

CONGRESS MUST PROTECT PROTESTERS IN SRI LANKA

Amnesty International urges Congress to call for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and press the government of Sri Lanka to respect, protect and fulfill the right to protest.

Last year's economic crisis in Sri Lanka sparked widespread protests, leading to a change in government in July. The new government responded to the protests with excessive and unnecessary force. Protest organizers and others have been arrested and detained under a draconian anti-terror law, the **Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA)**, which does not meet international human rights standards.

- The PTA allows suspects to be detained up to a year without charge.
- Persons arrested under the PTA do not have the right to be informed of the reasons for their arrest or to be brought promptly before a judge.
- The PTA facilitates torture by admitting at trial confessions obtained from suspects in custody.
- The offenses constituting "terrorism" under the PTA are ill-defined; these offenses have been abused in the past to target minorities, critics, and journalists.

Congress must support protesters' rights in Sri Lanka by supporting the repeal of the PTA.

Recommendations to Members of Congress:

- **Hold Congressional hearings requiring the Biden Administration and the State Department** to answer for their policies towards Sri Lanka and demonstrate that diplomatic relations prioritize:
 - Repeal of the PTA;
 - Pending repeal, an immediate moratorium on its use; and assurances that any successor legislation meets international human rights standards.
- **Pass a resolution calling for the repeal of the PTA** and express public support for repeal;

- **Support appropriations language** that requires the Sri Lankan government to meet human rights benchmarks, including the repeal of the PTA;
- **Contact Sri Lankan Ambassador Mahinda Samarasinghe** (202-483-4025; slemb.washington@mfa.gov.lk) to express concern about the Sri Lankan government's use of the PTA.
- **Contact Sri Lanka's Minister of Justice Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe**, (minister@moj.gov.lk) to request sharing a draft of the National Security Act with civil society organizations and other interested parties in Sri Lanka and seeking their feedback; and ensuring that any successor legislation to the PTA complies with Sri Lanka's obligations under international law.

AMNESTY URGES CONGRESS TO:

- Introduce and pass a resolution such as [H.Res.1493](#) that calls for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act;
- Speak out about the Sri Lankan government's abuses against protestors; and
- Work with the Biden Administration to insist that any counter-terror legislation adopted by the Sri Lankan government is compliant with international human rights standards.

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