

Easter Sunday Attacks Five years on

Sri Lanka Brief Update | 21 April 2024



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1. 21 April 2024 marks the five years of Easter Sunday attacks in Sri Lanka. The unanswered questions that remain in the investigations have not been addressed and there is a popular perception that there [were political forces behind the suicide attacks](#).
2. On 21 April 2019 nine suicide bombers belonging to a local pro-ISIL Islamic jihadi group called [National Thowheeth Jama'ath](#) (NTJ) launched a simultaneous attack on 8 locations, including catholic churches and leading hotels killing [269 people and injuring nearly 500](#).
3. On the day after the attack, President Sirisena appointed a [Presidential Committee](#) headed by Justice Malalagoda. It was instructed by the committee to investigate matters related to the blasts, the background, and other factors connected to the incidents and submit a report within two weeks. The summary of the report is [here](#).
4. On 22nd May 2019, [a Parliament Select Committee \(PSC\) was appointed](#) to inquire and report to the parliament on easter attacks¹¹. There were 9 members in the committee and the then Deputy Speaker Ananda Kumarasiri was the Chairman of the PSC. Its report is [here](#).
5. On 22 September 2019 the [Presidential Commission of Inquiry](#) (PCoI) headed by Supreme Court judge Janak De Silva was appointed. Its report was handed over to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on 01 February 2021. Only the first volume of the report has been made public.
6. On 22 February 2020 [President Rajapaksa directed the Defence Ministry to establish a Task Force](#) (TF) headed by the Chief of National Intelligence, Maj.Gen. Jagath Alwis to monitor the progress to speed up the ongoing investigation by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) into the Easter Sunday attacks. Its report has never been made public.
7. On 19th February [President Gotabaya Rajapaksa appointed a 6-member committee headed by Chamal Rajapaksa](#) to study in depth the facts and recommendations on the course of action contained in the final report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCoI) into the Easter Sunday attacks. The Committee was required to submit its report before March 15, 2021. Its report has never been made public.

8. On 10 September 2023 [President Wickremasinghe stated that he would appoint a committee chaired by a retired Supreme Court judge to inquire into the allegations made by Channel 4 based on Anver Azad Maulana's exposure and a Parliamentary Select Committee \(PSC\) to address allegations by former Attorney General. While the PSC was never appointed, no information is available on the \[committee chaired by a retired Supreme Court Justice S.I. Imam\]\(#\).](#)
9. On 12 January 2023 in a landmark judgment [Supreme Court held that former President Sirisena had violated the fundamental rights of the Easter bomb blast victims](#), and ordered him to pay Rs. 100m as compensation from his funds. He still functions as a member of the Parliament and enjoys peaks of privileges as a former president paid by taxpayer money. The judgment is [here](#).
10. Although in the same judgment Scheld that then the head of the State Intelligence Service (SIS) Senior Deputy Inspector General of the Police Nilantha Jayawardana accountable for neglecting his duty to protect the people and ordered to pay Rs. 75m from his fund he still functions as the SDIG for the Central Province. Two judicial judgments and PCoI have recommended AG department take action against Nilantha Jayawardana, [but no action has been taken](#).
11. Then DIG Colombo North Deshabandu Tennakoon, who was found to have been negligent in preventing the Easter Sunday attacks by [a Presidential Commission of Inquiry and recommended disciplinary action](#) but he has been appointed the Inspector General of the Police.
12. In the wake of 5th year commemoration of Easter Sunday victims and renewed call for justice and accountability The ruling SLPP of its president Ranil Wickremasinghe neither made a statement nor made any new plans to address unresolved issues and to promote accountability about the Easter Sunday attacks.
13. Political alliances headed by both leading contenders of the upcoming presidential election ie, NPP and SJB have made far-reaching statements on bringing the real culprits of the Easter Sunday attack to the book ensuring accountability.
14. [National People Power \(NPP\) promises](#) to bring the masterminds and planners of the Easter Sunday attacks and the political authorities and government officials who were found guilty by the Supreme Court to justice. It further promises to appoint a Special Commission of Inquiry under a National People's Force government in the future and based on the recommendations of that commission criminal charges would be filed against the responsible political authorities and government officials.
15. [Samgi Jana Balawegaya promises](#) to appoint a hybrid commission comprising between 7- 9 members including two foreign judges and one foreign investigator, two local judges, one local investigator, and one presidential council. The chairman will be a local judge. This hybrid composition of members of the Commission will allay misconceptions of impartiality and bias, the statement says. The multi-faced composition is designed to provide a comprehensive credible transparent and impartial approach to investigation. The Special Investigation Commission is to be constituted within two months of being elected as president.
16. Issuing a statement on behalf [United National Party headed by President Ranil Wickremasinghe](#), its General Secretary Palitha Ranga Bandara calls on the Sri Lankan people not to get deceived by National Peoples Power (NPP) and Archbishop of Colombo Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith with regards to the Easter Sunday Attacks. The statement

criticised the Cardinal saying that he has betrayed the nation once by associating with former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. People should act with diligence about the Easter Sunday attacks. The statement did not promise any new investigation into the Attacks.

17. [On 21 April 2024 the United Nations urged Sri Lanka](#) to bridge its "accountability deficit" and ensure justice as the country commemorated the 279 victims of its worst-ever attack against civilians five years ago. The U.N.'s top envoy to the country, Marc-Andre Franche, told a remembrance service in Colombo that there should be a "thorough and transparent investigation" to uncover those behind the Easter carnage in 2019.