



Australian Government

Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka – LKA37855 – UNP – Elections
– Shiral Laktilleke

10 January 2011

- 1. I have read Sri Lanka – LKA37498 – United National Party – of 21 October 2010. Can you please advise whether, other than the above information, there have been any further reports of the targeting of UNP members and supporters by the current Sri Lankan government and security forces in 2010?**

RRT *Country Advice LKA37498* referred to above is attached.¹

Further to the information mentioned above, a report dated 8 December 2010 refers to government parliamentarians trying to manhandle UNP MP Jayalath Jayawardena in the parliamentary chamber during the previous week.² Several government MPs were reported to have “accused Dr. Jayawardene of inciting diaspora and allegedly attempted to manhandle him. Government MPs were heard calling the UNP MP a ‘traitor,’ ‘Tiger’ and ‘murderer.’” On 7 December 2010, a resolution signed by 78 ruling United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA) parliamentarians which requested parliament to appoint a select committee to investigate Jayawardane’s conduct was handed to the Speaker.³ The government said Jayawardane helped to organise protests against Sri Lanka’s President Rajapaksa in Britain, which Jayawardane has denied. The Oxford Union had cancelled a planned speech by Mr Rajapaksa, saying large demonstrations planned against him would have posed security problems.⁴

The government also planned to bring a no-confidence motion against the deputy leader of the UNP, Karu Jayasuriya, after he made a “statement that alleged war crimes in the country should be probed.”⁵

In October 2010, the UNP claimed that UNP MP Ranjan Ramanayake had been arrested “on false and fabricated charges” after he was granted bail “on charges of having fraudulently obtained Rs. 1,000,000 from a female teacher on the promise of marrying her.” UNP deputy leader Karu Jayasuriya alleged that there was no evidence of cheating in Mr. Ramanayake’s case, “but he was arrested on fabricated charges to take revenge as

¹ RRT Country Advice 2010, *Country Advice LKA37498*, 21 October – Attachment 1

² Haviland, C. 2010, ‘Sri Lanka government calls opposition MP a “traitor”’, *BBC*, 8 December – Attachment 2

³ ‘Sri Lanka govt. to begin process to unseat opposition MP over anti-Sri Lankan conduct’ 2010, *Asian Tribune*, 8 December – Attachment 3

⁴ Haviland, C. 2010, ‘Sri Lanka government calls opposition MP a “traitor”’, *BBC*, 8 December – Attachment 2

⁵ ‘Sri Lanka govt. to begin process to unseat opposition MP over anti-Sri Lankan conduct’ 2010, *Asian Tribune*, 8 December – Attachment 3

he ignored government attempts to make him vote for the 18th Amendment to the constitution.”⁶

In September 2010, the UNP “accused the authorities of undermining democracy by intimidating parliamentarians” after Mangala Samaraweera was “unfairly questioned for hours by the police.”⁷ Samaraweera, who is a MP and the UNP’s media coordinator, had ordered a poster meant for public display protesting against the 18th amendment to Sri Lanka’s constitution from a printer.⁸ The poster depicted the president as a dictator. The 18th amendment to the constitution removed a two-term limit for a sitting president. UNP deputy leader Karu Jayasuriya said “that the ‘political harassment’ of Mr Samaraweera is a serious threat to freedom of expression in Sri Lanka.”⁹ The printer’s wife, her two brothers, the printer, and the owner and seven workers at the printing works were reported to have been arrested in relation to the printing of the poster.¹⁰

2. Can you please advise on what elections may be held in Sri Lanka within the next 6 months?

On 28 December 2010, Maithripala Sirisena, a government minister, said that municipal councils, urban councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas would be dissolved by the government in January 2011 and elections to the local councils would be held in March 2011.¹¹ A report from 3 January 2011 indicated that it was not clear whether elections would be held for the Jaffna municipal council and the Vavuniya urban council in the Northern Province as local government elections had been held for those councils in August 2009.¹²

