

**DUBLIN**

Front Line Defenders – Head Office  
First Floor, Avoca Court  
Temple Road, Blackrock  
Co. Dublin, A94 R7W3, Ireland

info@frontlinedefenders.org  
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +353 1 212 3750  
fax +353 1 212 1001

**BRUSSELS**

Front Line Defenders – EU Office  
Square Marie-Louise 72  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

euoffice@frontlinedefenders.org  
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +32 2 230 9383  
fax +32 2 230 0028

11 November 2022

## **Sri Lanka: Human rights defender and journalist Tharindu Jayawardhana summoned for inquiry**

On 8 November 2022, Sri Lankan journalist, media rights campaigner and human rights defender **Tharindu Jayawardhana** received a call asking him to appear at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in Colombo for an inquiry on 14 November 2022. The human rights defender was informed that the inquiry is based on a complaint filed by the Inspector General of Police (IGP) regarding a Facebook [post](#) published by him on 17 October 2022.

[Tharindu Jayawardhana](#) is a respected investigative journalist and a dedicated human rights defender. He is the president of the [Sri Lanka Young Journalist Association \(SLYJA\)](#) and the chief editor of [MediaLK](#), an investigative news website. He also works as a researcher at the [Centre for Society and Religion\(CSR\)](#). As a journalist and human rights defender, Tharindu Jayawardhana has been an advocate for the rights of oppressed and vulnerable communities and against state violence.

On 8 November 2022, Tharindu Jayawardhana received summons via a phone call from a police officer requesting him to appear at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for an inquiry, on 9 November 2022. Tharindu Jayawardhana expressed he could not be present on that day and agreed to appear at 9.30am on 14 November 2022. The human rights defender was informed that the inquiry was based on a complaint filed by the IGP regarding a Facebook [post](#) published by him on 17 October 2022. The post included images of police officers using disproportionate force and disrupting peaceful protesters in Colombo on 9 October 2022 and sought public assistance to identify and report officers. Similar summons was issued to journalist/human rights defender [Tharindu Uduwaragedara](#) linked to the same Facebook post.

Tharindu Jayawardhana was targeted several times in the past for his human rights work and reporting. In June 2021, he received a death threat via [Facebook](#) from Senior Deputy Inspector General of Police Deshabandu Tennakoon. Over a year later, on 9 August 2022, the human rights defender was summoned to the CID Head Quarters in Colombo to make a [statement](#) regarding the death threats made against him by Senior DIG Deshabandu Thennakoon.

Tharindu Jayawardhana has exposed police torture, and torture chambers such as in the '[Kotadeniyawa case](#)' in October 2015, used by the Kotadeniyawa police against citizens. Since the inception of protests in 2022 linked to the economic crisis, Tharindu Jayawardhana has been reporting on peaceful protests, disproportionate use of force by police and reprisals against protesters. He has used his social media accounts to challenge disinformation against protesters and expose state violence. He is a key campaigner against the ongoing detention of student leaders [Wasantha Mudalige](#) and Siridhamma Thero under the Draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act in 2022 linked to their role in the protests. In September 2022, Tharindhu Jayawardhana used the Right to Information (RTI) act to seek [information](#) regarding the alleged use of expired tear gas by the Sri Lankan

police used against protesters. Despite interventions by the RTI commission, the police denied providing information citing national security and integrity.

Front Line Defenders condemns the attempts to threaten and intimidate Tharindu Jayawardhana by Sri Lanka police and the state intelligence as reprisal for his legitimate journalism and peaceful human rights work. All citizens, and especially journalists and human rights defenders, must be protected from reprisals when carrying out peaceful protests and expressing legitimate dissent against Government policies. Front Line Defenders urges the Sri Lankan authorities to stop all reprisals against journalists and human rights defenders voicing against injustices. It also urges them to create an environment that protects human rights defenders.

**Front Line Defenders urges the relevant authorities in Sri Lanka to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally stop all attempts to intimidate human rights defender Tharindu Jayawardhana and stop reprisals against him;
2. Immediately and unconditionally cease all further forms of questioning or harassment against Tharindu Jayawardhana, as it is believed that these measures are solely related to his legitimate human rights activities and constitute a direct transgression of his rights;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Sri Lanka are able to carry out their human rights activism and journalistic activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions in line with Sri Lanka's international human rights obligations and commitments.

**Front Line Defenders Board of Directors**

Denis O'Brien, Jim Conway, Roja Fazaeli, María Mulcahy, Kieran Mulvey, Mary Jane Real (Philippines), David Sykes, Arnold Tsunga (Zimbabwe), Verónica Vidal (Uruguay)

**Front Line Defenders International Advisory Council**

James L. Cavallaro, Maryam Elahi, Michel Forst, Hina Jilani, Mary Lawlor

Front Line, The International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders trading as Front Line Defenders, is registered in Ireland as a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. Registered Office: First Floor, Avoca Court, Temple Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, A94 R7W3, Ireland.

Company No. 593190; Registered Charity No. 20204494; CHY 22404