

The Economic and Social impact of the Easter Sunday attack on Victims' Families

In February 2025

This is an English translation of the original Sinhala report. Please note that the original Sinhala report is accurate with respect to references and differences in content.

Research Team
Centre for Society and Religion (CSR)

Introduction

On 21 April 2019, a series of suicide bombings occurred in several locations in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday. As a result of these bombings, nearly 259¹ people were killed, and 457 were injured. The attacks severely affected the country's economy, and the victims and their families were also significantly impacted. Additionally, the social ramifications are significant. Victims' rights include preventing the recurrence of such incidents, uncovering the truth, ensuring criminal justice (taking legal action against those responsible), and securing economic justice through indemnification. Despite several investigations aimed at uncovering the truth about the incident (including the Vijith Malalgoda Committee, the Presidential Commission of Inquiry, the Parliamentary Select Committee, and Criminal Investigation Department teams under both the Good Governance Government and the Gotabhaya Rajapaksa Government), there has been no formal investigation into economic justice. While the primary goal of every investigation was to determine the cause of the attack, equal importance and attention should be given to economic justice, including the reparation of the victims and a formal investigation into the social impact on them.

¹ The information regarding the number of deceased individuals, as released by different institutions, is inconsistent.

Legal and policy background for granting relief

Upon reviewing the relevant legal background, it is evident that Sri Lanka possesses the necessary legal framework to provide relief to the victims of these attacks and their families, as well as to improve their economic conditions and mitigate the social impact. This legal framework can be categorised into three primary components: laws (acts), regulations and guidelines, and judicial directives.

Two significant pieces of legislation can be identified in this context: the Office for Reparations Act, No. 34 of 2018, and the Assistance to and Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses Act, No. 10 of 2023.

Identifying the needs of affected individuals—a fundamental aspect of reparation—and categorising those needs based on the specific circumstances of the victims is a responsibility assigned to the Office for Reparations, established under the Office for Reparations Act No. 34 of 2018. Section 11 of the Act outlines in detail the powers and duties of this Office. Pursuant to Section 11(1)(g) of the Act, the Office is tasked with formulating and recommending to the Cabinet of Ministers policies on reparations and guidelines regarding the granting of reparations. Additionally, the Office for Reparations is entrusted with several important functions, such as providing support, including administrative assistance, travel reimbursement, and psychosocial support where necessary for the aggrieved persons who appear before the Office for Reparations. The Office is also responsible for providing information and advice to aggrieved persons on their rights, the procedures involved in receiving reparations, and other mechanisms through which they might obtain redress or remedies.

The Assistance to and Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses Act No. 10 of 2023 is the second key piece of legislation. Its objectives are outlined in Section 2 of the Act. It includes provisions for granting redress, including compensation, restitution, reparation, and rehabilitation of victims of crime and witnesses, as well as for recognising and implementing internationally recognised best practices relating to assistance to and protection of victims of crime and witnesses.

Under this Act, a broad definition of a victim is provided. A victim is not only the person who has suffered any injury but also includes their family members and dependents. Section 3 of the Act outlines the rights of a victim of crime, recognising their right, along with that of their family members and dependents, to live with dignity and the right to receive relief. A person's or family's economic status is a key factor affecting their sense of 'dignity.' The responsibility to protect and promote respect for, and recognition of, the rights and entitlements of victims of crime and witnesses is entrusted to the National Authority for the Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses, as specified in Section 40 of the Act. Under Section 40(1)(c), one of the key functions of the Authority is to take necessary steps to ensure the security and protection of victims of crime and witnesses, by way of providing or arranging the provision of necessary medical treatment, counselling or rehabilitation services, or reparation or restitution measures.

In addition to the laws, there are guidelines that provide relief to the victims, and a key set of these guidelines among them is the guidelines issued under the Office for Reparations Act. The Reparations Policies and Guidelines prepared by the Office for Reparations were published in Gazette Extraordinary No. 2269/54 dated 3 March 2022. The number 01 in Reparations Policies and Guidelines addresses livelihood support. Accordingly, the government policy is to assist and enable aggrieved persons to rebuild and restore their lives through economic empowerment.

The judgment in the fundamental rights applications bearing Nos. 163/2019, 165/2019, 166/2019, 184/2019, 188/2019, 191/2019, 193/2019, 195/2019, 196/2019, 197/2019 and 293/2019 concerning the failure to prevent the Easter Sunday attacks, was delivered by the Supreme Court on 12 January 2023. In its ruling, the Court directed that compensation be awarded to the victims from the payments made by the respondents. This ruling can also be considered a legal framework for victim compensation and relief. Following the Supreme Court's decision, the Office for Reparations prepared a document² outlining the implementation of a financial relief scheme for the victims of the Easter Sunday attacks. The document contains several key provisions aimed at improving the economic conditions of the victims.

² https://www.reparations.gov.lk/web/images/Easter_attack_Scheme.pdf

Furthermore, the Presidential Commission of Inquiry, which was appointed to investigate the attacks, along with the committee chaired by Justice Vijith Malalgoda, made recommendations for providing relief to the victims. The ninth recommendation of the Justice Malalgoda Committee Report specifically addresses the welfare of the victims. Additionally, Chapter 26 of Volume 1 of the final report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry outlines measures for victim compensation, welfare initiatives, and relief programs.

Compensation and Relief Granted

According to information³ provided by the Office for Reparations to the Centre for Society and Religion, compensation has been paid to 220 individuals who lost their lives, with each receiving 1,000,000 rupees. However, compensation has not been awarded to 10 individuals who had requested it. The reason given for this was the absence of qualified dependents. As of 10 March 2022, a total compensation of 81.362 million rupees had been disbursed to those injured in the attack. Of the nearly 508 individuals who were injured, only 48 have received compensation of 500,000 rupees each, representing merely 9% of the total number of injured victims.

In the fundamental rights petition, which determined that the failure to prevent the Easter Sunday attacks constituted a violation of the victims' fundamental rights, the Court ordered the respondents to pay compensation to the victims. This compensation, amounting to 311 million rupees, will be distributed through the Office for Reparations. As of 7 October 2024, all respondents had paid the said compensation. The distribution of compensation among the victims as of that date is as follows:

Category of Victim	Amount Per Victim (Rs.)	No. of Victims	Total Amount Paid (Rs.)
Totally permanently disabled	500,000.00	5	2,500,000.00
	2,000,000.00	5	10,000,000.00
Partially permanently Disabled (> 69%)	100,000.00	24	2,400,000.00
	150,000.00	24	3,600,000.00
Partially permanently Disabled (40%–69%)	100,000.00	53	5,300,000.00
Partially permanently Disabled (Less Than 40%)	75,000.00	35	2,625,000.00
Families that suffered economic loss due to the loss of a wage earning family member	175,000.00	167	29,137,500.00
Families of deceased children under 18 years of age	75,000.00	47	3,525,000.00
Deaths of Foreign Nationals (previously unclaimed)	1,500,000.00	1	1,500,000.00

³ Letter dated 10th March 2022, RTI

Payment for Surgeries	1,236,000.00	1	1,236,000.00
Support for educational needs of children	70,000.00	1	70,000.00
Educational Support Scheme- Long Term		44	410,000.00
Total Amount Paid from the Fund			62,303,500.00
Bank Charges			42,002.92
Balance available in the Fund			248,654,497.08

Accordingly, a sum of Rs. 62 million has been disbursed as compensation from the fund, leaving a balance of Rs. 248 million, as stated on the website of the Office for Reparations⁴.

Besides governmental efforts, other parties have supported the victims through compensation and relief initiatives. Organisations such as Setsarana, the Centre for Society and Religion, the Kandy Human Rights Office, and numerous individuals have actively contributed to these efforts.

