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President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's government made some efforts to stabilize the economy and address inequality in access to public services, but made little progress in implementing human rights commitments.

The [United Nations](#) human rights office, in its annual [report](#) on Sri Lanka, recorded cases of arbitrary detention, torture, and deaths in custody, noting that “the structural conditions that led to past violations persist.” Victims, their families, and human rights defenders continued to face threats and harassment from security agencies, particularly in the north and east, where state officials also engaged in land rights and religious rights violations.

The authorities failed to advance accountability for widespread war crimes committed during the 1983-2009 armed conflict. Despite rhetoric of “national reconciliation,” the Dissanayake government has done little to build trust with the Tamil and Muslim communities. Courts ordered the excavation of mass graves at two sites believed to be associated with enforced disappearances during the conflict.

The government stalled on promised legal reforms, including to establish an independent prosecutor's office, repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and amend the Online Safety Act. Sri Lanka's Penal Code criminalizes same-sex conduct.

In October, the UN Human Rights Council by consensus renewed the mandate of the UN Sri Lanka Accountability Project to collect evidence of conflict-related abuses for two years.

The [United Kingdom](#) joined other countries, including the United States and Canada, that had previously imposed targeted sanctions on military leaders accused of civil war-era crimes. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Volker Türk](#), [visited Sri Lanka in June](#) and called for reforms.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The government abided by the terms of a US\$3 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout negotiated by its predecessor after the 2022 economic crisis, when Sri Lanka defaulted on its foreign debt. The crisis occurred partly due to [low government revenues](#) — a result of tax policies that benefitted those most wealthy.

According to [World Bank](#) data for 2023, the most recent available at time of writing, over a quarter of the population had income below the bank's poverty line of US\$3.65 a day. Nearly one-third of children were malnourished, according to the [World Food Programme](#). Many families struggled to access goods and services essential for their rights to education and health. Social spending has remained at low levels under the Dissanayake government, harming numerous rights. Policies pursued by the government under the IMF's framework have placed the burden of fiscal recovery disproportionately on those least able to cope.

There was some progress in combatting corruption. Dissanayake's predecessor, [Ranil Wickremesinghe](#), was [arrested for alleged misuse of funds](#) and later released on bail—one of over a dozen political leaders and senior officials to be detained in corruption investigations led by the strengthened [Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption](#).

Accountability and Justice

Over 100,000 people were killed in the 26-year civil war between the Sri Lankan government and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), including [an estimated 40,000 in the final months](#) alone. Abuses by government forces included torture and extrajudicial killings, rape and other sexual violence, enforced disappearance, and indiscriminate attacks on civilians. The LTTE committed atrocities including suicide bombings and other indiscriminate killings of civilians, summary executions, and the use of child soldiers.

In the 1980s there were thousands of enforced disappearances in the south of the island, as the army combatted an insurgency by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front or JVP), a formerly militant leftist party that is now the largest constituent of the Dissanayake government.

Due to the lack of credible domestic justice efforts, as well as ongoing violations against some victim communities, many activists welcomed the UN Human Rights Council's decision to continue international efforts to advance accountability through the UN Sri Lanka Accountability Project (OSLAP) for two more years. Victims engaged with OSLAP despite the ongoing risk of reprisal by security agencies. A woman in Trincomalee who shared extensive information with OSLAP said counterterrorism police questioned her at her home for three hours in June. "The monitoring is tighter now," she said. "Sometimes [police] even approach our children to get information about us. That is a type of threat."

The government pledged to address these crimes through a new domestic mechanism, but did not announce any details, while victims and their families expressed little faith in domestic processes. Previous governments have appointed [at least 10 different commissions](#) to examine human rights violations and war crimes since the 1990s, but none led to accountability nor revealed the fate of victims of enforced disappearance.

Although President Dissanayake has [supported claims](#) by [whistleblowers](#) and the [Catholic church](#) that there was a cover-up of state complicity in the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings, the authorities have yet to credibly investigate the attacks, which killed over 250 people.

