B. Gowthaman
15. Bhavani Fonseka
16. Bisliya Bhutto
17. C. Ranitha Gnanarajah, AAL
18. Chamila Thushari
19. Chandra Devanarayana
20. Channaka Jayasinghe
21. Chintaka Rajapakse
22. Chulani Kodikara
23. Damaris Wickremesekera
24. Dammika Munasinghe - Secretary, Joint Development Officers Centre
25. Deekshya Illangasinghe
26. Deshamanya Godfrey Yogarajah
27. Dharsha Jegatheeswaran

28. Dinushika Dissanayake
29. Dorin Rajani
30. Dr. Dinesha Samararatne
31. Dr. K. Guruparan, Attorney-at-Law
32. Dr. Kalana Senaratne - University of Peradeniya
33. Dr. Kaushalya Ariyaratne
34. Dr. Mahendran Thiruvarangan - University of Jaffna
35. Dr. Nimalka Fernando, Attorney-at-Law
36. Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu
37. Dr. Radhika Coomaraswamy
38. Dr. Ruvan Weerasinghe
39. Dr. Sanjana Hattotuwa
40. Dr. Thusiyan Nandakumar
41. E.M.S.N. Ekanayaka
42. Erandika de Silva - University of Jaffna
43. Ermiza Tegal
44. Faizun Zackeriya
45. Farah Mihar
46. Farzana Haniffa
47. Fathima Majitha
48. Francis Costa Priyankara
49. Francis Raajan
50. Gehan Gunatilleke
51. Harindrini Corea, Attorney-at-Law
52. Herman Kumara
53. Hilmy Ahamed
54. Hyshyama Hamin - Women's Rights Activist
55. Indunil Usgoda Arachchi
56. Iromi Perera
57. Ishara Danasekara
58. J. Yardsan Figurado
59. Jaabir Raazi Muhammadh
60. Jake Oorloff
61. Jayani Abeysekara
62. Jehan Jegatheesan
63. Joanne Senn
64. Juwariya Mohideen
65. K. Aingaran, Attorney-at-Law
66. K. Nihal Ahamad
67. K.J. Brito Fernando
68. K.S. Ratnavale, Attorney-at-Law
69. K.Thananjan
70. Kalani Subasinghe
71. Kamala Vasuki - Batticaloa

72. Kumaran Nadesan
73. Kumudini Samuel
74. Lahiru Perera - Family Rehabilitation Centre
75. Lakkitha Samarakone
76. Lakshman Gunasekara - Journalist
77. Lal Wijenayake - Convenor, Lawyers For Democracy
78. Linus Jayatilake - President, United Federation of Labour
79. Lucille Abeykoon
80. Luwie Ganeshathasan
81. M. Kusum Silva - Citizens Committee, Gampaha District
82. M.A. Wahid
83. Mahaluxmy Kurushanthan
84. Maithreyi Rajasingam, Attorney-at-Law
85. Mario Arulthas
86. Mario Gomez
87. Marisa de Silva
88. Michael Joachim
89. Mike Gabriel
90. Mirak Raheem
91. N.M. Saroor
92. Nagulan Nesiah
93. Nethmini Medawala, Attorney-at-Law
94. Nilshan Fonseka
95. Nurun Anberiya Hanifa
96. P. Muthulingam
97. P.M. Mujeebur Rahman, LLB
98. P.N. Singham
99. Pasan Jayasinghe
100. Peter Rezel
101. Philip Dissanayake
102. Prabodha Rathnanaya, AAL
103. Prabu Deepan
104. Priyatharshiny Rajendran
105. Prof. Arjuna Parakrama - University of Peradeniya
106. Prof. Maithree Wickramasinghe
107. Prof. Shamala Kumar - University of Peradeniya
108. Prof. Sumathy Sivamohan - University of Peradeniya
109. Puni Selvaratnam
110. Raghu Balachandran
111. Ramalingam Sivapragasam
112. Ramani Muttettuwegama, Attorney-at-Law
113. Rehab Mahamoor
114. Rev. Fr. Nandana Manatunga
115. Rev. Fr. Terence Fernando

