

**RESTRICTIONS AND VIOLENCE
AGAINST RELIGIOUS MINORITIES:
AN INCIDENT ANALYSIS**



#MINORMATTERS

RESTRICTIONS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST RELIGIOUS MINORITIES: AN INCIDENT ANALYSIS

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Restrictions and Violence against Religious Minorities: An Incident Analysis

Colombo, 2019

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INTRODUCTION

The election of Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, to the office of President of Sri Lanka, on the 8th of January 2015 led some to hope for greater democratic governance, the establishment of rule of law, and greater respect for the Constitution and human rights. Certainly, many from religious minority communities, were hopeful that they would be assured the freedom to practice their religion. Even though the new government did make some progress by way of, among other achievements, curtailing the executive powers of the President and Constitutionally enshrining the Right of Access to information, it failed in other areas. Information regarding the bond scam which cost the country billions of rupees gradually came to light, implicating those in senior levels of government. Initially, local government elections were delayed and subsequently Provincial Council elections as well. In 2018, a constitutional crisis witnessed a deadlock between the legislative and executive arms of government, as the President arbitrarily removed the existing, and appointed a new, Prime Minister. Therefore, we may note that while the government has delivered on some of its promises, it has failed in other respects.

Since 2015, there does not appear to have been a significant improvement in the rights of religious minorities to freely practice their religion either. The year 2018 marked a difficult year for religious tolerance in Sri Lanka. There were 79 incidents of religious intolerance affecting Christians and 13 incidents against Muslims reported to the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL). These figures do not include the incidents which occurred during the violence which swept through parts of the Central Province in March. This report is an attempt to identify trends which emerge from the data gathered by the NCEASL on acts of intolerance against Christians, Muslims and Hindus in 2018.

The report (a) briefly and selectively outlining the national context in which the incidents occurred; (b) outlines the methodology; (c) analyses acts of intolerance against Christians; (d) discusses acts of intolerance against Muslims (e) outlines intolerance against Hindus and (f) concludes by drawing some tentative differences between acts of intolerance against Christians as opposed to Muslims.

Background

This section attempts to locate the trends of religious tolerance in Sri Lanka in 2018 within a particular context.

To those familiar with Sri Lankan politics, 2018 was a tumultuous year, to say the least. The year began with the victory of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna at the local government elections, a party which was seen as that of the former President Mahinda Rajapakse. At the end of the year there was a constitutional deadlock which saw the ousting of the Prime Minister, the appointing of a new Prime Minister and Cabinet, the dissolution of Parliament, and the ruling by the Supreme Court that the dissolution of Parliament infringed the people's fundamental rights. In some ways, these changes on the political front may be read as a coming to the fore of ethno-nationalist politics.

It is against this political backdrop that the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka conducted a study which highlights some interesting points regarding religious freedom in Sri Lanka.¹ This survey was conducted among clergy, government officials and civil society groups in 22 districts. The study asked respondents if there had been any incidents of tensions between religious communities in the past six months.

60% in the Mannar district report that there are tensions between religious groups in their area.² Kandy (45.7%) and Ampara (38.0%) are two districts which also have high reports of religious tensions in the area.³ According to the data, there are no reports of tensions between religious communities in Hambanthota and Kegalle districts.⁴

According to this study, more than half the respondents feel that there are no obstacles to practicing one's religion in the country and in the area in which they live. 36.0% report that there is at least some obstacle to practicing religious activities in the country.⁵ More Muslims (52.9%), Christians (41.9%), and Hindus (37.2%) believe that there are some obstacles to practicing their religion in Sri Lanka, compared to Buddhists (21.9%).⁶ Additionally, 15.6% report that there are some obstacles to practicing their religion in the area in which they live.⁷

1 National Peace Council of Sri Lanka, 2019. Religious Freedom Survey, Colombo: National Peace Council of Sri Lanka.

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

4 Ibid

5 Ibid

6 Ibid

7 Ibid

More Christians (28.4%), Hindus (19.8%) and Muslims (13.2%) believe that there are some obstacles at least for practicing their religion in their area, compared to Buddhist (6.6%).⁸ This suggests that religious minorities feel that there is less freedom available to them to practice their religion. The trends identified in the report should be read recognizing the context outlined above.

Methodology

This section will outline the methodology adopted in coding and analyzing the data for the trend analysis. The study draws on the methodology Verite Research developed when they conducted a similar analysis of incidents of intolerance against Christians between the years 1994-2014.

Acts of Intolerance

The report intentionally avoids the term 'violence.' Rather, the term 'acts of religious intolerance' is used. For the purposes of this study, an act of religious intolerance has to fit at least one of the types of acts listed under 'nature of act of religious intolerance,' in order to be entered in the database as an incident.⁹ These are

- **Property Damage or Destruction** - unlawful forced entry, vandalism or any other form of attack on the property of an individual, institution or group
- **Physical Violence** - violence against person/s of any form including but not limited to forcible restraint, assault, rape, abduction and murder
- **Threats, Intimidation or Coercion** - includes any verbal threats, phone calls, or direct encounters which do not result in violent acts against persons or property but where there is a threat of force or a forcing of person/s to perform any action against their will
- **False Allegation** - a statement which is factually inaccurate and made before the Police

8 Ibid

9 Definitions are drawn from: Verite Research, 2015. Silent Suppression: Restrictions on Religious Freedoms of Christians 1994-2014, Colombo: National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka.

- **Discriminatory Action or Practice** - any form of discrimination on religious grounds; including but not limited to denying or limiting services, deny or limiting access through differential treatment in particular instances or a sustained policy/practice of differential treatment
- **Hate Campaign or Propaganda** - includes any printed material, meeting, rally or media campaign, which has express messages attacking or inciting feelings against a religion, religious practices, religious symbolism, places of worship, religious community or followers of a religion based on their religious affiliation

Scope of Study

The data relating to Christians used in the study was provided by the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL). The study also uses data provided by the Muslim Council of Sri Lanka and Truth Factor, while Mr M. G. Ratnakanthan provided data for the study of incidents against Hindus. The data collection took place in 2018. However, not all incidents reported were included. Some incidents which did not fit within the criteria presented above were not entered in the database.

