



Media, Civil Society and Trade Union Collective to Rise against Oppressive Laws

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29 -01-2024

Mr Mahinda Yapa Abeywardhana
Honorable Speaker,
The Parliament
Sri Jayawardenapura
Kotte

Honorable Speaker,

Request not to endorse the Online Safety Bill without verifying Supreme Court directives have been fully adhered to

We, as civil society activists, firmly believe the Online Safety Bill which completely endangers freedom of expression should be rejected outright. As citizens holding the sovereignty of the country, we, the undersigned, express our strong objection to the hasty passage of the bill on 24 January in the parliament, sans discussion with any stakeholder, and ignoring the directives of the Supreme Court.

MPs of the opposition parties have pointed out that the bill was debated and passed in the parliament without the proper inclusion of amendments and guidelines directed by the Supreme Court. Those amendments and guidelines were issued by the Supreme Court after taking into consideration a record of 45 fundamental rights petitions challenging the draft bill.

We believe, that if what the opposition MPs point out had occurred during the passage of the bill, it clearly violates the Constitution, undermines the sovereignty of the people and has possibly caused contempt of court as well.

In this letter, we once again confirm that even if the bill is passed as an Act by the Parliament, we will not stop our fight against regulations that are stifling the right to freedom of expression. This letter is also our commitment to continue our fight against regulations that are going to be implemented despite our objections that not only impede our right to free expression but also cause possible harm to the economy.

It is clear that the government is attempting to make the Online Safety Bill into law urgently to counter the opposition against the government ahead of the forthcoming elections.

As the Speaker of Parliament who ensures parliamentary orders are followed, we believe it's your responsibility to guarantee that the Supreme Court-directed amendments are incorporated into the Online Safety Bill before endorsing it.

Therefore, we, as citizen activists and citizens who respect democracy, request you not to sign your consent to the bill until you are satisfied that the orders and guidelines sent to you by the Supreme Court are fully incorporated into the bill.

On behalf of the Joint Committee



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Free Media Movement
Sri Lanka Working Journalists' Association
Young Journalists' Association of Sri Lanka
Media Law Forum
Law and Society Trust
Right to life human rights Center
National Cooperative Development Fund
Hashtag Generation
Association of Health Professionals
Sri Lanka Postal and Telecommunication Service Union
All Ceylon Management Service Officers' Union
Democratic Government Service Trade Union
South Asia Free Media Association
Ceylon Teachers' Union
Ceylon Trade Union Federation
United Postal Trade Union Front
Savisthri National Women's Moment
Uva Wellassa Women's Organization
Movement for the Defence of Democratic Rights (MDDR)
Free Media Movement Tarde Union (FMMTU)
Ceylon Teachers' Union
Moment for Land and Agriculture Reform (MONLAR)
National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO)
Shramabhimani Center
Dabidu Collective
Women's Action for Social Justice (WASJ)
United Federation of Labour (UFL)
Federation of Media Employees Trade Unions (FMETU)
Muslim Media Forum
Jaffna Press Club
Tamil Women Journalists Association
Tamil Media Alliance
Transparency International Sri Lanka

Free Trade Zone Union
South Asian Women in Media Network- Sri Lanka
Ceylon Bank Employees Union (CBEU)
South Asian Free Media Association
People's Commission of Women in Sri Lanka
The Voice of Truth
Stand Up Movement in Sri Lanka
Trade Union to Upliftment of Sri Lanka Railway
Freedom Trade Union Center (FTUC)
Prabha Abhilasha Network
People's Alliance for Right to Land (PARL)
Voice of the plantation people organization (VoPP)
Sri Lanka All Telecommunication Employees' Union
Unite – Trade Union and Mass Organization Collective
Media.LK
RED Organization
Nature Foundation
Media Pro-Tech
PEN Sri Lanka
National Movement for Social Justice
Standup Workers Union
Asian Media and Cultural Association
Women Center Sri Lanka
Protect Union
Human Rights Documentation Center (INFORM)
Citizens' Collective
Vinividimu Organization
Search for Common Grounds
Institute for People Engagement and Networking (iPEN)

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