

PTA Amendment Act No. 12 of 2022 — and what it did not change

The Sri Lankan parliament passed PTA Amendment Act No. 12 of 2022 in response to sustained EU GSP+ conditionality and HRC pressure. The amendment made marginal changes to detention review and bail. The core PTA powers — pre-trial detention without charge for extended periods, admissibility of confessions, broad definition of unlawful activity, restrictions on assembly and expression — were retained. Human-rights mechanisms (OHCHR, ICJ, Amnesty, HRW) assessed that the amendment did not bring the PTA into compliance with international standards.

The 2022 amendment is the empirical anchor for the case file's claim that international conditionality (EU GSP+, UNHRC, US partial sanctions) has produced incremental reform without producing structural change. The case file does not argue against the PTA being amended; it documents that the 2022 amendment is what was produced when international leverage was at its highest sustained pressure point. The pattern matters for the GSP+ Compliance Desk and for the narrowing timeline's reading of post-2015 frameworks.

§1 What changed

Limited changes to magistrate review of detention. Marginal expansion of bail eligibility. Cosmetic changes to detainee-rights provisions.

§2 What did not change

Pre-charge detention for extended periods. Broad definition of unlawful activity. Admissibility of confessions made to police. Restrictions on assembly and expression that have been used against Tamil commemorative events, journalists, and human-rights monitors. The OHCHR successor reports (2022, 2023, 2024) and the ICJ have documented continued use of these powers.

Sources

- PTA Amendment Act No. 12 of 2022, Government of Sri Lanka.
- EU GSP+ Regulation and successive monitoring missions to Sri Lanka.
- ICJ, Sri Lanka: The Need for Comprehensive PTA Reform (2022).
- Amnesty International, In the Shadow of the PTA (successive editions).

What this is not

- This article does not name PTA detainees.
- This article does not call for the abolition of all counter-terror law. It documents the gap between the 2022 amendment and international compliance standards.