

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 18, 2022

The Honorable Anthony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Samantha Power
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20523

Dear Secretary Blinken and Administrator Power,

We remain deeply concerned by the unprecedented and disastrous economic crisis currently facing Sri Lanka. Circumstances throughout the country are dire with widespread food, fuel, and medicine shortages. We welcome the efforts the State Department and USAID have made to address the urgent needs of the people of Sri Lanka, but given the scale and impact of the crisis, we urge you to take additional swift action to provide meaningful support to the Sri Lankan people in their time of need. More broadly, we ask the Administration to fully incorporate measures supporting the stabilization of Sri Lanka. This includes advancing efforts to address longstanding issues related to accountability and reconciliation and improving democratic institutions in Sri Lanka to meet our broader foreign policy goals for the region.

According to the World Food Programme, due to widespread economic issues, three in ten households—or approximately 6.26 million Sri Lankans—are unsure where they will get their next meal. An estimated 60 percent of Sri Lankans are skipping meals to stretch food supplies and hundreds of thousands are being forced to wait in extensive lines to acquire daily necessities. If the current economic situation does not improve soon, some experts warn that the number of those suffering from dangerous food insecurity could rise to 22 million, or one-third of the country's population.

In response to this tremendous economic hardship, Sri Lankans have for weeks taken to the streets in protest of successive governments' severe mismanagement of the country's finances. Further complicating the situation in Colombo, former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled the country on July 13th, leaving mass confusion over government leadership. In the wake of this dereliction of duty, the following day Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe assumed the role of acting President, even though only four days earlier he had agreed to resign from the Prime Ministry in response to the continued protests. Instead, the Sri Lankan Parliament elected Mr. Wickremesinghe to the full presidency one week later. In his new position of power, President Wickremesinghe announced a state of emergency, placed the nation under curfew, denounced the protests, and even suggested the use of live ammunition in quelling them. We urge the State

Department to continue to use all diplomatic means available to ensure the Sri Lankan government protects the right of suffering citizens to peacefully protest and does not utilize violence against peaceful demonstrators and journalists.

Unsatisfied about the direction of the country still, protesters continue to gather en masse calling for large-scale reform to Sri Lankan political structures. In a veiled effort to seemingly appease the protests, President Wickremesinghe removed requirements to use “His Excellency” when addressing the president and abolished the presidential flag. Unsurprisingly, this has done little to assuage the concerns of the Sri Lankan people and it is clear these demonstrations will not cease until the government effectively addresses the root causes of corruption and economic mismanagement which led to this crisis. We urge the Administration to continue to support the Sri Lankan government and people as they work to implement democratic and economic reforms.

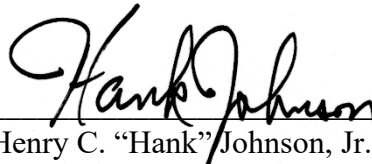
Although we greatly appreciate the \$11.75 million in new humanitarian and development assistance that USAID provided at the end of June, more is clearly needed now. We urge USAID to take immediate action to provide additional relief to the Sri Lankan people, including increased food, medical, and fuel aid.

We greatly appreciate your expedited attention to these matters and look forward to your response.

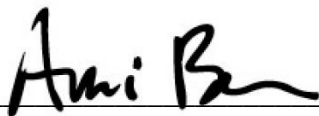
Sincerely,



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Henry C. “Hank” Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress



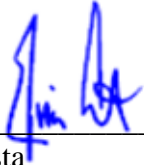
Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress



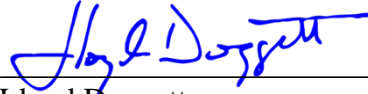
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



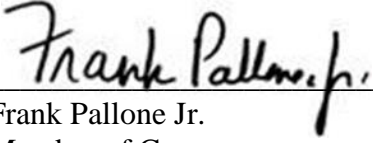
David E. Price
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone Jr.
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress