

COMPARATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE LAW SEMINAR SERIES



Constitutional Reforms in Sri Lanka: Contexts, Challenges, and Prospects

Professor Donald L. Horowitz & Dr Mario Gomez

Duke University

International Centre for Ethnic Studies

Chairperson: Dr Dian A. H. Shah, NUS Law

DATE: 21 February 2018, Wednesday

TIME: 10.30am – 12.00pm

VENUE: Block B Meeting Room (next to CALS), Block B, Level 2

Faculty of Law, NUS (Bukit Timah Campus)

The 2015 political transition in Sri Lanka brought with it an opportunity for far reaching constitutional reform. Within months of coming into power, the new coalition government led by President Sirisena passed the 19th amendment to the constitution, which was to fulfil – in part – the election manifesto of restoring good governance. The 19th Amendment reduced some of the powers of the Executive President, reduced the terms of both the President and Parliament to five years, established a better balance between the Executive and the Legislature, established an independent process for appointments to the independent commissions and the courts, and added a right to information to the Bill of Rights. In March 2016, Parliament established itself as a Constitutional Assembly to draft a new constitution for Sri Lanka. A Public Representations Committee (PRC) held extensive consultations throughout the country and produced a report based on these consultations. Among the issues of contention are the electoral system, the strengthening of independent institutions, judicial review of legislation, the inclusion of socio-economic rights, the establishment of a new Constitutional Court, and abolishing or modifying of the Executive Presidency. Since then the process of constitutional reform has been fraught with difficulties. Apart from political infighting and disagreements within the new coalition government, critics argue that public participation and transparency are lacking. Today, the reform process appears to have reached a stalemate. This seminar will provide insights on the context and political challenges that shape the ongoing constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka, and on the prospects and options for moving forward.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Prof Donald L. Horowitz is the James B. Duke Professor of Law and Political Science Emeritus at Duke University. He holds law degrees from Syracuse and Harvard and a Ph.D. in political science from Harvard. Elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1993, Prof Horowitz served as President of the American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy from 2007 to 2010. In 2011, he was awarded an honorary doctoral degree by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, the Flemish-speaking Free University of Brussels. He is currently writing a book about constitutional process and design, particularly for divided societies, a subject on which he has advised in a number of countries.



Dr 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 published on human rights, constitutional reform, public law, gender equality and transitional justice. Mario 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. His publications include 'The Politics of Dealing with the Past in Deeply Divided Sri Lanka', 'Constitutionalizing Economic and Social Rights in Sri Lanka' (co-author), and 'Lifting the Veil of Secrecy: The Right to Information in Emerging and Existing Democracies'.

REGISTRATION

There is no registration fee for this seminar but seats are limited.
Light refreshment will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis.
Please register by **16 February 2018, Friday**.
For enquiries, please contact Alexandria at cals@nus.edu.sg

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