

Sri Lankan troops tear down protest camp outside the President's office

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Army soldiers stand guard outside the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo after removing protesters, July 22, 2022.

Colombo, Sri Lanka (CNN) [Sri Lanka](#)'s police and military troops forcibly removed anti-government protesters camped outside the presidential office in Colombo in a pre-dawn raid on Friday on the order of the country's new President.

Social media posts showed officers dressed in riot gear pulling down protest tents and arresting demonstrators outside the presidential offices at Galle Face, two days after the crisis-hit country swore in a new leader.

Former Prime Minister [Ranil Wickremesinghe](#) was officially sworn in as the country's President on Wednesday and issued a "Gazette Extraordinary" calling on the armed forces to maintain public order. Police Spokesperson SSP Nihal Thaldewa confirmed nine men were arrested and will appear in court on Friday.

Protesters have been camped outside the Presidential office for months, demanding the resignation of former President [Gotabaya Rajapaksa](#), who fled the country in the early hours of July 13, and Wickremesinghe, a key Rajapaksa ally.

Both men presided over an [economic crisis](#) that has left the country's 22 million people struggling to buy fuel, food and basic necessities.

On Friday, Wickremesinghe swore in Dinesh Gunawardena, another Rajapaksa ally, as prime minister. Wickremesinghe and Gunawardena were classmates at Colombo's elite Royal College.

A CNN team in the capital confirmed the situation on the streets was calm following the morning raid, but a heavy military and police presence remained in and around the main protest site.

All roads and lanes leading to the area had been cordoned off and were manned by security forces. Armed forces now guard the entrance to the Presidential Secretariat and appear to have full control of the building. Banners that were hung from top of the secretariat have also been removed.

CNN Exclusive: Sri Lanka's acting President says previous government was 'covering up facts' about financial crisis



Some observers have raised concerns about the level of force used in the raid.

The Bar Association of Sri Lanka also said in a statement that it "strongly and unreservedly" condemns "the use of force and violence" by the authorities "in attacking protesters."

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka also condemned the raid, calling it a "brutal and despicable attack on peaceful protesters" and a "total violation of the fundamental rights of the people."

US and British diplomats also expressed concern.

"We [urge restraint](#) by authorities and immediate access to medical attention for those injured," US Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Julie Chung tweeted.

The British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, [Sarah Hulton](#) she was "very concerned" about reports of a clampdown at the protest site. "We have made clear the importance of the right to peaceful protest," she added.