

# **Sri Lanka: IUSF take protest to Tangalle, where fellow activists are detained**

Wednesday 26 October 2022, by [SAMARAWEEERA Buddhika](#) (Date first published: 24 October 2022).

**Activists of the Inter-University Students' Federation (IUSF) and several other civil organisations - who travelled from Colombo Fort to Beliatta by train and from Beliatta to Tangalle by bus - staged a protest in Tangalle town yesterday (23), demanding the release of IUSF Convenor Wasantha Mudalige and Inter-University Bhikkhus' Federation (IUBF) Convenor Ven. Galwewa Siridhamma Thera, both of whom are currently being detained in Tangalle under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act (PTA).**

A group of activists of the IUSF, alongside several civil organisations and artists, travelled to Beliatta via train from Colombo Fort Railway Station last morning. They addressed the people gathered at the Colombo Fort Railway Station and informed them of the protest, which was held under the theme "Yuthukame Jana Ralla".

As the train began travelling towards Beliatta, many persons, including IUSF activists who had come to Colombo from Anuradhapura, Batticaloa, Polonnaruwa, and Kandy, joined the trip. They displayed placards and banners with slogans such as "Immediately release Mudalige and Siridhamma Thero, who are jailed under the PTA", "We are not afraid of repression", and "Victory to the 'aragalaya' (people's struggle)".

They informed people about the protest at many railway stations from Colombo Fort to Beliatta. At a number of railway stations such as Dehiwala, Kalutara, Beruwala, Ambalangoda, Hikkaduwa, and Galle, various groups including IUSF activists boarded the train.

They reached the Beliatta Railway Station at around 12 noon yesterday. From there, they had planned to travel to Tangalle town by bus, and from Tangalle town, in a protest march, to travel to the location where Mudalige and Ven. Siridhamma Thera are being detained by the CID. At the end of the march, the activists had planned to hold a demonstration in front of the detention centre.

However, before the said train reached the Beliatta Railway Station, a large number of police officers were deployed around the station and Tangalle town. In addition to the officers, several police vehicles were also seen parked around those areas in videos of the incident shared on social media platforms.

By the time the protestors reached Tangalle town, more than 200 police officers had been deployed on both sides of the town's main road. A police officer then announced that the protest should be held in a manner that did not block the flow of traffic and cause inconvenience to the public on the main roads from Tangalle to Tissa, Beliatta, and Mahawela.

The protestors alleged that the Police, despite instructing them to not block traffic flow, had deployed police officers blocking Tangalle town. They charged that the presence of such a large number of police officers on both sides of the main road hampered businesses and other institutions located in the town.

Photographs showing police officers deployed on the streets and two water cannon trucks parked on the road leading to the centre where Mudalige and Ven. Siridhamma Thera are being detained – towards which the protestors were reportedly not allowed to proceed – were circulated on social media platforms. As they could not reach the location, the activists staged their protest in Tangalle town.

Meanwhile, speaking during the protest, the activists of the IUSF, including former IUSF Convenor Lahiru Weerasekara and Acting IUBF Convenor Ven. Udenigama Gunaratne Thera, said that the Government's attempts to suppress the people's struggle by imprisoning the activists leading it will not be successful. They stated that yesterday's protest was only a symbolic one, and they are ready to go to any place where Mudalige and Ven. Siridhamma Thera are being detained and hold protests for their release in the future.

The IUSF had organised a massive protest in Colombo on 18 August against President Wickremesinghe and the Government. A total of 16 university students who were arrested during that protest were released on bail after being produced before the Colombo Magistrate's Court on 19 August, while Mudalige, Ven. Siridhamma Thera, and IUSF Member Hashan Jeewantha were placed under detention by the CID.

Jeewantha was later released on bail after being produced before the relevant magistrate; however, Mudalige and Ven. Siridhamma Thera are still being interrogated by the CID on a 90-day detention order signed by Wickremesinghe in his capacity as the Minister of Defence.

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## **Buddhika Samaraweera**

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