

Sri Lanka: Families of Disappeared invite President to attend national commemoration this Sunday

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Families of the Disappeared claim none of the previous governments had the political will to investigate these crimes

The 34th Day of Commemoration of the Disappeared will be held from 10.00am at the memorial for disappeared persons in Raddoluwa, Seeduwa on October 27

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On October 27, families of the disappeared will mark the 'Day of Commemoration of the Disappeared' in Raddoluwa.

For as long as 33 years, families of persons subject to enforced disappearances have continued their struggle for justice. This year, as the families gather to commemorate their loved ones for the 34th year, they also invite President Anura Kumara Dissanayake to attend the event.

Political will

It is said that over 60,000 youth and civilians were killed, abducted or have gone missing during the 1987-1989 riots. However, Families of the Disappeared claim that none of the previous governments had the political will to investigate these crimes. Speaking to the Daily Mirror, Chairman Brito Fernando of the Families of the Disappeared said that bringing about justice to victims of enforced disappearances was one of the promises made by the incumbent President.

"We haven't invited former presidents to this commemoration because they didn't address the topic of enforced disappearances. Even though some sort of progress has been made with the establishment of the Office of Missing Persons, Office of Reparations and so on, former leaders didn't have the political will to solve the issues. They executed these establishments to pacify the international community. Therefore, we hope that the incumbent government will act with some political will to bring about justice to those who have gone missing over the years and we invited President Dissanayake to attend the event with the families of the disappeared," he added.



Enforced disappearances

It was back in 1971 that people started talking about enforced disappearances. However, there were no official statistics to prove the number of persons who have gone missing. Enforced disappearances from the North were reported since 1983 prior to the 1989 riots. What began as a movement to seek justice for people who went missing at the Katunayake export processing zone eventually expanded to a movement seeking justice for victims subjected to enforced disappearances from across the country headed by Fernando himself.

Adding his thoughts regarding the event, Human Rights Activist Sunanda Deshapriya said that memorialisation is essential for human beings. "If a loved one is subject to an enforced disappearance it is a burden for a lifetime. We are unable to conduct their last rites and we don't know what happened to them.

So we have an entire generation of people who are bearing the pain of enforced disappearances. Many youth have been abducted and gone missing during various periods in history since 1971 to 1988/1989, the 30-year civil conflict and so on. Amongst them are LTTE terrorists, soldiers in tri-forces and civilians as well. So the only way for loved ones of these victims to ease their emotional burden is through memorialisation," he added.

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Daily Mirror

https://www.dailymirror.lk/news-features/Families-of-Disappeared-invite-President-to-attend-national-commemoration-this-Sunday/131-294506?fbclid=IwY2xjawGNyuZleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHfGeo2OmpQOkwF5I15Jtrle4oPdG5WI_0IXvzq3k7iRoFPkA0in9a5RV8A_aem_bfQhmAp3uLPIndtXEw6GfA