

CAMPAIGN:

THE RIGHT TO PROTEST: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA

ACTION TOOLKIT

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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WHY THIS TOOLKIT

In this toolkit you'll find:

- Information and resources about the human rights situation in Sri Lanka with a focus on the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), a draconian anti-terror law used to crack down on protestors and stifle dissenting voices;
- Updates about the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) a proposed replacement law, which fails to uphold the Sri Lankan government's human rights obligations
- Online and Offline Actions to pressure the government of Sri Lanka to repeal the PTA and ensure that any successor legislation to the PTA complies with Sri Lanka's obligations under international law;
- Online Actions to pressure the U.S. Congress to take action in support of the right to protest in Sri Lanka and to pressure the government of Sri Lanka to substantially revise or drop the ATA
- Ideas for actions to raise awareness about the human rights situation in Sri Lanka and to promote the campaign in your community.

This guide provides you with a range of resources to support you in engaging in anything from a **less time intensive action** such as signing an online petition and retweeting, to a **high-level action**, where you step into a leadership role, implement offline activities, lead discussions, and participate in stunts!

Whether your favorite type of action is at the base of the pyramid of action or toward the top of the pyramid, please know all actions are important and most impactful when done together!

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SRI LANKA

In the last two years, the Sri Lankan government has intensified the crackdown on human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, and members of the opposition, and expanded its scope to include university students, academics, trade unionists, and social media commentators, severely curtailing civil society freedom. People from all walks of life, especially minority communities, have been threatened, intimidated, harassed, and jailed, simply for expressing views or doing their jobs in ways that displease the authorities.

In March 2022, a new wave of protests erupted across Sri Lanka, as a result of a catastrophic economic crisis that is depriving people of basic necessities, including essential medicines, food, cooking gas, fuel, and electricity. The government's responses to these protests have resulted in serious human rights violations: The army has been deployed with shooting orders to contain the protests; the police used unlawful force and lethal weapons; and the government continued to intimidate and detain dozens of peaceful protesters under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). President Ranil Wickremesinghe has also publicly labelled protesters as “terrorists” and “fascists”, in a bid to demonize protesters.





The authorities have used counterterrorism laws such as the **PTA** to detain individuals exercising their right to freedom of expression. The PTA has long been criticized as an abusive law that has been used to crush dissent and forcibly disappear people. Since it was introduced as a “temporary” measure in 1979, the law has been used particularly to target members of the Tamil and Muslim communities, and to stifle dissenting voices including journalists and human rights defenders. For over four decades, the PTA has enabled numerous instances of prolonged arbitrary detention and torture and other ill-treatment. Despite the Sri Lankan government’s repeated pledges to repeal the PTA and replace it with rights-respecting legislation, the government continues to use the law to violate human rights, in breach of its own domestic and international commitments. Now the Sri Lankan authorities are attempting to whitewash their abuses by replacing the PTA with a new proposed law, the Anti-Terrorism Act That does not comply with international standards and is as dangerous as the PTA to the people of Sri Lanka.

We have an opportunity to influence the ATA before it becomes a law! Although the bill has just been introduced in Parliament, it could be enacted into law in a matter of weeks. Now is the time for us to get the ATA substantially revised or dropped. It’s time for us to show up and demonstrate solidarity with peaceful protesters in Sri Lanka! We must convince our elected officials to be vocal in support of the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly in Sri Lanka and ensure that the ATA is either dropped or revised substantially to comply with international law.

THE FOLLOWING ACTIVISTS, STUDENTS, AND PROTEST LEADERS HAD BEEN DETAINED UNDER THE PTA

WASANTHA MUDALIGE

Wasantha Mudalige, a student activist, was detained for five months on orders signed by President Wickremesinghe under the PTA. As convenor of the Inter University Students Federation, Mudalige had taken a prominent part in widespread protests in Sri Lanka in 2022. During much of his detention, he was held in solitary confinement and poor conditions, including cramped cells without access to sanitation and sunlight. He is currently released on bail.

HEJAAZ HIZBULLAH

Hejaaz Hizbullah, senior lawyer and minority and civic rights activist, was arrested on February 7, 2020, and charged under the PTA. Hejaaz has been subject to an unfair character assassination in local media by the authorities in an environment where anti-Muslim sentiment is rife, and prominent Muslim professionals have been unfairly targeted. Amnesty International believes that evidence against Hejaaz may be subject to fabrication. His family believes that he is being targeted for his professional work as a lawyer and his peaceful activism for the human rights of Sri Lanka's embattled Muslim minority. He is currently out on bail.