⁴ http://reparations.gov.lk/web/images/Payments_done_from_Victim_Fund_2024.pdf

Current Challenges

The compensation provided by the government to the families of deceased and disabled victims is significantly lower than that awarded in similar incidents. For instance, Rs. 5.9 million was paid, with the involvement of the President, the Minister in charge of Police, and the Inspector General of Police, to the family of the Sub-Inspector who was shot dead in Weligama on 1 January 2024. Similarly, Rs. 10 million⁵ was allocated as compensation for the murder of MP Amarakirithi Athukorala on 9 May 2022. The Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Easter Attack has also observed that the victims of this incident have not received compensation even on par with those awarded to individuals affected by the Dharga Town and Beruwala incidents. This disparity highlights a serious issue regarding the inadequacy of compensation provided to the victims in this instance, particularly when compared to previous cases.

According to the circular issued by the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction on 26 September 1988, the compensation for a married deceased individual was set at Rs. 50,000. By 1990, the price of a litre of kerosene was Rs. 6.58, while the price of a litre of diesel was Rs. 9.90. Currently, however, the price of a litre of diesel has surged to Rs. 363, and the price of a litre of kerosene has risen to Rs. 245. Compared to 1990, the price of a litre of kerosene has increased 56-fold, whereas the price of a litre of diesel has grown 36-fold. Nevertheless, the compensation provided to a victim who was killed in the Easter Sunday attack has increased by only 20-fold since 1988. While the compensation amount should reflect the rising cost of living, it is clear that such considerations have not been taken into account, as shown by the amounts awarded and the related documentation. Furthermore, compensation amounts should rise proportionately with future living costs, but this issue has not been addressed.

5

https://www.lankadeepa.lk/latest_news/%E0%B6%B8%E0%B6%B1%E0%B7%8A%E0%B6%AD%E0%B7%8A%E2%80%8D%E0%B6%BB%E0%B7%93-%E0%B7%80%E0%B7%9B%E0%B6%AF%E0%B7%8A%E2%80%8D%E0%B6%BA-%E0%B6%BB%E0%B6%9A%E0%B7%8A%E0%B7%82%E0%B6%AB%E0%B6%BA-%E0%B6%BD%E0%B6%9A%E0%B7%8A%E0%B7%82-10%E0%B6%A7-%E0%B7%80%E0%B7%90%E0%B6%A9%E0%B7%92%E0%B7%80%E0%B7%99%E0%B6%BA%E0%B7%92-1-622402

Despite the aforementioned regulations and guidelines, the Centre for Society and Religion conducted a simple study of 10 victims and their families, revealing that the government has not taken adequate steps to improve the economic status of these victims and their families. It is a statutory duty of the Office for Reparations and the National Authority for the Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses, as mandated by the aforementioned two laws, to inform victims of their rights and the available support mechanisms. However, the study found that neither these institutions nor any other government agency had informed the 10 victims or their families subject to the study of their rights. As a result, these 10 victims were left without proper guidance on their rights, let alone adequate relief.

The first victim in the study sustained injuries during the attack and requires further surgery. It remains the government's constitutional duty to create an enabling environment and provide the necessary facilities to ensure that the victim can undergo the required medical treatment. However, this responsibility has yet to be fulfilled.

Although the Reparations Policies and Guidelines published in the Gazette Extraordinary dated 3 March 2022, under the Office for Reparations Act, stipulates in its first item the need to expedite the provision of livelihood support, according to the information gathered from the victims and families, such a program has not yet been implemented. Among the 10 victims studied, seven are in urgent need of livelihood improvement, but the lack of intervention by the relevant institutions, as mandated by law, has further exacerbated their victimisation. Despite the legal responsibility placed on these institutions under these rules and regulations, even basic measures such as facilitating the settlement of loans taken by the victims have not been addressed. Consequently, victims continue to borrow money to survive, highlighting the failure of the legislative framework to achieve its intended purpose.

