



Singapore, 12 July 2021

His Excellency Gotabhaya Rajapaksa
President
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Your Excellency,

Harassment of Trade Union Leaders Protesting Against the Proposed Act for Militarisation of Tertiary Education in Sri Lanka

Affiliated organisations of the UNI Global Union in Sri Lanka have informed that freedom of expression has been seriously obstructed for the public to voice out their opinions on matters of public interest affecting the community profoundly.

Arresting students, reverent clergy and trade union leaders who joined the demonstration to oppose the proposed bill is a matter of concern. We strongly support and stand with our affiliates, expressing their opinions on the proposed legislation that aims to weaken the tertiary education regulatory act, supplementing with a new legislature delegating the regulatory function of higher education to military officials under the Minister of Defence.

The UNI Asia and Pacific condemns the arrest of Mr Joseph Starlin, General Secretary of Ceylon Teachers' Union. We call upon your good office to make necessary arrangements to release him from custody immediately.

Sri Lanka has ratified the ILO Convention No. 87 respecting Freedom of Association and Convention No. 98 for Collective Bargaining. We urge your government to respect the commitments given to adhere to internationally accepted conventions and restore the freedom for people to express their opinions in a democratic manner.

We also note that the government curtails legitimate trade union activities using the health and safety restrictions under the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic situation. We regret that the government authorities are abusing the status to harass the trade union leaders overwhelmingly by forcibly quarantining them in a democratically functioning republic.

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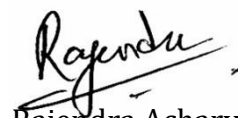
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Therefore, we invite your attention to the Sri Lankan governments commitment towards the right to freedom of expression and intervention to restore democratic right to trade union activities without undue interferences from authorities immediately.

Yours sincerely,



Minao Noda
President
UNI Asia and Pacific



Rajendra Acharya
Regional Secretary
UNI Asia and Pacific

Cc. Mr Mahinda Rajapaksa - Prime Minister, Sri Lanka
Mr Nimal Siripala de Silva - Minister of Labour, Sri Lanka
Mr Haripriya Hettiarachchi – Secretary, UNI Sri Lanka Affiliates Council

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