116. Rev. Sr. Noel Christine Fernando
117. Rohana Hettiarachchi
118. Rohini Hensman - Writer, Researcher and Activist
119. Ruki Fernando
120. S. Kamalakanthan - Social Activist
121. S. Ratnajeewan H. Hoole - Formerly of the Election Commission and UGC, and Michigan State University
122. S.C.C. Elankovan - Lawyer and Development Consultant
123. S.M. Anifa
124. S.T. Ganeshalingam
125. Sabra Zahid
126. Safana Gul Begum
127. Sajini Fernando, AAL
128. Sakuntala Kadirgamar
129. Sampath Samarakoon - Editor, vikalpa.org
130. Sandun Thudugala
131. Sanjula Pietersz, AAL
132. Sarah Arumugam, AAL
133. Sarala Emmanuel - Researcher
134. Selvaraja Rajasegar - Editor, maatram.org
135. Senaka Perera, AAL
136. Senel Wanniarachchi
137. Shafinaz Hassendeen
138. Shalomi Daniel
139. Sharmaine Gunaratne, AAL
140. Sheila Richards
141. Shivantha Rathnayake
142. Shreen Saroor
143. Shyamala Gomez
144. Sirany Thevakumar - Rights based activist
145. Srinath Perera - General Secretary, Free Trade Union Centre
146. Stella Victor
147. Sunanda Deshapriya - Journalist, Writer and Human Rights Activist
148. Sunil Shantha Ganewaththa
149. Suren D. Perera, AAL
150. Suresh Fernando, Attorney-at-Law
151. Swasthika Arulingam
152. Sylvester Jayakody - General Secretary, Ceylon Mercantile Industrial and General Workers Union (CMU)
153. Tanuja Thurairajah
154. Tehani Ariyaratne
155. Thiagi Piyadasa - Lawyer and Researcher
156. Thyagi Ruwanpathirana - Researcher
157. Tisarane Gunasekara

158. Vanie Simon
159. Ven. Fr. Samuel J. Ponniah
160. Visakha Tillekeratne - Independent Activist
161. Yamini Ravindran - Attorney-at-Law and Campaigns Director,
Minormatters

Organisations

1. Adayaalam Centre for Policy Research (ACPR)
2. Affected Women's Forum (AWF)
3. Alliance for Minorities
4. Batticaloa District Civil Society Activists Union
5. Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD)
6. Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA)
7. Civil and Political Rights Amayam, Batticaloa
8. Committee for Protecting Rights of Prisoners
9. Dabindu Collective Sri Lanka
10. Families of the Disappeared (FoD)
11. Forum for a Plural Democracy
12. Forum for Affected Families, Mannar
13. Human Elevation Organisation (HEO)
14. Human Rights Office (HRO), Kandy
15. Institute of Social Development (ISD)
16. International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES)
17. Law and Society Trust (LST)
18. Lawyer's Forum for the People
19. Mannar Social and Economical Development Organisation (MSEDO)
20. Mannar Women's Development Federation (MWDF)
21. Movement for Land and Agricultural Reform (MONLAR)
22. Movement for Plantation Peoples' Land Rights (MPPLR)
23. Muslim Women's Development Trust (MWDT)
24. National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO)
25. NGO National Action Front (NNAF)
26. People for Equality and Relief in Lanka (PEARL)
27. People's Action For Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL)
28. People's Alliance for Right to Land (PARL)
29. People's Collective for Climate Justice, Batticaloa
30. Plantation Rural Education and Development Organisation (PREDO)
31. Praja Abhilasha Network
32. Revolutionary Existence for human Development (RED)
33. Right to Life Human Rights Centre (R2L)
34. Rural Development Foundation
35. Samadana/m
36. Savistri National Women's Movement
37. Social Institute for Development of Plantation Sector (SIDPS)

38. Sri Lanka Young Journalists' Association
39. Suriya Women's Development Centre
40. Tamil Civil Society Forum (TCSF)
41. Upcountry Civil Society Collective (UCSC)
42. Viluthu
43. Voices Movement
44. Women and Media Collective (WMC)
45. Women for Justice and Peace in Sri Lanka
46. Women's Action Network (WAN)
47. Women's Organisation Working on Disability