Furthermore, Circular No. 1579, issued by the Director General of Health Services on 19 July 1988, provides guidelines for determining compensation for the injured. It includes provisions for assessing the loss of earning capacity based on the extent of bodily injury. The circular also emphasises the importance of considering the victim's family circumstances in addition to the extent of bodily injury when calculating compensation. However, 36 years after its issuance, this

principle has not been applied in the compensation process for the Easter Sunday victims. While mental trauma experienced during such incidents should be factored into the calculation of compensation alongside physical injuries, it was observed that this aspect was not considered in the cases of the 10 individuals studied.

Moreover, in these 10 instances, it was evident that the relevant institutions involved in the process of awarding compensation and reparations failed to consider the victims' social status, the social impact they experienced, and their genuine needs. For instance, in one case, a victim's family had lost a child, and their primary need was to have another child. However, due to the lack of proper medical advice, they lost the opportunity to conceive another child. Another family sought to conduct Buddhist rites and offer merits for their deceased child. A different family required support for their surviving child's education and assistance to perform plastic surgery for the burns the child had suffered. One family expressed a need to leave Sri Lanka to seek mental relief and recovery. For several families, a fundamental need was to construct monuments or tombs for their deceased relatives and to create a space where they could grieve and find solace near those memorials.

Another issue identified was that the compensation awarded to children whose parents had died was entirely credited to their accounts. These funds could only be withdrawn once the children reached the age of 18. Consequently, the relatives or guardians responsible for their care faced significant financial hardships and were often unable to adequately support the children. Similarly, compensation awarded to injured children was deposited into their accounts, but the funds could not be accessed to meet their current medical treatment needs, as the accounts remain inaccessible until the children turn 18. These practical economic and social difficulties were clearly revealed during the investigation of these ten families.

The table below presents the details of the victims studied by the Centre for Society and Religion. To ensure their privacy, the names and residences of these families have been omitted. The information provided regarding these 10 families seeks to offer insight into the current challenges and circumstances faced by the families of the bomb attack victims.

No.	Details of the Victim/Injured	Current Status of the Family	Needs
01	<p>Injured victim-*** Address - *** Age: 28 years Location of Incident: Kochchikade Church, Colombo. Injuries Sustained from the bomb blast: Doctors have confirmed hearing loss due to damage to the eardrums in both ears caused by the explosion. The victim is also suffering from mental trauma caused by the blast. Two surgeries are required on both ears. Although one surgery has been completed, the ear has been damaged again, necessitating another surgery on the same ear.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother: 58 years old, unemployed, and suffering from an illness. • Father: 76 years old, engaged in minor work. • Two elder sisters, both married and living in other areas. The injured person also contributes to supporting their families. • The family's primary source of income was the monthly salary of the injured person. • Due to health issues, the injured person had to leave the job in April 2019 and has not secured a stable, adequately paying job since. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the absence of permanent employment, the family is struggling to cover the monthly medical expenses for the mother, father, and the injured person. • Meeting monthly expenses during the period of surgery and recovery continues to be a significant challenge. • Stable and permanent employment is urgently needed to address livelihood needs.
02	<p>Deceased victiml -*** Address-*** Age at time of Death: 33 years. Siblings- Three siblings: one younger brother and two sisters.</p>	<p>Mother: 64 years old, unemployed. Father: 68 years old, unemployed. Wife- 30 years old. Following the death of her husband, she had to seek employment.</p>	<p>The mother and the father are struggling to afford monthly medical clinic visits and medication. The father is unable to meet the initial costs required to start a vegetable farm.</p>

	<p>Father of one child</p>	<p>Child- 7 years old, currently studying in the third grade.</p> <p>The deceased's monthly salary was the primary source of income for the family.</p> <p>Following his death, the wife's income has become the sole source of financial support.</p> <p>As the wife is employed in another district, the child was initially living with the grandparents, but due to the grandmother sustaining an injury in a recent fall, the child is now in the care of the wife's sister.</p> <p>The wife's income is very low, making it difficult for her to provide financial assistance to her immediate and extended family.</p>	<p>The mother requires eye surgery, but the family cannot afford the costs.</p> <p>Financial support is required for the child's education.</p>
03	<p>Deceased victim-***</p> <p>Age at time of Death: 33 years.</p>	<p>The victim's mother passed away shortly after his death.</p> <p>The surviving family includes his wife and two children.</p>	<p>The family is struggling to meet the monthly expenses for the children's education.</p>