GALWEWA SIRIDHAMMA THERO

a student activist, was detained for four months under the PTA and held in squalid conditions while his health deteriorated. After multiple public requests from his family members, Galawewa was admitted to Colombo National Hospital on October 25, suffering from a severe rash. He was diagnosed with Dengue fever. He is currently out on bail.

**PROGRESS HAPPENS WHEN WE
COME TOGETHER TO DEMAND
CHANGE. PROTESTING IS
EMPOWERING AND POWERFUL.
PROTESTING SHOULD NOT BE
SCARY OR DANGEROUS.**

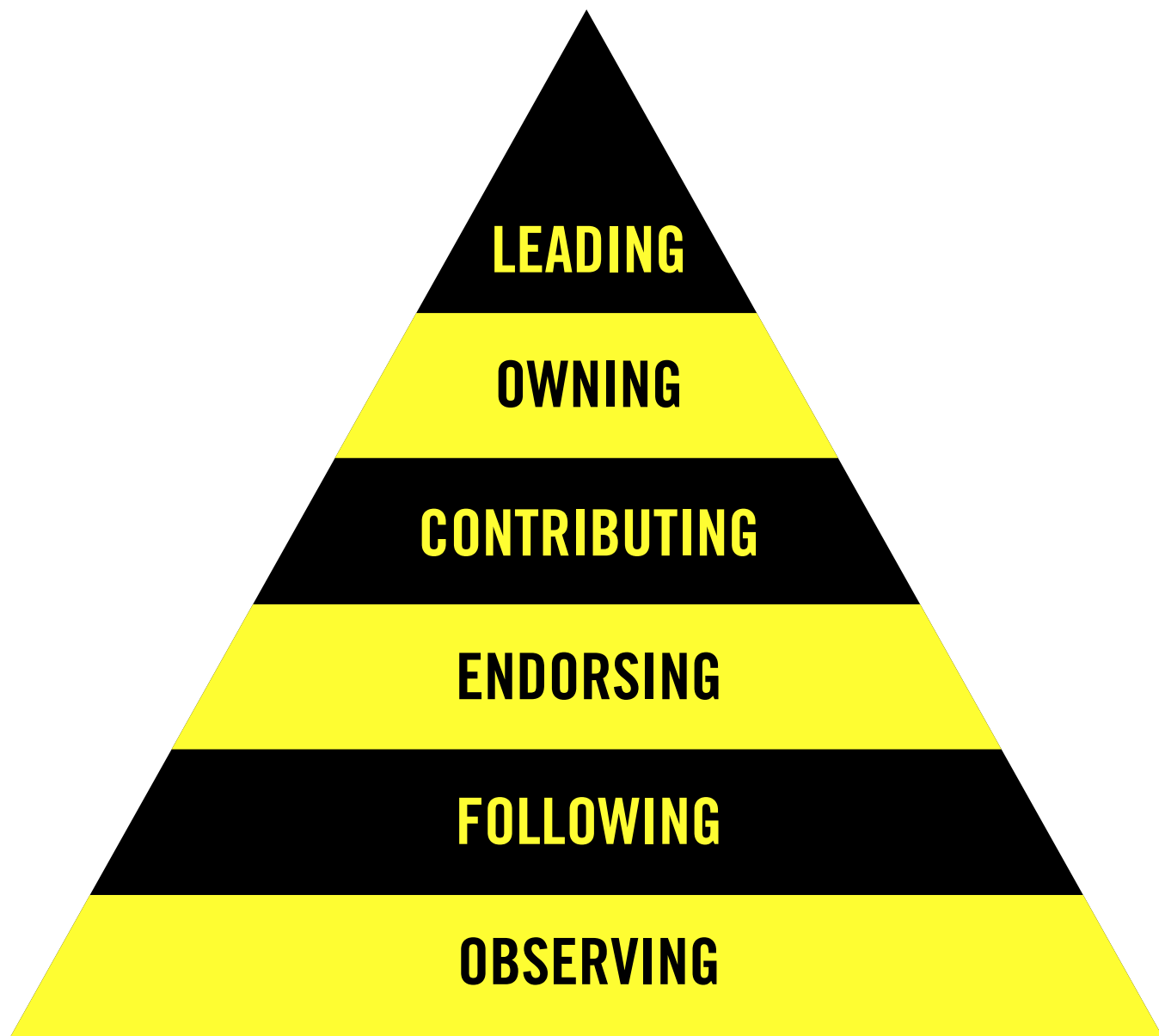
CALLS TO ACTION



AMNESTY
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CALLS TO ACTION



PYRAMID OF ACTION

LEADING AND OWNING



ACTION I: LOBBY YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Timeline: 1-2 weeks