The persistent impunity has led to continued abuses. The report from the UN human rights office [described](#) "routine use of torture and other forms of ill-treatment" and multiple cases of deaths in police custody, as well as "a lack of effective investigation into these cases." The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka reviewed at least 736 torture complaints.

The government pursued a [crackdown on organized crime](#) including drug and weapon seizures, and the extradition of high-profile suspects, but there were concerns over the use of the military in law enforcement and due process in the [arrest of people for drug possession](#). There were more than 120,000 such arrests between January and August.

Mass graves

Over several years [at least 20 mass graves](#) have been discovered throughout Sri Lanka, often by accident during construction work. In a fresh investigation of a mass grave at Chemmani, near Jaffna, the remains of over 200 people, including children, were discovered; they are believed to be [victims of extra-judicial killings by the Sri Lankan army](#) in the 1990s. In August [a court ordered the excavation](#) of another mass grave at Kurukkalmadam in Batticaloa district.

Sri Lankan [authorities lack the technical capacity](#) to rigorously investigate mass grave sites, and in the past a lack of political will undermined investigations, meaning almost no victims' remains have ever been identified or other evidence suitably preserved.

Freedoms of Expression and Assembly

In the north and east of Sri Lanka, the areas most affected by the 1983-2009 civil war, police and intelligence agencies [continue to monitor and intimidate the families of victims](#) who campaign for justice, as well as human rights defenders and other members of civil society. The NGO Secretariat, responsible for regulating civil society organizations, remains part of the Ministry of Public Security, enhancing the risk that human rights defenders would be treated as a threat.

In August, counterterrorism police [summoned Kanapathipillai Kumanan](#), a prominent Tamil journalist and rights defender, [for questioning](#).

The UN annual human rights [report](#) on Sri Lanka found that “the surveillance apparatus, especially in the north and east, has remained largely intact, with minimal oversight or direction from the central government,” [leading to continued patterns](#) of “intimidation and harassment.”

Counter Terrorism Laws

President Dissanayake’s election [manifesto](#) included a commitment to the “[a]bolition of all oppressive acts including the [Prevention of Terrorism Act](#) (PTA) and ensuring civil rights of people in all parts of the country.” Previous governments have made [similar commitments](#), including [repeatedly](#) to the [Human Rights Council](#), and to the European Union as a condition of the beneficial Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) trading arrangement. However, the police increased use of the PTA, from 38 cases in all of 2024 to 49 during the first five months of 2025.

Minority Tamils and Muslims face threats of baseless terrorism allegations. Human rights defenders in the Northern and Eastern provinces reported that members of the police and intelligence agencies routinely warned that they will be accused of terrorism because of their work.

Administrators of nongovernment organizations said they were sometimes unable to receive bank transfers due to the misapplication of rules purportedly intended to counter terrorist financing.

Sri Lanka is being evaluated by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an intergovernmental organization that combats money laundering and terrorist financing. Activists raised concerns that the government violated FATF’s code, which calls for “focused, proportionate and risk-based measures,” and warns against “unduly disrupting or discouraging” legitimate work by nonprofit organizations. In September 2023, the IMF [found](#) that “broad application of counter-terrorism rules” restricted civil society scrutiny of official corruption.

Freedom of Religion and Belief

A [campaign](#) to redesignate Hindu temples as Buddhist sites accelerated in 2020, when then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa established the [Presidential Task Force for Archaeological Heritage Management in the Eastern Province](#). Although the task force is no longer active, some government agencies have continued to pursue such designations.

Agencies, including the Department of Archaeology, Department of Forests, Department of Wildlife Conservation, the military, and the police, [took part](#) in a concerted strategy to appropriate Hindu temples and [adjoining lands](#), as well as property that contains Muslim cemeteries. These actions infringe on the right to freedom of religion as well as property rights, and made government rhetoric of postwar “reconciliation” appear hollow to members of affected communities.