

29th May, 2025

Secretary,
Ministry of Justice and National Integration,
Colombo 10

Re: The Repeal of the PTA -
Do not replace with a new terror law

We, as concerned peoples of Sri Lanka, respond to the newspaper notice published in the Lankadeepa Newspaper on 16th May, 2025, providing the public with an extremely narrow two weeks to submit recommendations, comments or suggestions on repealing the **Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) No. 49 of 1979 (PTA)** and new anti terror laws.

At the outset, we are extremely disappointed in, and concerned over the Government's decision to draft a new anti-terror bill. The public of Sri Lanka were assured by the National People's Power (NPP), prior to being voted into a majority in Parliament, that the PTA would be repealed. There was an explicit undertaking that extraordinary and oppressive laws such as the PTA would not be maintained by this Government. The various public statements on the necessary nature of the PTA, and the appointment of a Committee to consider a new anti terror law, is a breach of the promise to the People. The unqualified promise to repeal the draconian PTA by the NPP, is being hedged now that the Party is in Government.

We further state that the composition of the Committee betrays an ignorance of how such laws are implemented by a Sri Lankan majoritarian administrative apparatus, and instrumentalised by racism. The Committee is not representative of key interests - it includes largely state officials, military and Ministry of Defence personnel and does not include victims/victim families, or Tamil or Muslim community representation. As such, it has no legitimacy in the eyes of the People, as a body that will consider what is in the best interests of the People, especially the most vulnerable in our society.

We call on the Minister of Justice to seriously consider the wide scale destruction of human life and potential, caused by the heinous PTA, disproportionately to Tamil and Muslim communities, but also to southern youth during the 88/89 insurrection, student leaders during the recent people's struggle, and on alternate/dissident political voices in Sri Lanka. **The political intolerance bred by the use of the PTA, and the harm caused to our political culture by the maintaining of this oppressive law, is irremediable. It is time to break away from the history of State oppression, State violence and divisive identity politics engaged by successive**

governments since independence. Our experience is that this law has only been used for protecting authoritarian interests of the State and never in the interest of the people. It is also time to reflect on the sovereignty of the People, repair the damage done, and forge a new political culture based on human rights and real security for the People founded on freedom and dignity.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) 1979 is a dangerous anti-terror law. It is extraordinary in nature (no judicial oversight at the first instance or parliamentary oversight), and unjustly operates permanently alongside ordinary criminal law. The provisions on admissibility of confessions (often extracted by way of torture) made to the police, administrative detentions and Presidential powers to prohibit publications, are all abhorrent to democratic rule of law and human rights. The excessive powers under the PTA have been abused for over 40 years, and victims and their families continue to suffer devastating personal consequences at the hands of this law. There is widely recognised and long-standing local and international condemnation of the PTA. The Sri Lanka Government has also made repeated commitments to repeal the law, including in the UN Human Rights Council Resolution 30/1 of 2015. In 2022, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) called for the “complete abolition of the PTA” and that “terrorism should be investigated under the General Law of the country.”¹

On the other hand, Sri Lanka has laws and institutions for countering terrorism. Sri Lanka’s scheme of criminal law that addresses terror offences include at least 15 laws² as well as various provisions under the Penal Code that creates offences³. Sri Lanka has also ratified UN conventions and adopted them into anti-terror specific laws. The country has a National Intelligence Service, a Counter Terrorism Investigation Division (CTID) and a Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. This general legal system, subject to **full judicial oversight**, must form the response of the Sri Lankan state to the ‘threat of terrorism’.

¹ HRCSL - The Briefing of the Diplomats on 08th, 09th, & 10th of February 2022 on the Road Map of the HRCSL for 2022 held at the Human Rights Commission Headquarters. <https://www.hrcsl.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/HRCSL-Press-Release-on-15.02.2022.pdf>

² Offensive Weapons Act No. 18 of 1966, Offences against Aircraft Act No. 24 of 1982, Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence At Airports Serving International Civil Aviation No. 31 Of 1996, Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation No. 42 of 2000, Prevention of Hostage Taking No. 41 Of 2000 , Prevention And Punishment Of Crimes Against Internationally Protected Persons No. 15 of 1991, Suppression of Terrorist Bombings Act, No. 11 Of 1999, Chemical Weapons Convention No.58 Of 2007, Convention on The Suppression of Terrorist Financing Act No. 25 of 2005, Financial Transactions Reporting Act No. 6 of 2006, Prevention of Money Laundering Act No. 05 of 2006 (as amended), SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression Of Terrorism Act No. 70 Of 1988, United Nations Act No 45 of 1968 and regulations made under that to deal with terrorist financing and money laundering and which has led to listing of persons and organizations, Computer Crimes Act, S.6 on Offences committed against National Security.

