



JUSTICE FOR ALL

2nd December 2025

THE NEED FOR COLLECTIVE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE WAKE OF CYCLONE DITWAH

We are deeply saddened by the loss and damage to all those affected by the destructive weather conditions in the last few days as a result of Cyclone Ditwah. Hundreds have lost their lives, hundreds continue to be missing, thousands more displaced and in mourning across Sri Lanka. As we all respond to this moment of suffering, we are concerned whether all possible measures were taken to prepare for such a disaster including whether existing laws and frameworks such as the Sri Lanka Disaster Management Act and the National Council for Disaster Management and other statutory bodies mandated in such crisis were effectively functioning. The question is raised in the spirit of political accountability and transparency and with an appreciation that too often prioritizing of centralization, and dependence on sweeping and intrusive police powers under declarations of states of emergency has weakened commitments to democracy, rule of law and justice. We are particularly concerned with the scope, appropriateness and relevance of some of the emergency regulations made following the Declaration of a State of Emergency on 28th November 2025. We note with regret that together with pressure from some opposition leaders, the government saw it fit to declare a state of emergency, without considering its larger implications and urge the government to abide by the President's pledge that the emergency regulations will only be used for the disaster response and not to suppress human rights of the people. While rescue and recovery efforts no doubt must be the priority at this time, building public trust and confidence and ensuring inclusivity should not be undermined.

The present crisis also requires urgent steps to be taken with efforts towards recovery, relief, restitution, rebuilding and reconstruction. Sri Lanka's own experiences with natural disaster, conflict, the pandemic and other crisis has witnessed a spate of legal, policy and structural reforms introduced in the past. Yet, the mammoth task ahead requires vision, leadership and collaboration that requires setting aside political differences and uniting to address the multifaceted challenges that confront our country. Response both in the short and long term must be equitable, conflict sensitive and inclusive. We urge all members of parliament to fulfill their parliamentary duty to provide oversight on the use of public funds during this time and to be an effective and responsible check on the Executive. We also call on all political parties and actors not to politicise this catastrophic humanitarian tragedy for partisan political campaigns. Finally, we urge the government and all political parties to come together without further delay to deliberate and agree upon measures that need to be taken in the interest of all people in the country.

Signed by:

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