Coding data

Each incident is considered as a unit of analysis. In certain instances, one incident is part of a larger sequence. For example, a person who is threatened, intimidated or coerced by another could report the matter to the Police, only to have the Police admonish him and refuse to record a complaint.

In this instance, though the two incidents are part of the same sequence, the assault, and subsequent refusal by the Police to record the complaint are taken as two separate incidents. Therefore, many incidents which have been reported separately are, in reality, part of a larger sequence.

In order to prevent double counting a single incident which had multiple acts of intolerance, the database allowed for multiple responses. For example, if a church was stormed, the door broken, congregants threatened, intimidated or coerced, and the pastor assaulted, this would be coded as one single incident, which included property damage or destruction; threats, intimidation or coercion and physical violence. Perpetrators and victims are coded in a

similar manner, with one incident having multiple perpetrators and victims. Therefore, the report is sensitive to the multiple types of acts of religious intolerance, perpetrators and victims which could be included in one single incident.

The key perpetrators are categorized as follows¹⁰:

- **Religious Institution or Clergy** - refers to a member of a religious order, a place of worship or a religious institution (e.g. religious education institute, welfare institution affiliated to a religion)
- **Residents of the area** - this refers to other persons residing within the same area
- **Law Enforcement Officers** - refers to Police
- **State Officials** - was only used when the institution or person in question had a legal affiliation to a government body (e.g. state run school, government administrator)
- **Unidentified Persons or Groups** - affiliations of perpetrators are unclear or unstated

The targets of acts of religious intolerance are classified as¹¹:

- **Clergy** - generally a pastor
- **Lay Persons** - could include an individual or two or three individuals
- **Local Community** - could include, for example, the congregation or all households in the village or a particular sect of Christians/ Muslims being targeted
- **Wider community** - could be used particularly in events when many or all categories may be targeted en masse or Christians/ Muslims targeted at the nationwide level
- **Place of Worship** - could be a church or the location/house where prayer meetings are held
- **Place of business** - a place where business is carried out

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

The State response was also categorized. This includes both the Police as well as other employees of the State. The categories developed are¹²:

- **Absent at the time of incident/ Unknown** - if the police play a role whether actively or tacitly in the perpetration of the events
- **Present and Intervene** - if the police are present and intervene in the defence of the primary targets
- **Present and Inactive** - if the police are present and allow the religious persecution to continue without intervention
- **Actively/ Tacitly Involved** - if the police play a role whether actively or tacitly in the perpetration of the events

Limitations of the Study

This report is not based on an exhaustive list of acts of religious intolerance in 2018. Rather, it presents only the incidents recorded by the NCEASL. It is more than likely that many more incidents occurred in 2018, but were simply not reported to NCEASL. Therefore, caution is required in generalizing the data to all of Sri Lanka.

¹² Ibid

ACTS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AGAINST CHRISTIANS

As per the data provided by the NCEASL, 79 incidents of intolerance took place against Christians in 2018.

District Breakdown of Acts of Intolerance against Christians

Almost one fourth (24.1%) of acts of intolerance against Christians reported to NCEASL in 2018 are from the Batticaloa district. The districts of Polonnaruwa (13.9%) and Colombo (13.9%) witnessed another quarter of the incidents. Therefore, these three districts account for more than half (51.9%) the incidents of intolerance reported against Christians to the NCEASL in 2018. The districts of Anuradhapura, Kurunegala, Ratnapura, Matale, Nuwara Eliya, Trincomalee, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar and Jaffna did not witness any acts of intolerance at all, according to data collected by the NCEASL.

DISTRICT	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT	DISTRICT	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
Batticaloa	19	24.1%	Kegalle	3	3.8%
Polonnaruwa	11	13.9%	Ampara	2	2.5%
Colombo	11	13.9%	Matara	2	2.5%
Gampaha	7	8.9%	Badulla	2	2.5%
Galle	6	7.6%	Monaragala	1	1.3%
Puttlam	5	6.3%	Kandy	1	1.3%
Hambanthota	5	6.3%	Vavuniya	1	1.3%
Kaluthara	3	3.8%	Base	79	100.0%

Table 1: District Breakdown of Acts of Intolerance against Christians

Types of Violence

An analysis of the types of intolerant acts reported against Christians is revealing. According to the data, threats, intimidation or coercion account for more than 50% (51.9%) of the types of intolerant acts. Such threats intimidation or coercion ranged from individuals accosting the pastor and his wife as they travelled through the village and demanding that the pastor suspends the construction of a church, to mobs storming churches during Sunday worship and demanding a cessation of all Christian religious activities in the village. The data also indicates that of the incidents of intolerant acts reported to NCEASL, 32.9% are discriminatory actions on the part of the State. This will be discussed in more detail in the section on the State. 13.9% of the incidents involve property damage or destruction and 12.7% of the incidents reported physical violence against persons. 8.9% of the reported incidents are incidents of false allegations levelled against Christians. Finally, 5.1% of the reported incidents are hate campaigns or propaganda. Such campaigns were limited to poster campaigns at the local level or protests organized at a local level, demanding that the activities of Christians cease. This suggests that in the case of intolerant acts against Christians, they may be largely considered to be those which do not cause physical harm to persons or property.