³ Penal Code offences - S.114 Waging or attempting to wage war, or abetting the waging of war against the State, S.116 Collecting men, arms and ammunition the intention of waging war against the State, S. 117 Deliberately concealing design to wage war, S.118 – Insulting words attempting to bring State into contempt, S. 119 – attempts to refrain President or MP from use of lawful power or assaults, restrains, uses criminal force against President or an MP, S. 120 – Causing disaffection towards the State or excites hatred or contempt towards the administration of justice

It is in this backdrop that we strongly recommend the following;

1. **Repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act No. 49 of 1979 (PTA) immediately**, and not attempt delaying tactics through the Committee working on another version. **The Government should also impose a moratorium on the application of the PTA, until its repeal.**
2. **There are at least 15 laws in the existing criminal justice system including Penal Code provisions to address issues relating to 'terrorism'. Therefore, there is currently no necessity for any special law on terrorism.**
3. **Ensure that NO laws are enacted that empower the police / Executive** to restrict the freedom of movement, conducting meetings, ability to congregate, to have a rally or procession, or to make demands by any form of protest. Debate and dissent are essential features of a democracy, and in recent years, numerous oppressive laws have eroded these basic rights. Individuals and peoples pursuit of legitimate aspirations through democratic means should not be infringed upon in any manner by way of terror laws.
4. **Take measures to expedite justice to all currently detained under the PTA through political and legal interventions**, including Presidential Pardons, withdrawal of charges if no evidence, or if only/primary evidence is through confessions and release of those not charged yet.
5. **Ensure reparations by state for those who were detained under PTA and not convicted** including acknowledgement, apology, compensation, physical and mental health care and livelihood support. Reparations should also be provided to the families of those who died in custody when detained under the PTA.

Signatures;

Individuals

1. A. Gajendran
2. A.P. S. Fernando
3. Ainslie Joseph - Independent Activist
4. Ajitha A.
5. Amalini de Sayrah
6. Anduranwila Chandrajothi himi - People's Council Galle
7. Angelica Chandrasekeran - Therapist
8. Anithra Varia
9. Anoja A.
10. Anthony Jesudasan
11. Anthony Vinoth - Rights Activist

12. Anupa Nandula - Trade Union Activist
13. Anushaya Collure
14. Arjuna Parakrama, Emeritus Professor - University of Peradeniya
15. B. Gowthaman
16. Balasingham Skanthakumar - Social Scientists' Association (SSA)
17. Barni Devon Galhena (SMP)
18. Bishop of Colombo, Rt. Rev. Dushantha Rodrigo - Anglican Church of Ceylon
19. Bishop Duleep de Chickera
20. Bishop Kumara Illangasinghe
21. Bisliya Bhutto - Former Member, Puttalam Pradesiya Sabha
22. C. Ranitha Gnanarajah - Attorney - at - Law
23. Caryll Tozer
24. Chaminda Dias - GotaGoYaya
25. Chandima Jayawardane
26. Chandra Devanarayana
27. Channaka Jayasinghe
28. Chanu Nimesha
29. Chintaka Rajapakse
30. Christine Perera
31. Christopher Stephen - GotaGoYaya
32. Damith Chandimal
33. Dayapala Thiranagama
34. Deekshya Illangasinghe
35. Dennis Kularatne
36. Dhanusha Pathirana
37. Dharmasiri Lankapeli - Federation of Media Employees Trade Unions
38. Dr. Amali Wedagedara
39. Dr. C.S. Jamunanantha
40. Dr. Joe William
41. Dr. K. Guruparan - Attorney - at - Law
42. Dr. Kalpa Rajapaksha, Political Economist - University of Peradeniya
43. Dr. Mahendran Thiruvarangan - University of Jaffna
44. Dr. Mario Gomez
45. Dr. Nadeesh de Silva - The Open University of Sri Lanka
46. Dr. Ramesh Ramasamy - University of Peradeniya
47. Dr. S. Kumaravel
48. Dr. Sakuntala Kadirgamar
49. Dr. Sanjana Hattotuwa

