

Peaceful Protests for a Revolutionary Change in Sri Lanka

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Sri Lankans had been protesting for months over the country’s economic crisis that has led to a severe [shortage of many essential imported items like medicines](#), fuel and cooking gas. Wickremesinghe’s predecessor [Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled the country](#) after protesters [stormed his official residence](#) and occupied many key state buildings including the president’s office and prime minister’s office and official residence. Wickremesinghe was elected by Parliament to complete Rajapaksa’s term, which ends in 2024.

The untiring efforts of the peaceful protesters succeeded in forcing the resignation of three Rajapaksa brothers, first it was **Mahinda Rajapaksa** who resigned the post of Prime Minister on May 09, 2022. **Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa** on June 09, 2022. But the objective of the protesters was the removal of **President Gotabaya Rajapaksa**. Due to the siege of the President’s house he was forced to go on exile to Maldives and then secured a 14 day visa to Singapore.

Sri Lanka is the first country to succeed by the protests for a “Regime Change”, The country is riding the waves of revolutionary change for the first time in history. The mass protests irrespective of race, religion or social class, Sri Lankans, Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims collectively protesting against the growing hardships influenced by the economic crisis the country has faced since independence. The country is desperately struggling to meet the fuel, food and financial commitments.

An essential part of this struggle is peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and communication as well as the freedom of mobility. These rights and their use by an informed, youthful protest leadership was able to shake the foundations of the government pushing it to change the President, cabinet and important office holders in the government bureaucracy.

Since the takeover of **Ranil Wickremesinghe**, the Lankan government issues several “state of emergencies” to curtail anti-government uprisings on the island amid the crippling financial shortage. Shortly after the crisis-hit President Gotabaya Rajapaksa resigned on July 15, 2022.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) strongly condemned the repeated declaration of a state of emergency since April 2, 2022, to quell civil protests amid the stifling economic crisis in the country. The frequent ‘emergencies’ hinder people from voicing their grievances amidst the economic collapse in the country, the statement said.

“We have raised our concerns to the Government on a number of occasions over the misuse of emergency measures, but to no avail. We condemn the recent and continued abuse of such measures to infringe on the legitimate exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression,” the experts said, as mentioned in the press release.

An international human rights group says Sri Lanka’s government is using emergency laws to harass and arbitrarily detain protesters who are seeking political reform and accountability amid the island country’s economic crisis.

New York-based Human Rights Watch said in a statement Wednesday that Sri Lanka’s military sought to curtail protests through intimidation, surveillance, and arbitrary arrests of demonstrators, activists, lawyers and journalists since [President Ranil Wickremesinghe took office](#) last month.

“The Sri Lankan government’s crackdown on peaceful dissent appears to be a misguided and unlawful attempt to divert attention from the need to address the country’s urgent economic crisis,” said Meenakshi Ganguly, Human Rights Watch’s South Asia director.

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