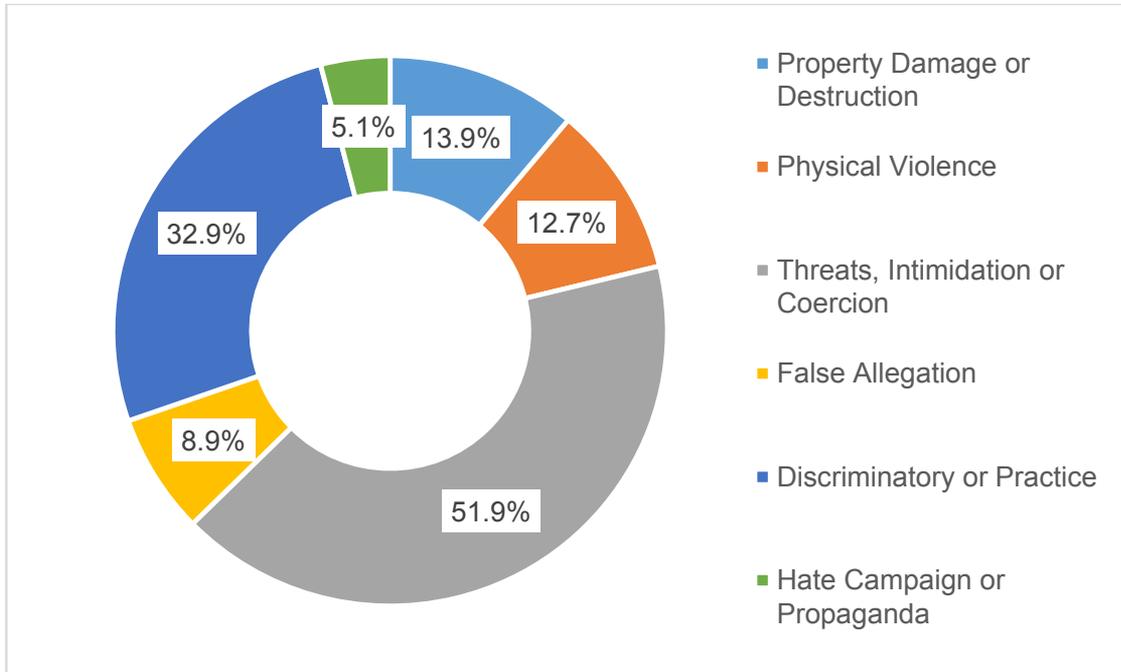


Figure 1: Types of Acts of Intolerance against Christians

Key Perpetrators

An analysis of the incidents of intolerant acts against Christians reported to the NCEASL suggests that in 46.8% of reported incidents, residents of the area are the key perpetrators. In more than a quarter of the incidents reported (27.8%) unidentified groups committed acts of intolerance against Christians. Unidentified groups were largely involved in destruction of property, which happened under the cover of darkness. In 24.1% of incidents reported to the NCEASL clergy, generally Buddhist monks in the South (on 17 occasions), and Hindu religious leaders in the North and East (on 3 occasions), are key perpetrators. In the event that clergy were involved in an act of intolerance towards Christians, they would generally play a leading role. Agents of the State, both the Police (16.5%) and other State employees (20.3%) are implicated in more than a third of reported acts of intolerance committed against Christians.

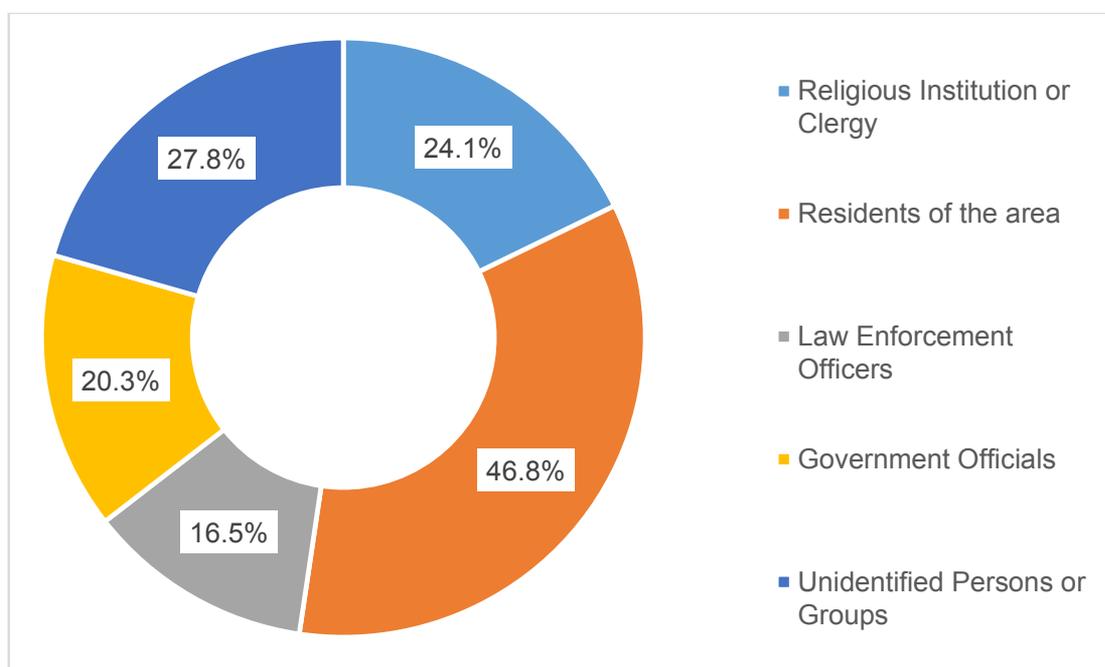


Figure 2: Key Perpetrators of Acts of Intolerance against Christians

Based on the data gathered by the NCEASL in 2018, it appears that most often it is persons at the local level who are involved in acts of religious intolerance directed towards Christians. Residents and clergy who are from the area are generally involved in acts of intolerance against Christians. The presence of national level actors is less visible in these incidents. Therefore, it is possible that acts of intolerance against Christians are fueled more by local level differences and power dynamics.

Primary Targets

Clergy are targeted in 59.5% of intolerant acts targeting Christians which were reported to NCEASL. This suggests that in most instances Christian clergy are the target of acts of religious intolerance against Christians. In 38.0% of reported incidents, lay persons are the target. While pastors were targeted when they were alone, lay persons were rarely targeted when they were alone. Lay persons were generally victims of acts of intolerance when they had gathered together as small groups or as a church congregation to engage in worship or prayer. In 22.8% of the incidents of religious intolerance reported, in the case of Christians, the local community is the target. Of the incidents reported, places of worship are the target in 15.2% of the acts of intolerance. Places of worship were usually damaged by unidentified persons during the night, or when angry groups stormed a worship service.

