

We call on the Government of Sri Lanka: Take Urgent Action to Stop Attacks on Muslims

Friday 20 June 2014, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 18 June 2014).

We the undersigned Sri Lankans strongly condemn the Bodu Bala Sena's (BBS) highly inflammatory hate speech against, and brazen physical attacks on the Muslim community in Aluthgama, Beruwala, Welipenna and Dharga-Town in June 2014. We believe that the violence is directly linked to recent statements by the BBS targeting Muslims. We call upon the authorities to immediately conduct independent investigations into the incidents, and hold to account perpetrators and those complicit in such acts. We believe inflammatory statements made by the General Secretary of the BBS, Galagodathera Gnanasara, clearly demonstrates his pivotal role and responsibility for the violence. We therefore call upon the authorities to take immediate steps to arrest and charge him for the deaths and destruction in the area.

At the time of issuing this statement, reliable sources who have access to the area during the last few days confirm the devastation and destruction in the region, including the killing of at least three people, with unconfirmed reports that this figure maybe higher, and injuries to around 80 people. In addition, mosques have been attacked and vandalized, and many Muslim-owned houses and businesses in the area damaged and destroyed. Despite curfew being imposed in the area, the violence and the gathering of mobs continued with the inability or unwillingness of the security forces to control them. Many innocent men, women and children continue to live in fear of further attacks. We are extremely disturbed that there continue to be reports of mobs in the area and that the insecurity in these areas continue, despite the presence of security force personnel. On June 15th there was an incident where a shop was attacked in Dehiwela. There are rumours of tensions and incidents from other areas.

In such a disturbing context, we call on the Government of Sri Lanka to take immediate and effective action and ensure that the perpetrators of this heinous violence are held to account. The Government has an obligation to protect all citizens of Sri Lanka and end impunity. Given the brazen attacks on the Muslim community, the Government must deploy additional police and other law enforcement authorities, and ensure that they take preventive and responsive action to ensure the safety of communities at risk. We are aware of the authorities having made a number of arrests so far. However, media reports state that many were released within the day. Further, the BBS General Secretary Galagodaaththe Gnanasara is reported to be free to roam about and to incite further hatred and violence, and has not yet been questioned. Unimpeded access should also be granted to food and relief convoys as well as to independent actors and the media to report without hindrance or harm on the situation.

There are basic protections provided in the Constitution and the legal framework for the safety and security of all citizens. The President, who is also the Minister of Defence, and his brother, the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development, must ensure that law and order is maintained and reassure the citizens of Sri Lanka that appropriate action is being taken to prevent any further violence and that the perpetrators will be held to account, including those who incited and spearheaded the violence. The authorities should also take this opportunity to issue a public

apology for failing to protect its citizens against violence.

We have in recent times seen the selective use of specific laws such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) to arrest and detain civilians, civil society and media personnel in the name of “national security”. We have also witnessed the law being used to stop peaceful protests elsewhere in the country. And yet, the police permitted the BBS rally to take place despite the pleas of a number of actors, including politicians within the Government who argued that it would exacerbate tensions. The legal framework outside the PTA can and should be used to deal with situations such as this where there is an egregious violation of the Constitution and laws of the country.

There is a clear need for an impartial inquiry into the causes for the violence to identify perpetrators of the attacks and the role played by the police and armed forces. It is also paramount that the State fairly compensates those who suffered the loss of family members, and the destruction of and damage to property. We urge the authorities to take specific steps to build the confidence of the Muslim community as equal citizens of Sri Lanka. The recent attacks on Muslim places of worship and businesses are part of a wider trend of violent attacks against Muslims and other religious and ethnic minorities, including the Christian community. Hence, there is a need to address this wider issue of violence against religious minorities. Most urgently, to take preventive action, including deploying adequate security forces in areas where minorities are under threat from further violence.

More than five years after the end of the war, it is imperative that we explore avenues for coexistence and come together to build a society that cherishes and celebrates its inherent pluralism. Thirty years after the carnage of Black July 1983, this most recent violence is a tragic reminder of how little we as citizenry have learned from the past.

Finally, this statement expresses solidarity with our fellow citizens, the victims and survivors of the villages of Aluthgama, Beruwala, Dharga Town, Walpitiya and Welipenna. Much needs to be done to address the recent violence and we believe much can be achieved if the Government acts swiftly and decisively to fulfill its fundamental responsibility for protecting all citizens of Sri Lanka and we as Sri Lankans play an active role to renounce the violence and act in solidarity with those under threat.