50. Duleeka Nonis
51. Ephraim Shaderach
52. Ermiza Tegal - Attorney - at - Law
53. Francis Raajan
54. H.G. Dammika - People's Council Matara
55. Hejaaz Hizbullah - Attorney - at - Law & PTA detainee (case still ongoing), Amnesty International Prisoner of Conscience
56. Hemalatha K.
57. Hussain Shamil Imtiaz Ali - Social Activist
58. Imran Rajabdeen - Social Activist / Free Palestine Movement
59. Ishani Ranasinghe
60. Jacintha Subasinha
61. Jagath Kularatne - Attorney-at-Law
62. Jayani Abeysekara Human Rights Defender
63. Jeewarathnam Suresh
64. Jehanki Anandha
65. Joanne Senn
66. K. Nihal Ahamed
67. K.S. Ratnavale - Attorney-at-Law
68. Kalani Subasinghe
69. Kounthini R.
70. Kushan Chalitha
71. Lahiru Weerasekara - YOUTH FOR CHEnge
72. Lavina Hasanthi Perera
73. Leisha Lawrence - GotaGoYaya
74. Lionel Peiris - Free Palestine Movement & Priest, Church of Ceylon
75. M.A. Sumanthiran, PC
76. M.R.M. Ramzy
77. Mahaluxmy Kurushanthan
78. Manasha Peiris
79. Marisa de Silva
80. Mariyarosari S.
81. Mark Schubert - Attorney-at-Law
82. Melani Gunathilaka - Climate and Political Activist
83. Melani Manel Perera - Journalist
84. Mohamed Faris Mohamed Fazeer - Journalist
85. Nadeesha Madurangi Fernando (SMP)
86. Nadeeshani Hanwella

87. Nagulan Nesiah
88. Natasha Van-Hoff
89. Neranjan Maddumage
90. Nicola Perera - University of Colombo
91. Nilmini Nonis
92. Nilshan Fonseka
93. Nimal Perera
94. Nirmala M.
95. Nirmala T.
96. Nisha Perera
97. Niththika S.
98. Nivanthini S.
99. Nuwan Bopage - Attorney - at - Law
100. P.M. Mujeebur Rahman, LLB - Journalist
101. P.N. Singham
102. Pasan Jayasinghe
103. Paulin Sheno (SMP)
104. Peter Rezel - Chartered Accountant
105. Prof. Shamala Kumar - University of Peradeniya
106. Prof. Sumathy Sivamohan - University of Peradeniya
107. Puni Selvaratnam
108. Rajany Rajeswary
109. Rajkumar Rajeevkanth
110. Ramya Dilrukshi Weerasinghe (SMP)
111. Ranil Buddika
112. Raveendran V.
113. Rebecca David - Social Activist
114. Reemus Fernando (SMP)
115. Rev. Andrew Devadason - Church of Ceylon (Anglican) Diocese of Colombo
116. Rev. Fr. F.C.J. Gnanaraj
117. Rev. Fr. Isaac Daniel Dixon - Secretary, Jaffna Inter Religious Group & Priest, Christ Church, Galle Face
118. Rev. Fr. Jeevantha Peiris
119. Rev. Fr. Jeyabalan Croos
120. Rev. Fr. M. Sathivel
121. Rev. Fr. Nandana Manatunga
122. Rev. Fr. Ravichandran
123. Rev. Fr. Rohan Dominic, CMF - Claretian Missionaries

124. Rev. Fr. Rohan Silva
125. Rev. Fr. S.D.P. Selvan
126. Rev. Fr. Sherard Jayawardena
127. Rev. Fr. T. Dixon - Kilinochchi
128. Rev. Fr. Terrence Fernando
129. Rev. M. Lukejohn - Human Rights Activist, Civil Rights Forum, Batticaloa
130. Rev. Rajan Rohaan
131. Rev. Sr. Berni De Silva
132. Rev. Sr. Chrishanthi Basil
133. Rev. Sr. Damitha De Silva
134. Rev. Sr. Deepa Fernando (HF)
135. Rev. Sr. Marian Fernando
136. Rev. Sr. Nichola Emmanuel
137. Rev. Sr. Shamindani Fernando
138. Rev. Sr. Shandika Perera
139. Rev. Sr. Shiromi Fernando
140. Rev. Sr. Sujeewa Gunatilake
141. Rohini Hensman - Writer and Independent Scholar
142. Rosita Fernando
143. Ruki Fernando - Human Rights Activist & Former PTA detainee
144. Ruwani Kularatne - Attorney-at-Law
145. Ruwanthie de Chickera - Playwright
146. S.N. Krishnapriyan - Red Fields Peoples Forum
147. S. Sundareswaran
148. S. Thirunavan
149. Sabra Zahid - Attorney-at-Law
150. Sandun Thudugala
151. Sarah Arumugam - Attorney-At-Law
152. Saroj Pathirana - Journalist
153. Saththiyaseelan K.
154. Selvaraja Rajasegar - Editor, Maatram.org
155. Shamini V.
156. Shanika Lakmali Fernando (SMP)
157. Shantha Wijesooriya - Ex-Co Member, Sri Lanka Working Journalists' Association
158. Sharmila Packiaraja
159. Sheila Richards
160. Shirani Cooray
161. Shivanthika Perera