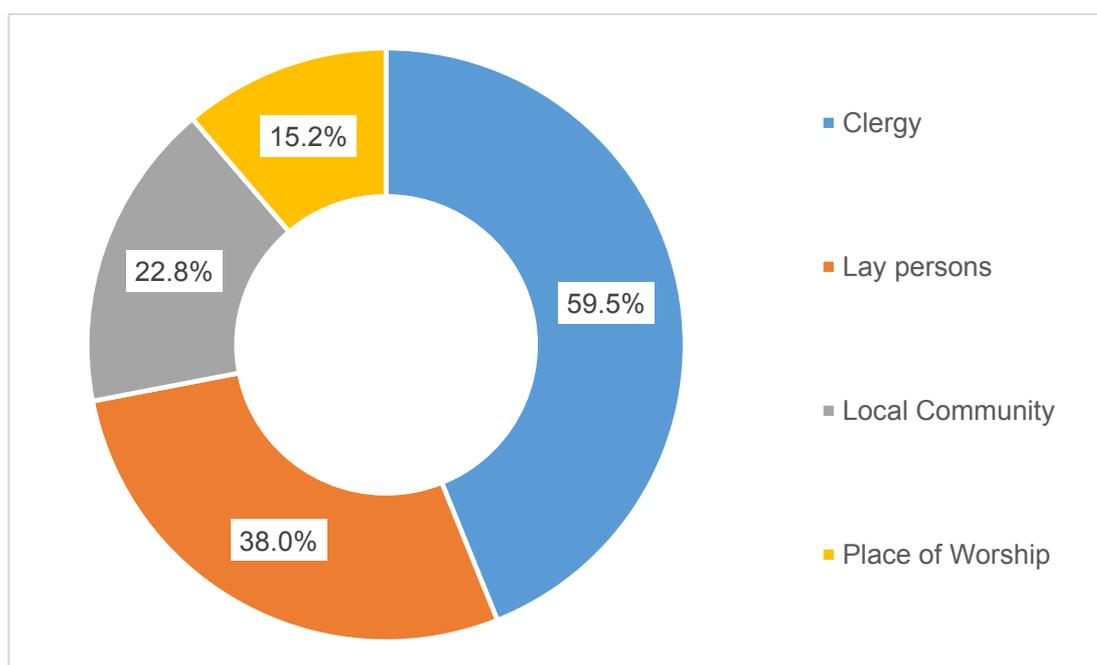


Figure 3: Primary Targets of Acts of Intolerance against Christians

The State

49.4% of the acts of religious intolerance reported to the NCEASL occurred when State officials, be they the Police or other State officials, are absent. Such other State Officials include Divisional Secretaries, Grama Niladharis, school principals, and officers attached to the Mahaveli Authority. In the instances in which they are present, they are actively or tacitly involved 67.5% of the time. State officials intervened in defense of the targets in 27.5% of the incidents they are present at. This suggests that very often State officials, regardless of whether they are the Police or State officials, are unlikely to intervene positively to resolve an issue. While this is what the data suggests, it is important to note that this trend emerges out of specific local contexts.

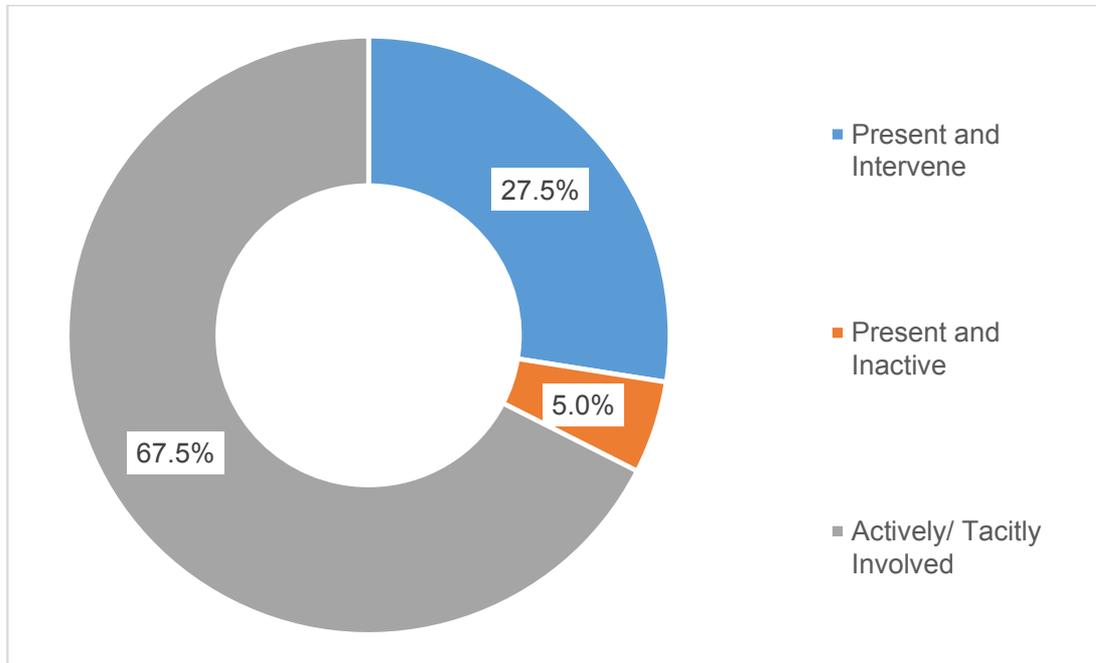


Figure 4: State Response to Acts of Intolerance against Christians

Generally, incidents involving the active or tacit approval of the State took the form of demanding a cessation to Christian religious activities in the village. The data suggests that these demands were based on State Officials' personal biases, or in some instances as a consequence of locals exerting pressure on them to halt activities of Christians in the village. In fact, on one occasion a State bureaucrat had requested that the village headman's permission be obtained prior to beginning construction work of a church.