Level of Engagement: High

Right now, the U.S. Congress has a narrow window of opportunity to influence the government of Sri Lanka to replace the PTA with legislation that complies with Sri Lanka's human rights obligations and to ensure that the ATA is dropped or substantially revised.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

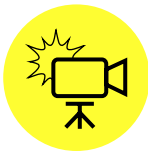
Contact your members of Congress and ask them to:

- 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 the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and that the ATA is either substantially revised or dropped. Pass a resolution such as [H.Res.1493](#) that calls for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and that any successor legislation must meet international standards;
- Speak out about the Sri Lankan government's abuses against protestors.

WAYS TO CONTACT YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

- **Hold a lobby meeting:** Meet virtually or in-person with the offices of your members of Congress on this issue [[leave behind](#)]. If interested, email grassroots@aiusa.org to be connected with your state's Legislative Coordinator.
 - If you require issue experts to accompany you, please connect with Carolyn Nash, Asia Advocacy Director CNash@aiusa.org and Jim McDonald, Sri Lanka Country Specialist JMcdonald@aiusacs.org.
- **Host a phone bank:** Organize a phone banking session aimed at Congress [using this script](#) and this call line: 1-210-702-3263.

LEADING AND OWNING



ACTION II: CREATE AN EDUCATIONAL VIDEO ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Timeline: 1 week

Level of Engagement: High

- Record a one-minute video!
- Use these [talking points](#) to set the context, provide key facts about the PTA, the ATA and Amnesty's calls.
- Download Campaign pictures and graphics [here](#) and solidarity signs [here](#).
- Make sure you submit your video for review by contacting tharb@aiusa.org and don't forget to flag once it's posted so we can repost you from AIUSA's social media accounts!



ACTION III: BANNER DROP

Timeline: 2 weeks

Level of Engagement: High

- Scout the location around the Sri Lanka Embassy or Consulate in your state or city. Or choose a public location symbolic of your state or city.
- Contact FedEx and request printing [the banner titled "Sri Lanka's crackdown on protestors must end"](#) in vinyl – size: 2 feet by 10 feet. You can also print signs (size: 11 by 17 feet) with different messaging.
- Make sure that you have at least 5 people to accompany you.
- Take picture, posts on social media using the hashtag #SriLanka, #ProtectTheProtest **and** tagging [@AmbSamarasinghe](#), [@wijerajapakshe](#), [@RW_UNP](#)
- Contact the Campaigns team campaigns@aiusa.org if you need support with the budget and to request a re-post of your action on AIUSA's social media channels!



ACTION I: POSTCARD ACTION

Timeline: 1 hour

Level of Engagement: Medium

- Mobilize your communities to send postcards calling on their members of Congress to take action and demand that Sri Lanka's government complies with human rights standards.
- Our message is simple: Congress should support the right of peaceful protesters in Sri Lanka by supporting the replacement of the PTA with legislation that complies with Sri Lanka's obligations under international law. The ATA is just as dangerous to the Sri Lankan people and must not be enacted in its current form. It should be substantially revised or dropped.
- We need to communicate that message and flood our government officials with thousands of emails, letters and postcards calling on them to take action now!
- If you want more messaging, please check above 'talking points' under 'Action II: Create an educational video on social media.'

STEP BY STEP GUIDE

- Buy a local postcard in town: write your full name, city, and state in the upper left-hand corner of the FRONT of the postcard.
- Write a personal message to your Member of Congress on the BACK of the postcard about why the Right to Protest is important to you [\[messaging here\]](#). Urge them to use all diplomatic means to ensure that the government of Sri Lanka protects the right to peaceful protest [\[messaging here\]](#).
- Ask a friend to take a photo of you taking action. Share on social media and tag your government officials using the hashtag #SriLanka #ProtectTheProtest
- Then reach out to your family, friends, and neighbors to motivate them to write a postcard.
- Gather all the postcards and send them to your representatives.



