

# **Sri Lankan feminists concerned with government approach to reform Of Muslim family law**

Monday 11 November 2024, by [The Feminist Collective for Economic Justice](#) (Date first published: 10 November 2024).

**The Feminist Collective for Economic Justice (FCEJ) denounces the completely misinformed and baseless comment made by National People's Power (NPP) member, Minister Vijitha Herath that there is no need to reform the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act (MMDA).**

The Collective strongly condemns this comment and stands in solidarity with Muslim women activists within and beyond our collective who have highlighted for decades the discrimination and multiple forms of violence faced due to the existence of the MMDA. This statement by the NPP government, and similar statements by other governments before them as well as by political parties is a denigration of the just demand for MMDA reform based on the lived experiences of Muslim women and girls. The struggle to reform MMDA has not only been [long standing](#) but also has been sustained under conditions of activists being threatened, vilified and harassed. The Minister's statement is particularly enraging as the [Progressive Women's Collective of the NPP have endorsed the call for reforms to the MMDA](#) and [the NPP's own policy document "A Thriving Nation a Beautiful Life \(2024\)" commits to revising discriminatory laws.](#)

Family law reform, which creates the space to fight for social change to unfairness in familial institutions, is at the core of and is directly linked to economic rights, justice and the safety of women. Women's decision-making capacity especially vis-a-vis familial finances; women's fair access to financial resources and assets from natal and marital homes; valuing of women's unpaid care work; and women's reproductive autonomy and agency vis-a-vis caring for children in the context of poverty among other things, are dependent on familial structures which are governed by laws such as MMDA. Even as women live with enforced financial dependence based on patriarchal social structures which are affirmed by laws such as MMDA, women are bearing the burden of debt and of austerity measures pushed by the Sri Lankan government and the IMF. This burden is further exacerbated by discriminatory family laws which the Sri Lankan government and institutions like the IMF benefit from in the name of recovery and enforcing austerity - in other words, sacrificing the wellbeing of women and girls of Sri Lanka to recover national debt.

The Collective reminds all candidates seeking to hold representative office that economic justice for women is the foundation for the country's economic stability. We also remind all candidates that the flagrant flouting of their own campaign promises, which is leading to a breakdown of trust between the government and the people, is precisely the kind of political practice that promotes political instability which has led to and will repeatedly lead to economic crises. Sri Lankan women of all faiths have expressed a clear demand for systemic change. The demand is for equality and non-discrimination. The demand is to reform MMDA now!

---

## **The Feminist Collective for Economic Justice (FCEJ)**

[Click here](#) to subscribe to ESSF newsletters in English and or French.

---

### **P.S.**

Feminist Collective for Economic Justice

[https://www.srilankafeministcollective.org/fcej-statements-articles?fbclid=IwY2xjawGduLdleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHUhiF13-IOiq73la8A8ZYIqQoWEToGw6uun6duzR485ADCwCLnmnX-7ugw\\_aem\\_QiLL3Km3lyvzNw1gUcdR-g&sfnsn=mo](https://www.srilankafeministcollective.org/fcej-statements-articles?fbclid=IwY2xjawGduLdleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHUhiF13-IOiq73la8A8ZYIqQoWEToGw6uun6duzR485ADCwCLnmnX-7ugw_aem_QiLL3Km3lyvzNw1gUcdR-g&sfnsn=mo)