	<p>Occupation -CD businessman</p> <p>Number of family members- 05. (mother, wife, two children and the deceased)</p> <p>At the time of the victim's death, the monthly income of was approximately 150,000 rupees.</p>	<p>The eldest child, a 12-year-old daughter currently in Grade 8. The younger child, a son, is 8 years old and studying in Grade 3.</p> <p>The wife manages a small grocery shop (retail) from a room in their home.</p>	<p>The small grocery shop, operated within a room of the house, requires improvements.</p>
04	<p>Deceased victim-***</p> <p>Age at time of Death: 17 years.</p> <p>Grade at the time of death: 11th.</p> <p>Details of the Family- mother, father, elder sister, younger sister and younder brother.</p>	<p>Mother, father and younger sister lives in the house.</p> <p>The elder sister is married and lives in a different area.</p> <p>Grieving the loss of their daughter, the father has attempted suicide twice and is now disabled. It is observed that the family has not received adequate psychological counselling or support to cope with the loss.</p>	<p>Over three hundred thousand rupees have been borrowed through pawning gold and household items to cover family expenses.</p> <p>The family is struggling to afford the mother's monthly medical expenses.</p> <p>They are also unable to find the initial investment required to start a farm.</p>

		<p>Due to her illness, the mother is unable to engage in certain types of work.</p> <p>The younger sister has completed the Ordinary Level (OL) examination and stays at home, while the younger brother is currently in Grade 11.</p>	
05	<p>Deceased victim-***</p> <p>Age at time of Death: 40 years.</p> <p>Family members: Lived with his mother, father, wife, and stepdaughter.</p> <p>The victim, his wife, and their 6-year-old child were all killed in the attack.</p> <p>Wife was 30 years at the time of death.</p>	<p>Due to his, wife's and child's death, the elderly parents now live alone.</p> <p>Following the incident, the victim's mother suffered a heart attack and required prolonged medical treatment.</p> <p>The father, who ran a candle-making business, was forced to cease operations midway.</p>	<p>The parents are now struggling to cover the monthly cost of medication.</p> <p>They lack the financial means to restart the candle business.</p> <p>The graves for the three deceased family members have not been prepared due to financial constraints.</p>
06	<p>Due to this attack 10-year-old boy of the family died and the 13 year old second child of the family was injured.</p>	<p>The mother, who was shocked due to the death of a child and the injuries of another child, was given a</p>	<p>Money is needed to pay off debts.</p>

	<p>Location of the bomb attack - Zion Church, Batticaloa</p> <p>Although the injured child had suffered severe burns, surgery was done only to his face.</p> <p>The injured child was unable to attend school during the time he was receiving treatment and later, when he went to school, he had to leave the school due to the fact that he was unable to attend the school for a long time.</p> <p>Later, the child was sent to study a course on cutting hair.</p>	<p>short period of psychological treatment.</p> <p>To get rid of the mental stress, a person claiming to be a religious leader had suggested that they go abroad and had sold property, gold items and mortgaged some and given 5 million rupees to the person concerned and another 5 million rupees had been spent on other expenses. However, they were taken to India and left stranded and later, to return to Sri Lanka, they had borrowed about 200,000 rupees from a person in Sri Lanka and spent it.</p>	
07	<p>The mother and father of the family have been killed.</p> <p>The 6-year-old daughter was seriously injured. She is now 11 years old. The</p>	<p>Although the government has compensated the injured daughter, the money is not enough for her treatment. Also, since the money has been transferred to her</p>	<p>Rs. 20,000 per month for the education of the two children.</p> <p>The injured girl's three-wheeler fare to go to classes and her brother's</p>

