
23 April 2019, Tuesday ✦ 12.30pm to 2.00pm

(Registration starts at 12.00pm)

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

Institutional Resilience and Political Transitions: The Sri Lankan Experience

Speaker: Dr Mario Gomez, International Centre for Ethnic Studies

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

ABSTRACT

After a decade of authoritarianism, the political transition of 2015 sparked hopes for a stronger constitutional democracy in Sri Lanka. A powerful executive presidency had previously facilitated the concentration of authority in the hands of the former President and had become a source for the abuse of power and a decline in the rule of law. The country experienced grave human rights violations; independent commissions that were supposed to provide accountability were crippled; and the judiciary became susceptible to executive interference. The Sri Lankan story is not unique and is reminiscent of Indonesia before the fall of Soeharto; to some extent, Nepal in 2006; and Malaysia before 2018.

This seminar will examine key constitutional and political reforms since the 2015 transition and how institutions have functioned and evolved following that transition. The constitutional crises of 2018 however, raised questions about the sustainability of these reforms and the durability of institutions in the face of increasing political and electoral competition. Against this backdrop, this seminar will also address a fundamental issue in studies on constitutionalism and democratization: can revitalized institutions remain resilient in the face of changing social and political contexts, and against the backdrop of deeply-embedded social cleavages that are strongly manifested in politics?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Mario Gomez is the Executive Director at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES), an independent think-tank based in Sri Lanka. He was previously a Lecturer in the Faculty of Law at 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 and papers include *'The Courts Respond to Executive Tyranny in Sri Lanka'*, *'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 *'Prosecuting Ethno-Religious Violence in Sri Lanka'*.

REGISTRATION

There is no registration fee for this seminar, but seats are limited. Halal lunch (with vegetarian option) will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis. To register, please visit <https://nus.edu/2TYLhFC> or scan the QR code.



Closing Date: Wednesday, 17 April 2019

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