

The Constitutional Crisis: A Round Up

On October 26, news broke that the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) had withdrawn from the coalition government. Shortly after, SLPP MP Mahinda Rajapaksa was sworn in as Prime Minister by President Sirisena.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe [refused](#) to vacate his post. Both Wickremesinghe and Rajapaksa [contended](#) that they commanded the majority vote. However, before a floor vote could be called, President Sirisena [prorogued](#) Parliament.

The events on October 26 has led to protests from [citizens](#), rival political parties and [legal analysts](#), who say Sirisena's move runs completely counter to the 19th amendment of the constitution, which specifically provides for when a Prime Minister ceases to hold office. Revealingly, Attorney General Jayantha Jayasuriya has also [refused](#) to express an opinion on the legality of the move, saying it would be 'deemed inappropriate' – the strongest signal to date, from the State's chief legal adviser that the events of October 26 were unconstitutional.

In the immediate aftermath, the heads of State-owned media have been [replaced](#).

Confusion reigned on November 1, with several contradictory dates being given for the re-convening of Parliament. Initially, Prime Minister Wickremesinghe [tweeted](#) that Parliament was being convened on November 5, but the BBC [quoted](#) President Sirisena as saying no such decision had been taken. UPFA MP Mahindananda Aluthgamage in a press conference noted that Parliament would be convened on November 16. This morning (November 2) Speaker Karu Jayasuriya [said](#) Parliament would convene on November 7.

Sirisena's move has also been met with deep concern in the international community – since last Friday, [Norway, Australia, the European Union, the US, Canada and India, the United Nations and The Elders](#) have issued statements, all of them urging for Parliament to reconvene.

Significantly, a week hence, only the envoys from [China](#) and [Burundi](#) have acknowledged Rajapaksa's appointment – the silence from the rest of the community is telling.

The governments of [Canada](#) and [Australia](#), the [UK Foreign Commonwealth Office](#) and the [US State Department](#) have issued travel advisories to the country in anticipation of unrest resulting from political turmoil.

The European Union has [reportedly](#) considered stripping Sri Lanka of its duty-free access if it backtracks on its commitment to rights, considering the wartime abuses that happened on Rajapaksa's watch as president.

The following is a compilation of content that has been published over the course of the last week. This list will be updated regularly as the situation develops.

Twitter Moments

Collections of Tweets around key aspects of the conversation around the current political situation.

1. [Constitutional Crisis in #SriLanka](#)
2. [Citizens protest the #ConstitutionalCrisisSriLanka](#)
3. [#ConstitutionalCrisisSriLanka: On the reconvening of Parliament](#)

Infographics: Short quotes

"This has the makings of a constitutional coup. The 19th amendment does make clear the ways in which the Prime Minister can be removed. That these procedures have not been followed render the Presidential acts tonight illegal and unconstitutional"

Asanga Welikala



"The Joint Opposition under Mahinda Rajapaksa's leadership will be the new government, if they can muster the necessary majority in Parliament. A new coalition government is in the making. It is not likely to be a reformist regime."

Professor Jayadeva Uyangoda



"The Prime Minister of any country should be one who commands confidence. If the President had doubts about this, he should have put it to a vote. The sooner this can be taken to a vote, the better."

Dr Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu



"The president claiming that he formed an opinion that MR commands the confidence of parliament, and then proroguing parliament - is totally undemocratic and an abuse of power."

Gehan Gunatilleke



Facebook Album

Click to view in full: [Excerpts from Nailing Canards: Why President Sirisena's Actions Remain Illegal, Unconstitutional, And Illegitimate – debunking false arguments made in public debates around the Constitution](#)



It is abundantly clear that the arguments being proffered to justify the unconstitutional attempt at a transfer of power are driven by a combination of ignorance, convenience, desperation, excessive partisanship, and in some cases, by pure malice and a total lack of scruple. These attempts have if anything aggravated the seriousness of the unprecedented power-grab we are facing, rather than shed light on the task of constitutional interpretation.

Read more: <http://bit.ly/NailingCanards>

Facebook Album

Click to view in full: [Civil Society protest on Reconvening Parliament](#)



Articles

[Paradise Lost? Preliminary Notes on a Constitutional Coup , by Asanga Welikala](#)

[What Is At Stake Is Democracy Itself, by Tisarane Gunasekara](#)

[A Land Like No Other, by Sasanka Perera](#)

[Nailing Canards: Why President Sirisena's Actions Remain Illegal, Unconstitutional, And Illegitimate, by Asanga Welikala](#)

[A Coup in Sri Lanka's Democracy: A Statement by Sri Lankan Students](#)

[Of Constitutions, Cabinets and Coups, by Sanjit Dias](#)

Resources

[Roundup of official statements and press releases on the crisis](#)

The events since October 26 have also seen the spread of misinformation, both online and off. *Groundviews* has been following the situation closely. Access the following tools on media literacy: [Infographics: how to identify misinformation, photo and video verification](#)

Key links, social media recommendations and resources are available at this page. It will be updated regularly: [A Constitutional Crisis in Sri Lanka - Updates, Analysis and Insights](#)

For regular updates on the situation as it unfolds, our WhatsApp group is a valuable source of information. Members of our groups include diplomats, researchers, current and former members of Government and lawyers. To be added to the group, please send a message to +94771103076.



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