Registration and Demands for Closure

In 3 incidents reported to NCEASL in 2018, reference was made to a Circular issued by the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs Ministry in 2008 which states that new constructions of religious places of worship should obtain prior approval from the Ministry¹³. This Circular was the basis on which attempts were made by the State to cease or hinder religious practices of Christians. Pastors were told that they could not continue with the construction of a church as they had not obtained this approval. Furthermore, this Circular is used against Christian places of worship even in instances where they have been in existence *prior* to 2008. This is despite the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and the Department of Christian Affairs having affirmed that there is no requirement for registration for Christian places of worship, following petitions made under the Right to Information Act¹⁴. Therefore, in certain instances in 2018, state officials had made extra-legal demands of Christians when they attempted to construct a church.

Summary

According to the data, Batticaloa, Colombo and Polonnaruwa districts witnessed the greatest number of incidents of religious intolerance against Christians in 2018. The data gathered by the NCEASL suggests that in most instances it is residents and clergy (both Buddhist and Hindu) from the village/town who commit acts of religious intolerance against Christians, with pastors being the main targets. Additionally, State officials may not be reliable sources for the resolution of these situations, as the data indicates that they rarely intervene positively to resolve issues of religious intolerance against Christians. The persistent presence of local actors in incidents of intolerance targeting Christians may be understood as instances in which local differences and local power dynamics surface. However, more research is required to confirm if this is actually the case, and if so, to also better elucidate the manner in which this unfolds at the local level.

¹³ Annex 1 (including translation)

¹⁴ Annex 2 (including translation)

ACTS OF INTOLERANCE AGAINST MUSLIMS

This section of the report will discuss the trends which may be observed in acts of intolerance committed against the Muslim community living in Sri Lanka in 2018. In doing so, it will first discuss the trends which emerge from the 13 incidents collected by the NCEASL. This excludes those incidents which took place in the Kandy district in early March. These incidents are discussed separately.

District Breakdown of Acts of Religious Intolerance against Muslims

DISTRICT	FREQUENCY	DISTRICT	FREQUENCY
Ampara	3	Monaragala	1
Colombo	2	Kandy	1
Virtual Space	2	Puttlam	1
Batticaloa	1	Jaffna	1
Kaluthara	1	Total	13

Table 2: District Breakdown of Acts of Religious Intolerance against Muslims

Acts of religious intolerance were reported to the NCEASL from 8 districts. 3 acts were reported from Ampara, while 2 were reported from Colombo. Additionally, 2 incidents involved hate campaigns which took place on social media platforms.

Types of Acts

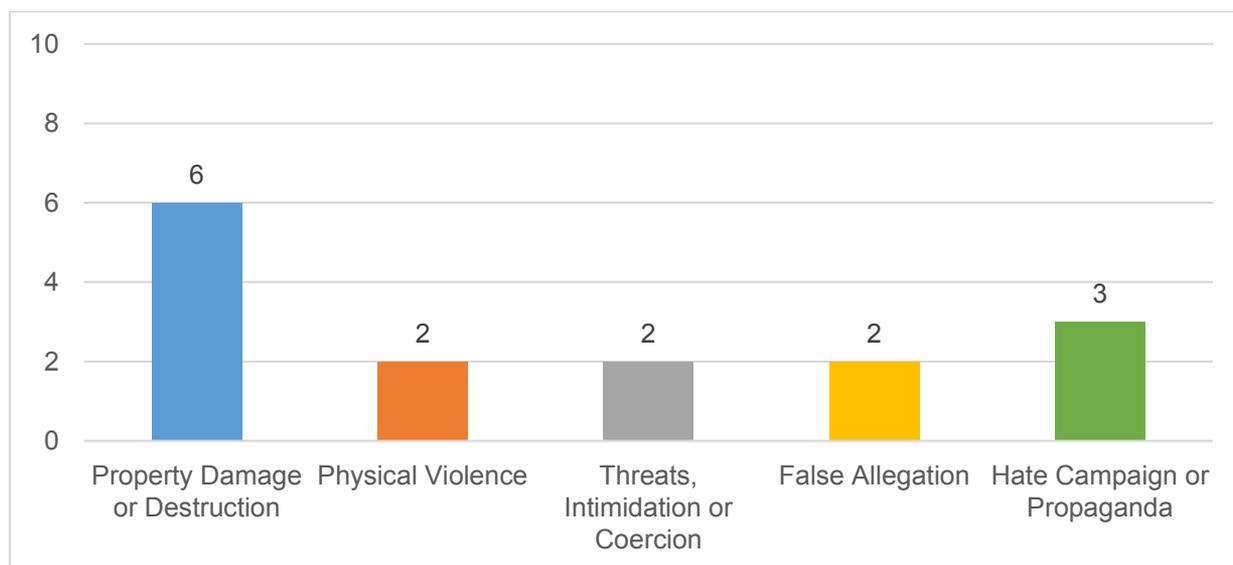


Figure 5: Types of Acts of Intolerance against Muslims

Damage to property is caused in 6 of the intolerant acts against Muslim, according to NCEASL's data, in 2018. Additionally, there are 3 reports of hate campaigns or propaganda, and 2 reports each of threats, intimidation or coercion, physical violence and false allegations. While the data is insufficient to draw any definitive conclusions, it appears that in the case of acts of intolerance against Muslims, damage or destruction to property is more frequent. Furthermore, the hate campaigns and propaganda reported against Muslims occur on social media platforms and are tinged by national discourses.

