



## Concerns with Continued Repression in Sri Lanka

6<sup>th</sup> February 2023, Colombo, Sri Lanka:

The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) is deeply concerned by the excessive use of force, arbitrary actions and the blatant disregard for due process in arresting peaceful demonstrators on the eve and on the day of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence of Sri Lanka, which was on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2023. Media reports evidenced the manner in which peaceful protesters engaged in a 'satyagraha', a form of peaceful protests, were [met with force](#) and arrested, while they voiced legitimate concerns regarding the waste of public resources amidst the dire economic crisis in the country. Compounding this was the [denial of access](#) to their lawyers upon arrest.

CPA has [continuously](#) monitored incidents of repression and the disproportionate use of force by security forces against peaceful protesters, media personnel and lawyers, and is concerned by the routine use of force, arrest and intimidation to exacerbate a pervasive climate of fear and repression. CPA also notes that the present year has already seen several incidents which speak to the continuation of these repressive trends, as the citizenry continues to bear the brunt of dire economic conditions.

CPA reiterates that the right to protest, as manifested in the freedom of assembly, association, and expression, is vital for the healthy functioning of a democracy. Undermining these rights can have serious implications to the rule of law and democracy in Sri Lanka. In the words of Justice Mark Fernando in the [Jana Ghosha case](#) in 1993, 'stifling the peaceful expression of legitimate dissent today can only result, inexorably, in the catastrophic explosion of violence some other day'. These words resonate in a country that is confronted with a deepening crisis and multiple uncertainties. In such a context, CPA urges the authorities to desist from the use of ad-hoc and arbitrary measures and to adhere to its obligations towards its citizens.

A commentary on the legal issues related to the right to protest will be issued shortly