Note by the drafters: Subsequent to the compilation of signatures for this statement an incident was reported. Ven. Watareka Vijitha Thero, was found beaten up, with his hands and legs bound, by the side of the Hirana bridge, in Panadura this morning (Thursday 19th). He is currently receiving treatment for his injuries at the National Hospital, Colombo. Ven. Vijitha Thero has been a vocal critic of the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) and an advocate for inter-religious harmony. His outspokenness has resulted in him coming under attack and being subject to serious threats and intimidation allegedly by members of the BBS.

18th June, 2014

Signed by:

1. A. Santhiapillai
2. A.M. Faaiz - Attorney-at-Law & Director, Secretariat for Muslims
3. Aadhila Kayaam
4. Affan Ariff
5. Ahmed Hussain
6. Ainslie Joseph
7. Ajit Abeysekera
8. Ajita Kadirgamar

9. Ajith C. Herath - Hiru Newspaper
10. Aman Ashraff
11. Amana Hussain
12. Amarnath Amarasingham
13. Ameen Hussein
14. Anandha Joseph
15. Anberiya Hanifa
16. Angelica Chandrasekaran
17. Anita Nesiah
18. Anitha Selvarajah
19. Ann Jabbar
20. Annie Kurian - Director, Centre for Social Concerns
21. Anukshi Jayasinha
22. Anushaya Collure
23. Areeb Ahamed
24. Arjini Nawal
25. Asanka Brendon Ratnayake
26. Asanka Wijesinghe
27. Asker Khan - Secretary, Muslim Council of Sri Lanka
28. Azhar Ahamed
29. B. Gowthaman - Attorney-at-Law
30. B. Skanthakumar
31. Bhavani Fonseka
32. Buddhima Padmasiri
33. C. Colombage
34. C. Gadiewasam
35. Caryll Perera
36. Cayathri Divakalala
37. Chami Hameed
38. Chamindry Saparamadu - Attorney-at-Law
39. Chandani Withana
40. Chandraguptha Thenuwara
41. Chandrika B. Kumaratunga - The South Asia Policy & Research Institute
42. Chandrika Gadiewasam
43. Chandula Kumbukage
44. Chantelle Pieris
45. D.H.S. Maithripala - Peradeniya
46. D.N. Ambalavanar - Batticaloa
47. Deanne Uyangoda
48. Deborah Philip
49. Dehini Wiratunga
50. Dhamsiri Fonseka
51. Dhanushka Fernando
52. Dilanda Pelpola
53. Dinesha Samararatne
54. Dinidu de Alwis - Editor-in-Chief, The Republic Square
55. Dinushka Jayawickreme
56. Dinuwan Senaratne - Network Engineer
57. Dr. A. Rohan Perera
58. Dr. Dharmasena Pathiraja
59. Dr. Fara Haniffa

60. Dr. Jehan Perera - National Peace Council (NPC)
61. Dr. Kumudu Kusum Kumara - University of Colombo
62. Dr. Michael Roberts
63. Dr. Pushpa Ramlani Dissanayake
64. Dr. R. Cheran
65. Dr. Ramya Kumar
66. Dr. Ranil D. Guneratne
67. Dr. Sepali Kottegoda
68. Dr. Sivamohan Sumathy
69. Dr. Sunil Wijesiriwardena
70. Dr. Zulfika Ismail
71. Dumindu Karunasekera
72. Elane Savi Wijesekera
73. Elma Hussain
74. Emil van der Poorten
75. Ermiza Tegal - Attorney-at-Law
76. Esther Surenthiraj
77. Evangeline S. Ekanayake
78. F. Solomantine
79. Faizun Zackariya - Director, Muslim Women's Research & Action Forum
80. Falih Caffoor
81. Farah Hussain
82. Farha Fathima
83. Farzana Khan
84. Fathima Hameed
85. Fazil Hussain
86. Fazlur Muzammil
87. Freddy Gamage - Center for People's Dialogue
88. Gajen Mahendra
89. Gamini Akmeemana
90. Gehan Gunatilleke
91. Githanjali Algama
92. Hans Billimoria
93. Hans Gray
94. Harean Hettiarachchi
95. Hasangi Nandasena
96. Hilmy Ahamed
97. Ian Ferdinands
98. Ikram Yakeem
99. Iromi Perera
100. Izhara Huzair
101. Jake Oorloff
102. Janaki Galappatti
103. Janakie Seneviratne
104. Jayanta de S. Wijeratne - Negombo
105. Jayantha Dhanapala
106. Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala
107. Jayasingam T. - National Peace Council (NPC)
108. Jeanne Samuel
109. Jehanki Anandha
110. Jezima Hussain