Key Perpetrators

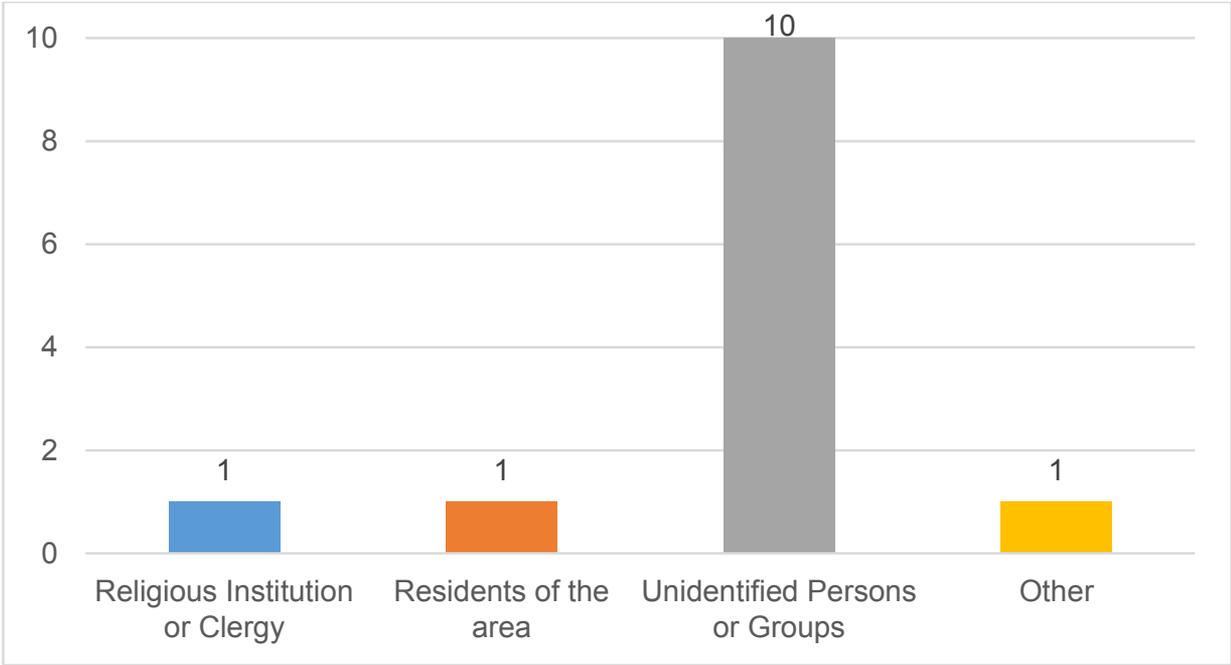


Figure 6: Key Perpetrators of Acts of Intolerance against Muslims

Of the 13 reported acts of intolerance against Muslims, 10 are committed by unidentified groups or persons. Clergy, residents of the area and other persons are responsible for the other three reported incidents.

Primary Targets

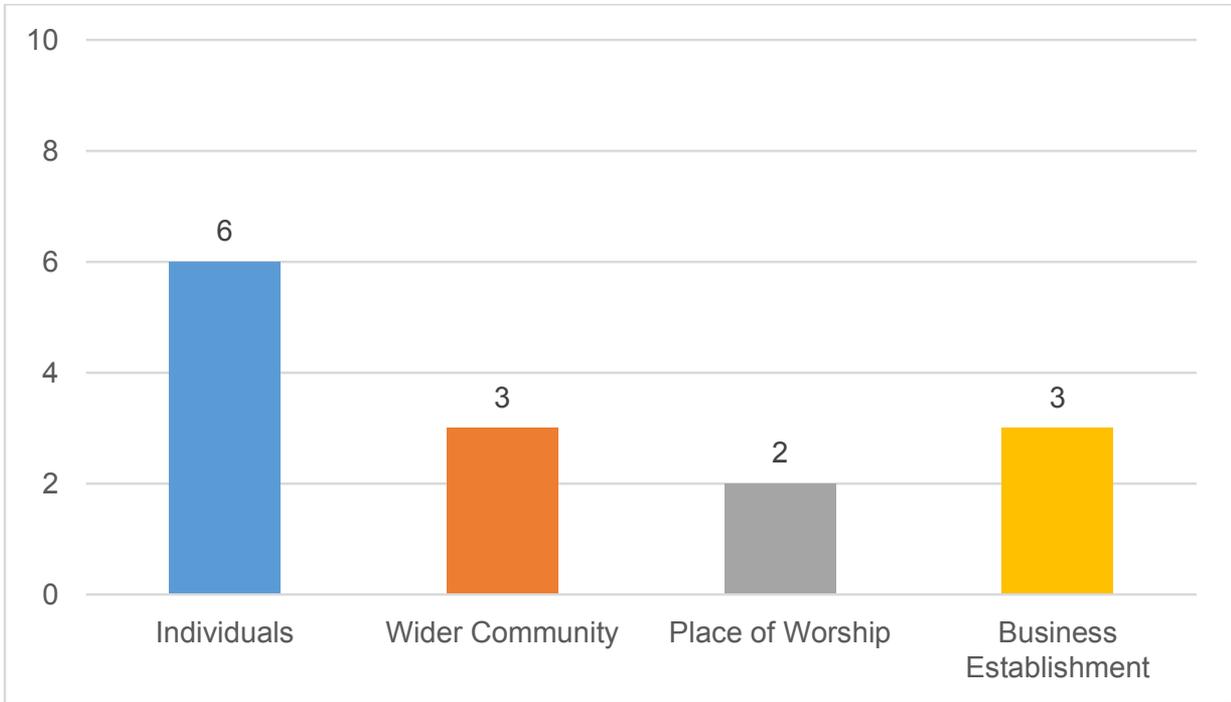


Figure 7: Primary Targets of Acts of Intolerance against Muslims

As per the data gathered by the NCEASL, it appears that generally it is individuals who are targeted (6 of 14 reported targets). Also, 3 business establishments and 2 places of worship are the target of acts of intolerance. Additionally, the wider Muslim community is targeted in 3 incidents. Religious leaders were not the target of acts of intolerance against Muslims. Again, while the data is insufficient to draw definitive conclusions, the targeting of business establishments suggests that acts of intolerance against Muslims may have an economic basis.

Violence in Digana and Theldeniya¹⁵

In March 2018 ethno-religious violence spread through the Central Province of Sri Lanka. This section hopes to briefly discuss the incidents which took place in the Central Province between the 5th and 8th of March 2018.

On the 22nd of February 2018 a Sinhalese lorry driver, M. G. Kumarasinghe was attacked by a group of persons, who were allegedly Muslims. It is reported that there was no ethnic or religious motivation behind the attack. Mr. Kumarasinghe succumbed to his injuries on the 3rd of March 2018. In an effort to prevent ethnic violence igniting in the community, Muslim religious leaders met with Buddhist clergy from the area and with the Police as well. The Muslim religious leaders also offered to contribute towards the funeral of the deceased person. Those who were responsible for the murder of M. G. Kumarasinghe surrendered to the Police. On the 4th of March the efforts made on the part of the Muslim community appeared to be successful. However, reports suggest that upon Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thero, General Secretary of the *Bodu Bala Sena*, Mr. Amith Weerasinghe, leader of the *Mahasohon Balakaya*, and Mr. Dan Priyasad entering the locality on the evening of the 4th of March, tensions began to escalate.

