

Sri Lanka: Statements after the Easter Attacks and Massacre of April 21, 2019

Saturday 27 April 2019, by [CPA \(Sri Lanka\)](#), [NSSP](#), [Samajawadi Janatha Sansadaya \(formerly Wame Handa/Left Voice\)](#),
[WAN](#), [WCDMB](#) (Date first published: 26 April 2019).

Posted below are some statements by citizens groups in Sri Lanka in response to the massive bombing attacks on the 2019 Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka [More to be added.]

On April 21, 2019, a series of coordinated bomb explosions killed hundreds in Sri Lanka as they congregated for Easter Sunday mass. St. Anthony's Church, Kochchikade was the first to be hit by an explosion, followed by St Sebastian's Church in Katuwapitiya, Negombo and the Zion Church in Batticaloa. There were also explosions at the Kingsbury, the Shangri-La hotel and the Cinnamon Grand. An explosion in Dehiwala killed two - the Government has not confirmed whether this attack is related. At 3:30 pm, there was an 8th explosion in Dematagoda. STF officers entered the house wearing protective masks. Three police officers died, while 2 suspects were detained.]

Women's Action Network Condemns the Easter bombings and Urges Strength through Unity

The Women's Action Network (WAN) strongly condemns the wave of bombings of churches and hotels in Colombo, Negombo, and Batticaloa. Children and families celebrating a joyous Easter Sunday now lie among the 310 killed and hundreds wounded. Bodies transported in bags; funerals planned for children, parents and tourists. It is impossible to bear, impossible to find the words. Our hearts, thoughts, and prayers are with the families and loved ones of the many victims of this despicable attack and with the Catholic and Christian communities.

Every community in Sri Lanka feels the trauma. Catholics and Christians targeted on their holiest day question whether the State will protect religious minorities from terror. Suicide bombings evoke memories of war and feelings of insecurity for all communities - Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims; women, men, and children. Muslims, recently the victims of ethnically targeted violence, fear retaliation will ensue from hate mongering and incitement. They long for all to see that the bombings do not represent Islam and run counter to the traditional non-violence of Sri Lanka's Muslim community. Trauma and fear have also been triggered among Tamils, who fear this attack will be used to deny the promises of transitional justice, including longstanding calls to dismantle discriminatory security laws and structures. Outsiders again associate our beautiful island with bloodshed, discrimination and fear.

We condemn in strongest terms the despicable act of the perpetrators. Such reckless killing of civilians, that too in places of worship, goes against our shared humanity and cannot be justified by anyone under any circumstance. All perpetrators of this heinous crime should be arrested and

prosecuted within the law. Non-recurrence is predicated on accountability for the crimes committed and for the State's lapses in allowing them to occur.

It is deeply disturbing that State intelligence agencies possessed information of possible attacks but did not act upon it and kept citizens in the dark. We believe this negligence is equally responsible for the large-scale casualties and damages. Lessons must be learnt on how to handle and disseminate credible security threats to safeguard the lives of ordinary people rather than cloister such information within an elite circle of government.

As we struggle to make sense of how this happened and where to go from here, we must above all find strength through unity. History teaches us that division and hatred sow only violence and loss. We call on the State to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators, protect religious minorities from further attacks, prevent retaliation, and vigorously champion communal harmony. Efforts to bridge communal divides should be inclusive, with women participating at all levels. We fully support the calls to "avoid propagating unverified reports" and to remain "united and strong." The State must continue to protect all its citizens from malicious rumours and hate speech on social media. Measures and messaging aimed to protect innocent civilians from further attacks and retaliation must be put in place. Curfews and military presence on the streets will not alone suffice.

We call on Sri Lankans of all communities to join in this effort and reach out to fellow citizens. This is not a matter of politics, even in this election year, but of our collective healing and survival, building the united, just and peaceful future we deserve. These events compel all of us including in civil society to rethink how we move forward collectively and build trust among and between communities.

- *WAN is a collective of 8 women's organisations that are working in the north and east.*

Statement from Women's Coalition for Disaster Management, Batticaloa

26th April 2019, Batticaloa
The following is a statement from the Women's Coalition for Disaster Management, Batticaloa, regarding the recent events in Batticaloa. We are deeply shocked and saddened by the loss of lives and the suffering of the people of Batticaloa. We call on the State to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators, protect religious minorities from further attacks, prevent retaliation, and vigorously champion communal harmony. Efforts to bridge communal divides should be inclusive, with women participating at all levels. We fully support the calls to "avoid propagating unverified reports" and to remain "united and strong." The State must continue to protect all its citizens from malicious rumours and hate speech on social media. Measures and messaging aimed to protect innocent civilians from further attacks and retaliation must be put in place. Curfews and military presence on the streets will not alone suffice.