111. Joe William
112. Jothie Rajah - Research Professor, American Bar Foundation
113. Jovita Arulanantham
114. Juanita Arulanantham
115. Juweriya Mohideen - Women Action Network (WAN)
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117. K. J. Brito Fernando - Families of the Disappeared
118. Karin Fernando
119. Kaushalya Perera - University of Kelaniya
120. Kiruthika Thurairajah
121. Krishna Velupillai
122. Kuhanithy Gunachandran
123. Kumaran Nadesan
124. Kumari Kumaragamage
125. Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
126. Leana Pieris
127. Leila Udayar
128. Lihini Fernando
129. Lionel Bopage
130. Luwie N. Ganeshathasan - Attorney-at-Law
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132. M.A. Sumanthiran - Attorney-at-Law
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134. M.L. Weeraman
135. M.R. Rahman
136. Mahaluxmy Kurushanthan
137. Mahendran Thiruvarangan
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147. Mirak Raheem
148. Miyuru Gunasinghe - Independent Consultant
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150. Muhammad Siddeeq
151. Mujeebur Rahman
152. Munza Mushtaq
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155. N.P.M. Woleedh
156. Nadia Izzy
157. Nadishka Aloysius
158. Nagulan Nesiah
159. Naloofa Kayaam
160. Naveed Kayaam

161. Nazly Kabir
162. Nicola Perera
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165. Nilshan Fonseka
166. Nimalka Fernando - Women's Political Academy
167. Nimanthi Rajasingham
168. Ninel Fernando
169. Nissanka De Mel
170. Niyanthini Kadirgamar
171. Nizreena Ismail
172. Nusthar Mohamed
173. Omar Kayaam
174. P. Selvaratnam
175. P.N. Singham
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199. Rajani Chandrasegaram
200. Ramani Kadirgamar Muttulingasamy
201. Ranjit Galappatti
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203. Rasika Deepani
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206. Razeen Deen
207. Regina Ramalingam
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209. Rev. Fr. Nandana Manatunga
210. Rev. Fr. Rohan Dominic
211. Rev. Fr. S.V.B. Mangalarajah - Jaffna

212. Rev. Fr. Sarath Iddamalgoda
213. Rev. Jason J. Selvaraja - Senior Pastor, Assembly of God, Chavakachcheri
214. Rev. Sr. Deepa Fernando
215. Rev. Sr. Noel Christine Fernando
216. Rev. Sr. R. Fernando
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218. Rikaza Laffir
219. Riza Yehiya - Architect & Sustainability Consultant
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221. Romesh Hettiarachchi
222. Ronnie Yogarajah
223. Roshni de Fonseka
224. Rossana Favero-Karunaratna
225. Ruhanie Perera
226. Ruki Fernando
227. Rukkaiya Hussain
228. Rushdi Zackariya
229. Ruwanthie de Chickera
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251. Sharmini Boyle
252. Sharmini Ratwatte
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254. Shehan de Alwis
255. Shifan Ahmed
256. Shihan Shamsudeen
257. Shreen Saroor - Women Action Network (WAN)
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259. Shyara Jaleel Khan
260. Silma Ahamed

261. Silma Mohideen Ahamed
 262. Sitralega Maunaguru
 263. Sohan Fernando
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 266. Suba Sivakumaran
 267. Subky Hussain
 268. Sumanasiri Liyanage
 269. Sunanda Deshapriya
 270. Sundaram Divakalala
 271. Sunela Jayewardene
 272. Sunethra Bandaranaike
 273. Sunila Mendis
 274. Supoorna Kulatunga
 275. Suren D. Perera - Attorney-at-Law
 276. Suren Fernando
 277. Suren Watson
 278. Tanuja Thurairajah
 279. Tanya Ferdinandusz
 280. Thaha Muzammil
 281. Thiruni Kelegama
 282. Thyagi Ruwanpathirana
 283. Tisarane Gunasekara
 284. Tony Angie
 285. Tony Senewiratne
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 294. Viranthi Kumarage
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 300. Yazmin Yousuf
 301. Zairina Ariff
 302. Zara Hussain
 303. Ziyada Hassian Ali
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