On the 5th of March, violence erupted in Digana and Theldeniya in Kandy. Mobs roamed the street and set fire to Muslim-owned shops and places of business. Reports suggest that many in the mob had arrived from other parts of the country. The body of a young Muslim man was found on the 6th of March, in a burnt house. He is said to have died of excessive smoke inhalation. The violence continued unabated on the 6th of March despite the Police imposing a curfew and the President declaring a State of Emergency. On the 7th of March amidst continuing violence, the government imposed a block on social media platforms. However, the violence spread to the Akurana and Katugasthota areas as well. On the 8th of March the Police re-imposed a 12-hour curfew. It was reported that some 3000 police personnel and 750 members of the STF were deployed to Kandy. They were further assisted by 2500 army personnel, 600 navy personnel, and 30 members of the air force. Thereafter, a semblance of normalcy was restored in the area.

In the aftermath, the government arrested 81 persons, including the leader of the *Mahasohon Balakaya*, Mr. Amith Weerasinghe. By some estimations, 49 shops, 132 houses, 4 mosques, and 18 vehicles were damaged or destroyed as a result of the violence. Additionally, 51 persons were injured, and 2 persons died due to the incidents which took place in Digana. In the aftermath of the violence, ethnic relationships between the Sinhalese and the Muslims became more strained than they had been previously.

Summary

It is difficult to identify trends, in acts of intolerance against Muslims in 2018, due to the limited data. It may be observed that business establishments are targeted in acts of intolerance against Muslims. Hate campaigns targeting Muslims occur at a national level, particularly over social media, rather than at the local level. Perpetrators of acts of intolerance against Muslims, which were reported to NCEASL, are most often unidentified persons.

The violence in Digana marks a low point for religious freedom in Sri Lanka. A fatal attack on a Sinhalese man was used to justify widespread violence targeting the Muslim community living in certain parts of the Central Province. The presence of national level actors and the allegedly organized nature of the violence is a cause for concern to individuals and organisations working for religious freedom in Sri Lanka.

¹⁵ This section is written based on a fact-finding mission conducted by the NCEASL in the area on the 11th of March 2018

ACTS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AGAINST HINDUS

This section is written based on a few incidents reported to the NCEASL in 2018, and a report submitted by the Verite Research titled “Understanding Press Coverage on Religious Freedom,”¹⁶ which analysed media reports of incidents of violations of religious freedom for the months October-December 2018. Therefore, some caution is required in drawing strong conclusions.

The data on acts of religious intolerance against Hindus is reported almost entirely from the North and East of the country. In most instances, the grievance surrounds the construction of a Buddhist temple at a place Hindu worship, or the construction of Buddhist statues by the Military. The latter is seen by some commentators as a physical reminder, to Tamils in the North, of the dominant, State-sponsored Sinhala-Buddhist ideology which views the entire country as belonging to Sinhala Buddhists. Alternatively, acts of intolerance against Hindus may also be a consequence of interventions by the Department of Archeology, which restricts Hindus from accessing their places of worship. Furthermore, religious tensions between Hindus and other religious communities (Muslims, Christians or Catholics) living in close proximity to each other are also reported. Unfortunately, the data is insufficient to observe any trends in acts of intolerance against Hindus in the year 2018.

¹⁶ Verite Research, 2019. Understand Press Coverage on Religious Freedom, Colombo: National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka.

CONCLUSION

The data collected by the NCEASL provides a valuable entry point to begin a conversation regarding religious freedom in Sri Lanka. While it is tempting to highlight some interesting concluding points from the data, it would be unwise to ignore that there are limitations in the data. Consequently, the writer is uncomfortably aware of the need for more data to draw more definitive and nuanced conclusions than those which are presented below.

1. Tentative differences may be observed in the type of intolerant acts perpetrated against Christians and Muslims. In the case of acts reported against Christians to the NCEASL, the main type of act was threats, intimidation or coercion. However, destruction to property and physical harm featured more prominently, with regard to the acts reported against the Muslim community. Furthermore, incidents against Christians are usually numerous “smaller” incidents dispersed across the country, whereas in the case of incidents of intolerance against Muslims, they tend to be more sporadic, concentrated to a specific time and space, and at a much larger scale, as witnessed in the violence which took place in Digana. Therefore, we may cautiously suggest that the types of intolerant acts directed at the two religious minorities are generally different.
2. The limited data suggests that there is generally a difference in perpetrators of acts of intolerance against Christians, as opposed to Muslims. In the case of Christians, those who act intolerantly towards them are generally residents or Hindu or Buddhist clergy from the area. While persons from the area are probably involved in acts of intolerance against Muslims the nature of the acts make it more difficult to identify perpetrators.
3. According to the data gathered by NCEASL, clergy were generally the primary targets when intolerant acts were directed at Christians. Furthermore, there was no damage to commercial establishments, and damage to property was generally less reported among Christians. However, among acts of intolerance against Muslims, property, be it business establishments, houses or places of worship, were the primary targets. It is possible then to provisionally suggest that economic motives weigh more heavily in acts of intolerance against Muslims, as opposed to similar acts against Christians.
4. Based on the data NCEASL collected through 2018, it is possible to tentatively argue that acts of intolerance against Christians are more often shaped by local persons or organisations. This may be deduced from the fact that it was largely local residents and local clergy who were involved in acts of intolerance reported to the NCEASL. Furthermore, even the hate campaigns and propaganda reported against Christians were very local in nature. Acts of intolerance against Muslims though appear to be shaped more by forces outside the locality than those within. Social media campaigns and activities of organisations such as the *Bodu Bala Sena* indicate a broader national level discourse targeting Muslims. Furthermore, the violence which took place in the Kandy district had a level of organization which suggests that forces larger than the local political actors were at play. Therefore, we may cautiously posit that acts of intolerance against Christians are generally manifestations of local level politics, whereas in the case of acts against Muslims, they may be manifestations of politics beyond the local level.