On 6 January 2011, government minister Maithripala Sirisena said that municipal council and urban council elections in Colombo, Galle and Kandy would be scheduled later because of World Cup cricket matches to be held in those places.¹³ An article dated 7 January 2011 indicates that the government had dissolved all local government institutions on 6 January 2011. According to the article, “268 Local Government Bodies out of 330 Municipal Councils, Town Councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas” had been dissolved, enabling fresh elections to be called. Elections are to be held in 228 of 270 Pradeshiya Sabhas and 40 of 42 town councils. Elections will not be held for the 18 municipal councils.¹⁴

The next presidential election in Sri Lanka is reported to be due to be held by November 2015,¹⁵ while another report indicates that it is to be held in 2016. In Sri Lanka, the president is elected by popular vote for a six-year term, with a two-term limit, and the last

⁶ ‘Ranjan released on bail with warning’ 2010, *Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka)*, 19 October – Attachment 4

⁷ ‘Sri Lanka MP interrogated over “dictator” posters’ 2010, *BBC*, 28 September – Attachment 5

⁸ Free Media Movement (FMM) 2010, ‘The Free Media Movement condemns the arrest of the printer, and the owner and workers at Sarala Graphics, Nugegoda’, Asian Human Rights Commission website, 10 September – Attachment 6

⁹ ‘Sri Lanka MP interrogated over “dictator” posters’ 2010, *BBC*, 28 September – Attachment 5

¹⁰ Free Media Movement (FMM) 2010, ‘The Free Media Movement condemns the arrest of the printer, and the owner and workers at Sarala Graphics, Nugegoda’, Asian Human Rights Commission website, 10 September – Attachment 6

¹¹ ‘local councils to be dissolved next month’ 2010, *Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka)*, 29 December – Attachment 7

¹² ‘Sri Lanka: Island-wide elections to be held for all local Government bodies in March’ 2011, *Asian Tribune*, 3 January <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2011/01/03/sri-lanka-island-wide-elections-be-held-all-local-government-bodies-march> - Accessed 7 January 2011 – Attachment 8

¹³ ‘Over 10,000 SLFP applications for LG polls’ 2011, *Daily News (Sri Lanka)*, 7 January – Attachment 9

¹⁴ ‘Town councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas stands dissolved enabling election commissioner to call for fresh elections’ 2011, *Sri Lankan Government News*, 7 January – Attachment 10

¹⁵ ‘Sri Lanka: Political structure’ 2010, *Economist Intelligence Unit – ViewsWire*, 7 December – Attachment 11

presidential election was held on 26 January 2010.¹⁶ In January 2010, Sri Lanka's President Rajapaksa stood for re-election two years prior to the end of his term. He was re-elected by a margin of 18% over opposition candidate, retired Army General Sarath Fonseka.¹⁷

The next parliamentary election in Sri Lanka is due to be held in April 2016. Sri Lanka's parliament is elected to serve six-year terms. The last election was held on 8 April 2010, and a re-poll was held in two electorates on 20 April 2010.¹⁸ Rajapaksa's UPFA coalition was successful in the parliamentary elections where it won 144 out of 225 seats. The United National Front gained 60 seats in the election, the Tamil National Alliance 14 seats, and the Democratic National Alliance seven seats.¹⁹

The website of Sri Lanka's Department of Elections provides information on past presidential, parliamentary, provincial and local authorities elections in Sri Lanka.²⁰

3. Is there any information available confirming Mr Laktilleke's role within the UNP?

Information was found that refers to Shiral Laktilleke being the Kotte organiser of the UNP. There were also reports found referring to persons whose names appear to be variants of Shiral Laktilleke.

A report on a UNP party convention in December 2010 refers to "Shiral Laktilleke the Kotte organizer" being the first to address the crowd.²¹ Another report in December 2010 indicates that "Kotte UNP Organizer Shiral lakthilaka" was to deliver the welcome speech at a UNP convention in Pitakotte on 12 December 2010.²²

An earlier report from December 2009 refers to UNP Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe appointing Shiral Lakthileka as the party's chief organiser for the Kotte electorate. The article provides background information on Lakthileka, including that he is a law graduate of Colombo University and also has degrees in international law and conflict resolution from Arcadia and Temple Universities in Philadelphia in the United States.²³ A website entitled "Shiral Lakthilala" includes similar information on Shiral Lakthilaka.²⁴