Press Statement of Vame Handa ('Left Voice')

Colombo, 26 April 2019

“President and Government should be held responsible for Easter Sunday carnage”

At least 253 people were killed and 500 were wounded due to the suicide attacks carried out by religious extremists on Easter Sunday on three churches and three luxury tourist hotels in Sri Lanka. The Left Voice, an organisation of socialist activists in the trade unions and peoples' struggles, unconditionally condemns this barbaric attack.

We express our sorrow to the families of the affected. It is disclosed that this attack was carried out by National Thowheed Jamath, an organisation based in Sri Lanka. In the meantime, Islamic State (ISIS) has claimed responsibility for this atrocity.

Full responsibility for all the damages to lives and property in this tragic violence should be taken by the Government of Sri Lanka. Even though intelligence information including the identity of some of the individuals who exploded the bombs were received by the police around 4 April. The government did not inform the public of this credible threat nor take any preventive steps to stop this disaster. The Secretary to the Ministry of Defense (who has since resigned following public outrage) confirmed that he was aware of this intelligence but didn't act on it, believing it to be exaggerated.

While the public is rightly criticizing the entire government for its criminal irresponsibility, the President and Prime Minister are passing the buck onto others including each other. The opportunity for Sri Lanka to become a bombing ground has been created by the unstable political situation for which both leaders are responsible.

It is necessary to understand the socio-economic roots of this type of extremism among young Muslims. Sinhala chauvinist forces which strengthened after the military defeat of the LTTE in May 2009, considered the local Muslim community as its next antagonist.

The Muslim community, especially in the Eastern province, is economically disadvantaged. The post-war campaigns against halal food certification and the slaughter of cows as carried out by Sinhala racist forces were actually campaigns against Muslim commercial interests. The war-time Secretary to the Ministry of Defence (and brother to the former president), Gotabhaya Rajapakse protected the Bodu Bala Sena ('Buddhist Army Force') movement who led those racist campaigns. He aspires to be the next President of the country with the backing of those same forces.

The Muslim businessmen of Colombo city have been under threat from Sinhala racists who organize boycotts of their stores as well as attack them, with no protection from previous and present Governments. It appears that some of the suicide bombers were well-educated children of rich businessmen. The context of anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobia has clearly helped ISIS and other reactionary groups to penetrate into the Muslim community in Sri Lanka.

The present opposition leader and ex-president Mahinda Rajapakse has stated that he too was aware of the possibility of terror attacks. He complains that the present government enabled this situation through arrests of a few intelligence personnel implicated in abductions and disappearances during his regime. Now all three parties, the President, the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition are committed to strengthening the security forces and police by introducing new oppressive laws. The President has declared a state of emergency which threatens democratic rights. Other authoritarian steps include blocking access to social media platforms and the cancellation of May Day rallies next week.

The crisis in the present Sri Lankan Government (Ranil-Sirisena) which developed since 26th October 2018, has now shattered the Sri Lankan state. It is now an opportune moment to rally round all the forces to push this Government out of existence which is strongly echoing in the peoples' sentiments

demanding the Govt. to resign. If we delay in the task of defeating this Government, a right wing coup will be hatched in the very near future.

A dangerous turn is that the government has requested the support of imperialist countries such as the United States, labeling them as international terrorist activity. At this moment operatives from FBI & Scotland Yard are active in Sri Lanka. We should not exclude the possibility of imperialist intervention in the name of crushing terrorism.

The most dangerous situation is the possibility of attacks against Muslims all over the island by racist forces. The Left forces should take the leadership to avoid this type of situation. One important step towards such activity is to hold the May Day despite the state ban. Further, progressive forces should come forward to defeat the government's open invitation to foreign intervention.

Linus Jayatilake
Leader - Left Voice Organization

Statement of the NSSP

'Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said that information about these attacks had been received in advance, but attempted to sidestep responsibility. "We must look into why adequate precautions were not taken. Neither I nor the Ministers were kept informed."

The statement of PM shows that president office avoided producing valuable information given by the security division and at the same time did not take any steps to counter the predicted racist fascist violence. This is hidden collaboration with racist terrorists in order to show yahapalana government is incapable protecting minority communities from racist violence. Clearly Sinhala fascists are collaborating with Isis type groups to create such violence. RANIL MUST RISE TO OCCASION TO CONSOLIDATE POWER AND SAVE DEMOCRACY.

Dr. Vickramabahu, NSSP