162. Shreen Saroor
163. Sithara Kularathna
164. Suganthini S.
165. Sugath Rajapaksha
166. Sujatha J.
167. Sujith Prasanna - People's Council Kalutara
168. Thanzela Ousman
169. Tharushi Dishara - Attorney - at - Law
170. Thasneema Dahlan - Free Palestine Movement Sri Lanka
171. Thayalini J.
172. Thileepan S.
173. Thiyagaraja Waradas
174. Thiyagaraja Waradas
175. Tholamai V.
176. Thushara Gallessage
177. Tisaranee Gunasekara
178. Ulpatha Wekandawala Rahula himi - Center For Environment
179. V. Weerasingham
180. Vaas A.P.P. (SMP)
181. Vanie Simon
182. Vasanthagowry Pavalarany
183. Ven. Fr. Samuel J. Ponniah
184. Vijeyanila K.
185. W.F. Priyankara Costa
186. Wasantha Mudalige - Political Activist & Former PTA detainee
187. Wijepala Wijekoon

Trade Unions

188. A.M.S.D. Perera - President, All Island Telecommunications Employees Union
189. Amila Sandaruwan - Joint Teachers Service Union
190. Ashila Dandeniya - Standup Workers Union
191. Chamila Thushari - Dabindu Collective Union
192. D.G.N.U.K. Jayarathna - Joint Railway Employees Union
193. Dammika Munasinghe - Joint Development Officers Centre
194. Devinda Kodagoda - Private Workers Centre
195. Duminda Nagamuwa - Workers Struggle Centre
196. J.B. Jagath Gurusinghe - President, Information and Communication Workers Union
197. Joseph Stalin - General Secretary, Ceylon Teachers Union (CTU)

198. K.N.P. Fernando - Joint Nursing Service Union
199. M. Punchihetti - Lanka Education Services Union
200. Marx Prabagar - Plantation Workers Centre
201. Srinath Perera - Free Trade Union Center
202. Swasthika Arulingam, AAL - President, United Federation of Labour (UFL)
203. Tempitiye Sugathananda himi - Joint Health Workers' Union
204. Tharindu Uduwaragedara - General Secretary, Federation of Media Employees Trade Unions
205. Y.B. Jayasekara - Joint Water Supply Workers Union

CSOs/Movements

206. Alliance for Minorities
207. Ampara District Alliance for Land Rights
208. Centre for Communication Training (CCT)
209. Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD)
210. Christian Solidarity Movement
211. Christian Solidarity Movement, Sri Lanka
212. Collective Human Front (*Saamuhika Minis Pawura* (SMP))
213. Dabindu Collective Sri Lanka
214. Free Women
215. Her Advocacy and Feminism's Action Platform
216. Human Elevation Organisation (HEO), Akkaraipattu
217. Human Rights Office (HRO) Kandy
218. Institute for People Engagement and Networking (iPEN)
219. International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES)
220. Inter University Students' Federation (IUSF)
221. Janawaboda Kendraya
222. Kithusara Group
223. Law and Society Trust (LST)
224. Mannar Women's Development Federation (MWDF)
225. Movement for Land and Agricultural Reform (MONLAR)
226. Movement for People's Council (MPC)
227. National Peace Council (NPC)
228. Negombo United Peoples Organisation
229. Peace Commission, CACM, Sri Lanka
230. Peoples Movement for a Better World
231. People's Alliance for Right to Land (PARL)
232. Praja Abhilasha Network

- 233. Red Fields Peoples Forum
- 234. Revolutionary Existence for Human Development (RED)
- 235. Sandeshaya by Saroj
- 236. Shramabhimani Kendraya
- 237. Standup Movement Lanka
- 238. Tamil Civil Society Forum (TCSF)
- 239. The Movement of Christian Women's Voice (MoCWV)
- 240. Vallamai - Movement For Social Change, Jaffna
- 241. Voice of Plantation People Organization (VOPP)
- 242. Women's Action Network (WAN)