

CONGRESS MUST PROTECT PROTESTERS IN SRI LANKA

Amnesty International urges Congress to call for the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) to be replaced with legislation that complies with Sri Lanka's obligations under international law

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. Now the Sri Lankan authorities are moving to replace the PTA with a new law, the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) – a bill that does not comply with international standards and is as dangerous as the PTA to the Sri Lankan people.

- The PTA and the proposed replacement legislation (ATA) allow suspects to be detained up to a year without charge
- The proposed replacement legislation retains unchecked powers of the executive, including to proscribe persons and organizations without judicial oversight;
- The PTA and the proposed replacement legislation include provisions that facilitate torture
- The offenses constituting “terrorism” under the PTA and under the ATA are ill-defined; these offenses have been abused in the past to target minorities, critics, and journalists.

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 revised or dropped.

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 the PTA;
 - Pending repeal, an immediate moratorium on its use;
 - Assurances that any successor legislation meets international human rights standards; and
 - Ensure that the ATA is not enacted in its current form.
- **Pass a resolution calling for the repeal of the PTA** and scrutiny of replacement legislation;
- **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 and that the ATA must be revised substantially or dropped.
- **Contact Sri Lanka's Minister of Justice Wijeyadasa Rajapakse**, (minister@moj.gov.lk) to ensure that the PTA is repealed and that the ATA is dropped or substantially revised to comply with Sri Lanka's obligations under international law.
- **Urge the Biden administration to speak out.**

AMNESTY URGES CONGRESS TO:

- Pass a resolution such as [H.Res.1493](#) that calls for the repeal of the PTA and for successor legislation that meets international standards;
- Speak out about the Sri Lankan government's abuses against protestors; and
- Contact the Sri Lankan Ambassador Mahinda Samarasinghe (202-483-4025; slemb.washington@mfa.gov.lk) to express concern about Sri Lanka's crackdown on peaceful protests.

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