	<p>family has a 13-year-old son.</p> <p>The injured daughter and her brother are being looked after by the deceased mother's sister. She and her sister were also injured in the bomb attack, while her brother's son was also killed.</p> <p>Location of the bomb attack - Zion Church, Batticaloa</p>	<p>account, she can only receive the money when she turns 18. That is, in another 7 years. However, she still needs to be treated. She has lost her sight and cannot work on her own.</p>	<p>transportation to school is Rs. 40,000 per month.</p> <p>The arrears for classes are Rs. 18,000.</p>
08	<p>The victim is a 41-year-old woman. Her husband was killed in the bombing. Her 14-year-old son was also killed in the attack.</p> <p>There is a school-age child.</p>	<p>She lives in a small rented house with her daughter.</p> <p>She lives in a tin-roofed house with no facilities because she needs a low-rent house and there are no relatives nearby.</p> <p>She goes to work at a home because she is short of money. Since she goes to work, her daughter stays in a neighboring house until she returns.</p>	<p>The rent for the current house is Rs. 7000.</p> <p>The monthly expenses for the daughter's classes and education are Rs. 15,000</p> <p>The amount borrowed is Rs. 100,000.</p>

09	<p>Age of deceased child - 12 years</p> <p>Location of attack - Katuwapitiya Church</p> <p>Family details - Mother, father, elder brother, younger brother</p> <p>The deceased child's mother, father and younger brother who was 7 years old at the time, were also injured in the attack.</p>	<p>After the death of the child, the family moved to another house.</p> <p>The mother and father's only goal was to have a child. However, despite their efforts, they failed and went to many doctors, but they were unable to have a child. According to them, it was a long time before they found a suitable doctor and by then they were in a state where they could not have a child.</p> <p>The eldest child has now completed his A-levels. The younger child is studying in grade 7 at school.</p> <p>The father, who is a contractor, is experiencing a business loss due to the mental stress caused by the attack. The education of the two children has also been disrupted.</p>	<p>Their primary need is to have another child.</p>
----	---	---	---

10	<p>Age of deceased - 20 years</p> <p>Location of attack - Colombo hotel</p> <p>The family consists of a mother, father and two other brothers.</p>	<p>The child, who was working in a hotel, was confirmed to have been a victim of the bomb attack through CCTV footage.</p> <p>However, the body has not been found.</p> <p>Accordingly, religious rites have been performed at the burial site.</p> <p>The child's death was confirmed three months later through DNA from the right thigh, a stomach ulcer and two other parts of the body.</p> <p>No relief was received in the first three months. After three months, a compensation of 0.9 million rupees was received from the government for the child who died.</p> <p>They stated that they will use every penny they receive to remember the child and help</p>	<p>Their main need is to perform meritorious deeds for the child.</p>
----	--	---	---

		Buddhist religious activities and the poor.	

Recommendations of the Centre for Society and Religion

1. Establish a Commission of Inquiry or a similar mechanism to investigate the economic, financial, and social harm/impact on the victims of the Easter Sunday attack.
2. Appoint a Presidential Task Force for a specified period to take necessary measures to improve the living conditions of the victims and their families and to ensure proper coordination among relevant agencies.
3. Initiate a special inquiry by the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka to investigate the violation of fundamental rights resulting from the delay and failure to provide economic justice to the victims of the Easter Sunday attack.
4. Instead of providing a flat Rs. 10 lakh compensation to the deceased, calculate adequate compensation based on the current cost of living and the needs of their dependents.
5. Rather than the current compensation of up to five lakh rupees for the injured, offer adequate compensation that reflects the present cost of living, the nature of the injured individual's dependents, and the required medical treatment.
6. Take appropriate measures, as per the legal framework, to improve the living conditions of the families of the victims.
7. Assess the additional needs of the victim families and provide them with suitable relief accordingly.
8. Formally inform the victims of their rights and entitlements.