

## **JUDGE WEERAMANTRY: THE AFFABLE JUDGE**

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Judge Christopher Gregory Weeramantry has served over five decades as a lawyer, was appointed as a Judge of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and subsequently retired from the Supreme Court and accepted duties as Sir Hayden Starke Professor of Law at Monash University. In 1991, he was appointed as a judge of the International Court of Justice and remains the only Sri Lankan to have ever held the post. He served in the ICJ from 1991 – 2000 and performed in the capacity of the Vice-President of the ICJ during the period of 1997 – 2000. During his time period in the ICJ, he has greatly influenced doctrines of international law by drawing on examples from non-western jurisprudences, religions, cultures and customs. Through his critical approach to international law, Judge Weeramantry has further influenced a distinct approach to international law which is commonly referred to as the Third World Approaches to International Law or TWAIL.

In 1996, Judge Weeramantry authored one of the most celebrated dissenting judgments of all times in the ICJ's Advisory Opinion on the Legality or the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons. In this, he opined that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is illegal in 'any circumstances whatsoever'. He assertively declared in his dissent that to say otherwise 'contradicts the fundamental principle of the dignity and worth of the human person on which all law depends.' He further noted with regret that the ICJ has lost an opportunity of

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directly and categorically banning the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. The approach that Judge Weeramantry adopted in the contentious matter on nuclear weapons aptly indicates his human worth and ideology with which he viewed the sanctity of all lives and the planet.

The views that were propounded in his many decisions as a judge of the ICJ, a judge of the domestic courts in Sri Lanka, and in his numerous publications continue to shape the way in which International Law is viewed, engaged with and applied in the contemporary society. Judge Weeramantry has in effect reshaped international law in a manner suitable to and applicable to non-western jurisdictions which often face challenges in shaping their domestic jurisprudences to be compatible with international legal ideologies.

Judge Weeramantry has rightfully received many honours and awards among which the following stand out: Mohamed Sahabdeen Award for International Understanding in the SAARC Region (1993), Member of the Order of Australia (2003), UNESCO Prize for Peace Education (2006), The Right Livelihood Award (2007, Sweden), Lifetime Achievement Award for Distinguished Peace Leadership (2008, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation), Centre for International Environmental Award (2012, USA). In 2007, he was bestowed with the highest honour a Sri Lankan national can receive – ‘*Sri Lankābhīmānya*’ award. He has further been appointed as a Fellow of the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law. Judge Weeramantry continues to shed light on International Law in this troubled day and age through Weeramantry International Centre for Peace Education and Research founded for, among other things, developing international legal education and research. We, the Editors of the Sri Lanka Journal of International Law wish Judge Weeramantry a healthy long life!