

FCEJ Stands in Support of the Birds, the Land, and the People of Mannar

Feminist Collective for Economic Justice

The Feminist Collective for Economic Justice, Sri Lanka hears the harrowed cries of the birds, the land, and the people of Mannar. One of the darkest days of this government has come to pass on the night of 26 September 2025, with the brutal attack by hundreds of police officers of peaceful protestors in Mannar.¹ Many protestors have ended up in hospital including women and children.

For years the people of Mannar have been fighting an inspiring battle against sand mining and the wind power project that threatens to destroy their fragile ecosystem. The wind turbines have affected the globally renowned migratory paths of thousands of birds and sand mining is destroying the coastal ecosystem.² The people of Mannar are feeling the social, economic and ecological deterioration caused to the region.³

The government appears to be carrying through the plans of the previous regime with cosmetic changes. Having stopped the Indian investor, Adani Company, from setting up a wind power plant in Mannar, the contract has been handed over to a Sri Lankan company, Hayleys Fenton.⁴ There are no assurances that the local

company will do anything different from the Indian investor in terms of preserving the environment and not harming the people of Mannar.

Similarly, the Mannar wind power project coincides with the government coming under review by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) of their 'electricity tariff methodology' in November 2025. This is a prerequisite for the Extended Fund Facility. The review is to ensure 'cost recovery and cost reflectiveness' and the urgency to deliver a broader and privatised energy sector. The bulldozing through of the Sri Lanka Electricity Act in the past few months,⁵ moving electricity closer to complete privatisation by unbundling the services and forming new entities of Ceylon Electricity Board,⁶ and the now violent removal of people raising concerns about the Mannar wind power project seem to align with the November deadline.

On the other hand, the government reminds people that the electricity tariffs have been reduced. Taken in light of the monumental increases between 2022 and 2024, the reduction is not a significant relief. The reality is that paying electricity bills has become another burden pushing ordinary Sri Lankans into an incessant debt cycle. The systems of forcing payment of bills are causing households to struggle without electricity for many months.

The people protesting in Mannar surely had hopes for change. Instead, the continued dancing to the tune of the IMF, the blindness to the irreversible environmental and social impact of a wind power plant

1 Fernando, Roy. (2025). "Brutality, Broken Trust and the Battle for Dignity in Mannar". *Groundviews* (27 September). Available at <https://groundviews.org/2025/09/27/brutality-broken-trust-and-the-battle-for-dignity-in-mannar/>; *The Sunday Times*. (2025). "Mannar residents vow to continue protests against wind power project". (27 September): <https://sundaytimes.lk/online/news-online/Mannar-residents-vow-to-continue-protest-against-Windpower-project/2-1150339>

2 Alagiyawanna, Dilum. (2025). "A Sri Lankan Sanctuary Faces the Perils of Misguided Renewable Expansion". *The Daily Mirror* (13 August): <https://www.dailymirror.lk/opinion/A-Sri-Lankan-Sanctuary-Faces-the-Perils-of-Misguided-Renewable-Expansion/231-316627>

3 Perera, Buwanaka S. (2023). "Wind Farms: The Death of Mannar". *Groundviews* (25 April). Available at <https://groundviews.org/2023/04/25/wind-farms-the-death-of-mannar/>

4 *EconomyNext*. (2025). "Sri Lanka's Hayleys-Fentons to get Mannar wind plant at 4.65 cents". (31 January). Available at <https://economynext.com/sri-lankas-hayleys-fentons-to-get-mannar-wind-plant-at-4-65-cents-202437/>

5 Daluwatta, Hiran. (2025) Sri Lanka's Electricity Amendment Bill 2025: Trojan Horse for national economic collapse". *The Daily FT* (11 July): <https://www.ft.lk/columns/Sri-Lanka-s-Electricity-Amendment-Bill-2025-Trojan-Horse-for-national-economic-collapse/4-778823>

6 *The Examiner*. (2025). "Power struggle over messy CEB reforms". (26 September). Available at <https://www.examiner.media/power-struggle-over-messy-ceb-reforms/?ref=the-examiner-newsletter>

and sand mining, and the complete failure to engage people's views, in this instance, cries, means there is no system change. The people of Mannar speak from their lived experiences of existing wind turbines and the loss they have already suffered.⁷ The situation in Mannar is particularly horrifying as the destruction to the fragile ecosystem and erasing of the culture and livelihood of people who are tied to this ecology are irreversible.⁸

The attack on the protest is also an act of suppression of Tamil-speaking people of the north of the island. The attack took place in the context of a history of marginalisation of Tamil and Muslim communities, and the continued experience of Sinhala majoritarianism. A Sinhala majoritarianism that continues to dictate the actions of this government within its party and beyond. Populations severely disenfranchised for generations because of the war, violence, and top-down imposed 'development projects' by the Sri Lankan state will, justifiably, see this as yet another oppressive act by a Sinhala state. The majoritarian mindset has fuelled conflict and justified violence. It is a violence that is valuable to corporations also interested in capturing markets such as the energy sector.

Bringing 'green energy' without real consideration for the environment or human rights is an exercise in green washing which many governments and companies across the world are engaging in. Dismantling the subsidised public energy sector to make way for profit extraction by private parties in the guise of expanding renewable energy projects is another trend we are witnessing world over. To see the National People's Power government joining these ranks is troubling. The move is particularly

tragic, as Sri Lanka has been known as a country that had achieved 99% electrification through its public energy sector.

We require a thorough review of the energy infrastructure, costs and inflow through a consultative process that takes as its foundation the right to energy as a fundamental right. Through this lens, it will be possible to restructure tariffs and undertake other measures to balance cost and income from the energy sector without bringing ecological and social destruction. This is imperative as the existing mode of addressing the issue, especially through privatisation, is unsustainable in the long run and will only increase costs to the government and to the people.

People must have a right to energy, a basic necessity for life today. This right must co-exist with the right to a safe environment. To pit one against another is a vulgar mode of functioning which has become all too common in the world. To watch a supposedly 'progressive government' that rose to power through the energy of people's protest join the bandwagon of this vulgarity is heartbreaking.

29 September 2025.

The Feminist Collective for Economic Justice is a collective of feminist economists, scholars, feminist activists, university students and lawyers that came together in April 2022 to understand, analyse, and give voice to policy recommendations based on lived realities in the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka.

⁷ Hassan, Minaza. (2025). "Residents fear more damage from Mannar turbines expansion". *The Sunday Times* (14 September): <https://www.sundaytimes.lk/250914/news/residents-fear-more-damage-from-mannar-turbines-expansion-612164.html>

⁸ Mohamed, Shabeer. (2025). "Mannar's fight against unplanned development". *The Sunday Observer* (24 August): <https://www.sundayobserver.lk/2025/08/24/news-features/60072/mannars-fight-against-unplanneddevelopment/>