

COMPARATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE LAW SEMINAR SERIES



Constitutional Choices for Sri Lanka: Radical Reform or Incremental Change?

Speaker: Dr Mario Gomez, Executive Director
International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES), Sri Lanka

Chairperson: Assistant Professor Dian A. H. Shah, NUS Law

31 October 2018, Wednesday

3.00pm – 4.00pm (Registration start 2.30 pm)

NUS (Bukit Timah Campus), Eu Tong Sen Building Level 1, Lee Sheridan Conference Room

Constitutional reform is vital if Sri Lanka is to leave behind its legacy of political violence and forge inter-ethnic reconciliation. Constitutional reform could occur through a replacement of the current constitution, through incremental constitutional change, or through a change in constitutional culture and practice.

Despite a process of public consultation and the establishment of a 'Constitutional Assembly', Sri Lanka's attempts at radical constitutional reform by replacing its current constitution have stalled. In 2015 the country failed to grasp fully, a constitutional and transformative moment and lost the opportunity to introduce far-reaching constitutional change. Yet Parliament did introduce the 19th Amendment to the Constitution which resulted in a more balanced distribution of power between the executive and the legislature. This has also enabled the courts and some independent commissions to become independent. This was followed by a new law on the Right to Information. Both these reforms have altered significantly the scheme of constitutional government in the country. This seminar will analyze the impact of these changes, and ask if constitutional incrementalism, ordinary legislation and a change in political culture, are alternatives to radical constitutional change for deeply divided societies. Are there multiple constitutional moments allowing for multiple political bargains to be struck and for progressive and creeping change?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Mario Gomez is the Executive Director at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) in Sri Lanka. He was previously a Lecturer in public law, human rights and gender studies in the University of Colombo. He has a PhD in law and teaches occasionally in the University of Colombo. He was a one-time member of the Law Commission of Sri Lanka and a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Kennedy School of Government. Recent publications include 'The Politics of Dealing with the Past in Deeply Divided Sri Lanka', 'Constitutionalizing Economic and Social Rights in Sri Lanka' (Co-author), 'Lifting the Veil of Secrecy: The Right to Information in Emerging and Existing Democracies', 'Keeping Rights Alive: Reform and Reconciliation in Post-War Sri Lanka', and 'Sri Lanka: A Case Study on Post-Conflict Justice'.

REGISTRATION

There is no registration fee for this seminar but seats are limited.

Halal light refreshments will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

Please register by **29 October 2018, Monday**.

For enquiries, please contact Alexandria at rescle@nus.edu.sg

TO REGISTER

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