¹⁶ 'Sri Lanka' 2010 in 'The World Factbook', Central Intelligence Agency website, 9 November <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ce.html> – Accessed 23 November 2010 – Attachment 12

¹⁷ US Department of State 2010, *Background Note: Sri Lanka*, 7 June <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5249.htm> – Accessed 23 November 2010 – Attachment 13

¹⁸ 'Sri Lanka' 2010 in 'The World Factbook', Central Intelligence Agency website, 9 November <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ce.html> – Accessed 23 November 2010 – Attachment 12

¹⁹ US Department of State 2010, *Background Note: Sri Lanka*, 7 June <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5249.htm> – Accessed 23 November 2010 – Attachment 13

²⁰ 'Past Elections' (undated), Sri Lanka Department of Elections website <http://www.slelections.gov.lk/pastElection.html> - Accessed 6 January 2011 – Attachment 14

²¹ 'UNP braces for wrenching conflict' in 'Political Watch' 2010, *The Island*, 18 December http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=13820 – Accessed 6 January 2010 – Attachment 15

²² 'Sri Lanka: United National Party ready for special convention' 2010, *Asian Tribune*, 12 December – Attachment 16

²³ 'Shiral-Kotte new UNP organizer' 2009, Sri Lanka News First website, 22 December <http://srilankanewsfirst.com/general/15383.html> - Accessed 7 January 2011 – Attachment 17

²⁴ 'Biography: Shiral Virantha Lakthilaka' (undated), Shiral Lakthilala website <http://www.shiral.net/home/biography.php> - Accessed 7 January 2011 – Attachment 18

Other reports from March 2010 and January 2010 refer to Shiral Lakthilaka being the Kotte organiser of the UNP.²⁵ ²⁶ Another report from January 2010 refers to Shiral Lakthilaka as an opposition lawyer.²⁷

A report from December 2010 names Shiral Laktilleke as a provincial councillor for Kotte.²⁸ An earlier article from April 2010 refers to Shiral Lakthilake being appointed as a Western Province Provincial Council member for one of four UNP seats for the Colombo District which were vacated when the previous provincial council members were elected to parliament.²⁹ The previously mentioned website entitled “Shiral Lakthilala” refers to Shiral Lakthilaka as a member of the Provincial Council of the Western Province.³⁰

Another report from March 2010 refers to Shiral Laktilleke being the Colombo District UNP candidate.³¹ A Shiral Laktilleke was also named as the UNF candidate for Colombo District.³² In April 2010, Shiral Lakthilake was reported to be one of the defeated UNP electoral candidates in Colombo district.³³

Attachments

1. RRT Country Advice 2010, *Country Advice LKA37498*, 21 October.
2. Haviland, C. 2010, ‘Sri Lanka government calls opposition MP a “traitor”’, *BBC*, 8 December. (CISNET Sri Lanka CX255024)
3. ‘Sri Lanka govt. to begin process to unseat opposition MP over anti-Sri Lankan conduct’ 2010, *Asian Tribune*, 8 December.
4. ‘Ranjan released on bail with warning’ 2010, *Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka)*, 19 October.
5. ‘Sri Lanka MP interrogated over “dictator” posters’ 2010, *BBC*, 28 September. (CISNET Sri Lanka CX250338)
6. Free Media Movement (FMM) 2010, ‘The Free Media Movement condemns the arrest of the printer, and the owner and workers at Sarala Graphics, Nugegoda’, Asian Human Rights Commission website, 10 September. (CISNET Sri Lanka CX249243)
7. ‘local councils to be dissolved next month’ 2010, *Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka)*, 29 December.
8. ‘Sri Lanka: Island-wide elections to be held for all local Government bodies in March’ 2011, *Asian Tribune*, 3 January <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2011/01/03/sri-lanka->

²⁵ Najmuddin, J. & Sri Aravinda, I. 2010, ‘Police dismantle Ranil’s stage’, *Daily Mirror*, 30 March <http://www.dailymirror.lk/index.php/news/2733-police-dismantle-ranils-stage.html> - Accessed 7 January 2011 – Attachment 19

²⁶ ‘13 army deserters arrested’ 2010, *New Indian Express*, 29 January – Attachment 20

²⁷ ‘Sri Lanka police “raid Fonseka campaign HQ”’ 2010, *BBC News*, 29 January http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8487331.stm - Accessed 7 January 2011 – Attachment 21

²⁸ ‘Columns – Political Column – New journey for UNP: Unexpected getting together’ 2010, *The Sunday Times*, 12 December <http://sundaytimes.lk/101212/Columns/political.html> - Accessed 6 January 2011 – Attachment 22

²⁹ ‘Two WPC members take oaths’ 2010, *Daily News (Sri Lanka)*, 28 April – Attachment 23

³⁰ ‘Home: News and Events’ (undated), Shiral Lakthilala website <http://www.shiral.net/home/index.php> - Accessed 7 January 2011 – Attachment 24

³¹ ‘Shiral Laktilleke Grilled By TID’ 2010, *Colombo Times*, 10 March – Attachment 25

³² ‘Foreign Minister Gets Police To Remove Decorations For UNF Rally’ 2010, *Colombo Times*, 31 March – Attachment 26

³³ ‘Manape jilmaat: Ministers in recounts at counting centre’ 2010, *Colombo Times*, 11 April – Attachment 27

- [island-wide-elections-be-held-all-local-government-bodies-march](#) - Accessed 7 January 2011.
9. 'Over 10,000 SLFP applications for LG polls' 2011, *Daily News (Sri Lanka)*, 7 January.
 10. 'Town councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas stands dissolved enabling election commissioner to call for fresh elections' 2011, *Sri Lankan Government News*, 7 January.
 11. 'Sri Lanka: Political structure' 2010, *Economist Intelligence Unit – ViewsWire*, 7 December
 12. 'Sri Lanka' 2010 in 'The World Factbook', Central Intelligence Agency website, 9 November <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ce.html> – Accessed 23 November 2010.
 13. US Department of State 2010, *Background Note: Sri Lanka*, 7 June <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5249.htm> – Accessed 23 November 2010.
 14. 'Past Elections' (undated), Sri Lanka Department of Elections website <http://www.slelections.gov.lk/pastElection.html> - Accessed 6 January 2011.
 15. 'UNP braces for wrenching conflict' in 'Political Watch' 2010, *The Island*, 18 December http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=13820 – Accessed 6 January 2010.)
 16. 'Sri Lanka: United National Party ready for special convention' 2010, *Asian Tribune*, 12 December.
 17. 'Shiral-Kotte new UNP organizer' 2009, Sri Lanka News First website, 22 December <http://srilankanewsfirst.com/general/15383.html> - Accessed 7 January 2011.
 18. 'Biography: Shiral Virantha Lakthilaka' (undated), Shiral Lakthilala website <http://www.shiral.net/home/biography.php> - Accessed 7 January 2011.
 19. Najmuddin, J. & Sri Aravinda, I. 2010, 'Police dismantle Ranil's stage', *Daily Mirror*, 30 March <http://www.dailymirror.lk/index.php/news/2733-police-dismantle-ranils-stage.html> - Accessed 7 January 2011.
 20. '13 army deserters arrested' 2010, *New Indian Express*, 29 January.
 21. 'Sri Lanka police "raid Fonseka campaign HQ"' 2010, *BBC News*, 29 January http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8487331.stm - Accessed 7 January 2011.
 22. 'Columns – Political Column – New journey for UNP: Unexpected getting together' 2010, *The Sunday Times*, 12 December <http://sundaytimes.lk/101212/Columns/political.html> - Accessed 6 January 2011.
 23. 'Two WPC members take oaths' 2010, *Daily News (Sri Lanka)*, 28 April.
 24. 'Home: News and Events' (undated), Shiral Lakthilala website <http://www.shiral.net/home/index.php> - Accessed 7 January 2011.
 25. 'Shiral Laktilleke Grilled By TID' 2010, *Colombo Times*, 10 March.

26. 'Foreign Minister Gets Police To Remove Decorations For UNF Rally' 2010, *Colombo Times*, 31 March.
27. 'Manape jilmaat: Ministers in recounts at counting centre' 2010, *Colombo Times*, 11 April.