

# Continuous emergency regulations — 1971 to 2011

The continuous use of emergency regulations under the Public Security Ordinance from 1971 onwards, documented by ICJ, Amnesty and the UN Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism.

---

Sri Lanka has lived under emergency regulations declared under the Public Security Ordinance for the majority of the period from 1971 through the formal lapse of emergency rule in August 2011 — and again under regulations gazetted in 2018, 2019 and 2022. The continuous emergency administration is documented by the ICJ, Amnesty International and the UN Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism as the principal extra-PTA legal architecture within which detention, censorship, association restrictions and search powers have operated.

## §1 What the regulations enabled

Emergency regulations gazetted under the Public Security Ordinance routinely included powers of arrest and detention without charge, control of publications, restrictions on assembly and movement, and powers of search and seizure. The regulations sat alongside the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1979, producing the dual-track detention architecture documented by the ICJ and the UN Committee Against Torture.

## §2 Where this sits

The continuous emergency regime is the standing background against which every other documented event in the /case/ archives — 1958 / 1977 / 1983 pogroms, Jaffna Library 1981, HSZ creation, post-2009 land seizure — occurred. It is the institutional context, not an event.

## Sources

- [icj-pta](#)
- [amnesty-pta](#)
- [hrw-pta-2022](#)
- [un-srt-srilanka-2017](#)

## What this is not

- This page does not aggregate detention or casualty figures in TLTE voice.
- This page does not name detainees or officials.