

Protests see first death as Police open fire

Friday 22 April 2022, by [SAMARAWEERA Buddhika](#) (Date first published: 20 April 2022).

- **Police open fire on Rambukkana protestors**
- **One dead, over 20 hospitalised; some critical condition, undergoing emergency surgery**
- **Police blame protestors for blocking rail crossing, attempting to set diesel bowser on fire, setting three-wheeler on fire, damaging property, throwing stones at cops**
- **Police curfew declared in Rambukkana amidst public outrage**

One person was killed and more than 20 others injured when the Police opened fire on protestors engaged in a protest in the Rambukkana area yesterday (19) evening, with Police curfew declared within the Rambukkana Police area and STF personnel deployed, as public anger grew over the shooting.

The protestors were engaged in a protest over the prevailing fuel shortages and rising fuel prices, particularly the latest fuel price hike by Ceylon Petroleum Corporation early yesterday.

When contacted by *The Morning* late yesterday evening, a spokesman for the Kegalle Teaching Hospital said that a person who was shot during the protest had died after being admitted to the hospital. He added that another 12 people had been admitted to the hospital by yesterday evening, out of which a few were in critical condition and were undergoing emergency surgery.

Meanwhile, Police Media Spokesman Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Attorney-at-Law Nihal Thalduwa also issued a statement regarding the incident.

“A group of protestors had been blocking the railway crossing in the Rambukkana Town since yesterday [18] morning and later they had stopped a bowser with diesel to block the railway crossing. The Police advised them from time to time to leave the place, but they did not listen. Protestors later tried to set the bowser on fire. They had also set fire to a three wheeler and continued to damage property in the area,” the statement read.

“This time, the Police used tear gas to disperse them. At that moment, the protestors started attacking the Police with stones. The Police opened fire to control the situation. Several persons were injured and hospitalised. Police officers who were injured due to the attacks by protestors have also been hospitalised. Police are continuing to take steps to restore peace in the area.”

Following the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) having announced the fuel price hike with effect from midnight on 18 April, filling stations in the Rambukkana area had stopped issuing fuel. However, the people who were waiting in queues near filling stations until midnight that day started a protest in the Rambukkana area demanding the release of fuel at the old prices.

Accordingly, they staged a protest on 18 April from 1.30 a.m., blocking the Colombo-Kandy railway line in the Rambukkana area. The Rambukkana-Mawanella, Rambukkana-Kegalle and Rambukkana-Kurunegala main roads were also blocked due to the protests.

Yesterday evening, the Police had fired tear gas to disperse the protestors who were engaged in the protest, blocking the railway track in the area. Video footage which circulated on social media platforms, particularly on Facebook, showed a person who had been shot at by the Police, being taken to a hospital on a motorcycle. Several other videos were circulated which showed the protestors who were shot at by the Police being admitted to hospitals and attended to by hospital staff.

The imposition of Police curfew and the deployment of STF personnel had been due to growing outrage among the area residents over the death of the protestor.

Buddhika Samaraweera

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

P.S.

The Sunday Morning

<https://www.themorning.lk/protests-see-first-death-as-police-open-fire/>