ACTION II: ORGANIZE A TWITTER STORM AMONG FRIENDS AND FAMILY AND IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER SECTIONS

Timeline: 1 week

Level of Engagement: High

TARGETS	HASHTAGS	ASSETS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • @USAmbSL • @wijerajapakshe • @RW_UNP • @AmbSamarasinghe • @POTUS • <u>House Members' twitter accounts</u> • <u>Senators' twitter accounts</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #SriLanka • #ProtectTheProtest 	<p>Download <u>here</u> and <u>here</u>.</p>



CONTRIBUTING

SAMPLE TWEETS

- I urge you [[@Your member of Congress](#)] to call on the government of #SriLanka to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act and ensure that any new legislation is aligned with international human rights standards. #ProtectTheProtest
- I urge the Biden administration @POTUS to strongly call on the gov of #SriLanka to repeal the PTA & either substantially revise or drop its newly proposed successor, the draft Anti-Terrorism Act, which doesn't meet human right standards.
- As people in #SriLanka face the brunt of the ongoing economic crisis, they have the right to express their opinions and call for accountability including through peaceful protests. [[@Your member of Congress](#)] tell @RW_UNP to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act and to drop or substantially revise the draft Anti-Terrorism Act.
- I urge @USAmbSL to remind @RW_UNP & @wijerajapakshe that they must comply with human rights standards by immediately ending the crackdown on peaceful protests in #SriLanka and create an enabling environment to respect and protect the right to protest. [Take action.](#)
- The government of Sri Lanka has been using the Prevention of Terrorism Act in violation of human rights. Tell President Ranil Wickremesinghe to #ProtectTheProtest. [Take action.](#)
- The President of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe must end the crackdown on peaceful protests and create an enabling environment to respect, protect and fulfill the right to protests. #ProtectTheProtest. [Take action.](#)
- People have the right to express discontent peacefully and the state has an obligation to facilitate this right. President Ranil Wickremesinghe #ProtectTheProtest. [Take action.](#)

AMNESTY'S CONTACT

If you wish to develop your own social media posts, please contact tharb@aiusa.org who can assist you with drafting and AIUSA's review process.

If you wish to coordinate with other sections, please contact the below focal point at AIUK. For further guidance contact Jim McDonald, Sri Lanka Country Specialist JMcdonald@aiusacs.org.

Section: AI UK

Name: Jerry Allen, Sri Lanka Coordinator

Contact information: jerry.allen@amnesty.org.uk

OBSERVING, FOLLOWING, AND ENDORSING



ACTION I: ONLINE ACTION

Timeline: 3-5 minutes

Level of Engagement: Low

- **Click [here](#) to send a message** to your member of Congress urging them to call on the government of Sri Lanka to replace the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) with a legislation that complies with Sri Lanka's obligations under international law.
- Encourage others to take action: **[Promote this online action](#)** on your social media platforms.



ACTION II: ONLINE ACTION

Timeline: 3-5 minutes

Level of Engagement: Low

- **Click [here](#) to send a message** to Sri Lanka's Minister of Justice and the Ambassador of Sri Lanka urging them to work with the President of Sri Lanka to replace the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) with legislation that complies with Sri Lanka's obligations under international law. The Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) is just as dangerous to the Sri Lankan people and must not be enacted in its current form.
- Encourage others to take action: **[Promote this online action](#)** on your social media platforms.

OBSERVING, FOLLOWING, AND ENDORSING



ACTION III: ONLINE ACTION

Timeline: 3-5 minutes

Level of Engagement: Low

- Click [here](#) to Tweet at Ambassador of the US to Sri Lanka Julie Chung, demanding that she promotes, defends, and protects the right to peaceful protests in Sri Lanka.
- Encourage others to take action: [Promote this online action](#) on your social media platforms.



ACTION IV: ONLINE ACTION

Timeline: 3-5 minutes

Level of Engagement: Low

- Use [this script](#)* to call your members of Congress.
- To be connected, call 1-210-702-3263.

*This script serves two purposes: 1) You can directly call your members of Congress using the box titled 'script' at the end of the page; or 2) you can call others and encourage *them* to make phone calls to their members of Congress.

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