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Verite Research, 2019. *Understand Press Coverage on Religious Freedom*, Colombo: National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka.

ANNEX 1



ආගමික කටයුතු හා සදාචාර වර්ධන අමාත්‍යාංශය
 மத அலுவலகங்கள், ஒழுக்கக் மேம்பாட்டு அமைச்சு
 MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS AND MORAL UPLIFTMENT

මගේ අංකය }
 අංකය: 1/ආ.ක./ඉදිකිරීම්/2008 }
 My No. }

ඔබේ අංකය }
 අංකය: 157 }
 Your No. }

දිනය }
 2008. 10. 16 }
 Date }

ගෞරවනීය කොට්ඨාස
 ප්‍රාදේශීය සභාව
 23 OCT 2008
 157

පොදුසේවක තුමා
 ශ්‍රී ලංකා පොදුසේවක දෙපාර්තමේන්තුව
 කොළඹ

නව ආගමික ස්ථාන ඉදිකිරීම

විධිමත් අනුමැතියකින් තොරව නව ආගමික ස්ථාන ඉදිකිරීම හේතුවෙන් පැනවූයේදී හැකි හැටිමිකාරී
 තත්වයන් වලකාලීම පිණිස අප විසින් ප්‍රාදේශීය ලේකම්වරුන් සහ පළාත් පාලන ආයතන ප්‍රධානීන් අමතන
 ලද 2008.09. 10 සහ 2008. 10.15 දිනැති ලිපි දෙකක පිටපත් මේ සමඟ වවමි.

මෙම උපදෙස් ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීම සඳහා අවශ්‍ය සහාය ලබාදීමට පියවර ගන්නා ලෙස ඔබගේ නිලධාරීන්
 දැනුවත් කරන මෙන් ඉල්ලා සිටිමි.

(Signature)

ව.වි.එම්. සේරත්
 ලේකම්
 ආගමික කටයුතු හා සදාචාර වර්ධන අමාත්‍යාංශය

- පිටපත්
- ජනාධිපති ලේකම්, ජනාධිපති ලේකම් කාර්යාලය
 - බෞද්ධ කටයුතු කොමසාරිස් ජනරාල්
 - අධ්‍යක්ෂ, නිත්‍ය ආගමික හා සංස්කෘතික කටයුතු දෙපාර්තමේන්තුව
 - අධ්‍යක්ෂ, ක්‍රිස්තියානි කටයුතු දෙපාර්තමේන්තුව
 - අධ්‍යක්ෂ, මුස්ලිම් ආගමික හා සංස්කෘතික කටයුතු දෙපාර්තමේන්තුව
 - ප්‍රාදේශීය ලේකම්,
 - ගරු නගරාධිපති තුමා, මහ නගර සභාව / නගර සභාව
 - ගරු සභාපති තුමා, ප්‍රාදේශීය සභාව

(Signature)
 157

English Translation - 2008 Circular

Ministry of Religious Affairs and Moral Upliftment
2008.10.16

Officer in Charge,
Sri Lanka Department of Police,
Colombo.

Please find attached herewith the letters sent to Divisional Secretaries and the Heads of Local Government Authorities dated 2008.09.10 and 2008.10.11, in an attempt to curb any problematic situations that could possibly arise from the unauthorized construction of new places of worship.

I request you to inform your officers to provide the co-operation necessary to implement this.

H.M. Herath,
Secretary,
Ministry of Religious Affairs and Moral Upliftment.

CC-

Secretary to the President, Presidential Secretariat
Commissioner General of Buddhist Affairs
Director, Department of Hindu Religious and Cultural Affairs
Director, Department of Christian Affairs
Director, Department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs
Divisional Secretary,

Mayor, Municipal/Urban Council
Chairman, Ganga Ihala Korale Provincial Council



ආගමික කටයුතු හා සදාචාර වර්ධන අමාත්‍යාංශය
 மத அலுவலகங்கள், ஒழுக்க மேம்பாட்டு அமைச்சு
 MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS AND MORAL UPLIFTMENT

අංකය } 2008.10.16
 මා/ප්‍රා/ 1/අ.ක./ඉදිකිරීම්/2008 }
 අංකය }
 Your No. }
 දිනය }
 Date } 2008.10.16

ගරු නගරාධිපතිතුමා, මහ නගර සභාව.
 ගරු සභාපතිතුමා, ශ්‍රී ලංකා ක්‍රිස්තියානි සභාව, නගර සභාව/ ප්‍රාදේශීය සභාව.
 ප්‍රාදේශීය ලේකම්,

අව ආගමික ස්ථාන ඉදිකිරීම.

ඉහත කරුණ සම්බන්ධයෙන් මාගේ සමෂක හා 2008.09.10 දිනැති ලිපියට වැඩිදුරටත්ය.

එම ලිපියෙහි තුන්වන ඡේදයෙන් දන්වන ලද පරිදි ආගමික ස්ථාන ඉදිකිරීම සඳහා ආගමික කටයුතු හා සදාචාර වර්ධන අමාත්‍යාංශයේ එකඟතාවය ලබාගැනීම සඳහා සකසන ලද ආකෘති පත්‍රයක් මේ සමඟ එවමි. ඉදිරියේදී ආගමික කටයුත්තක් සඳහා ඉදිකිරීමක් කරනු පිණිස අනුමැතිය ලබාගැනීම සඳහා ඉල්ලුම්පතක් ඉදිරිපත් කරන ලද විටකදී අයදුම්කරු ලවා මෙකී ආකෘතිය නිසි පරිදි සම්පූර්ණ කරවාගෙන එහි දක්වා ඇති පරිදි ඔබගේ නිරීක්ෂණ සහ නිර්දේශ සටහන් කොට මෙම අමාත්‍යාංශය වෙත ඉදිරිපත් කිරීමට පියවර ගන්නා මෙන් කරුණාවෙන් දන්වමි. ආකෘතියේ සඳහන් සෑම කරුණකටම අදාළ විස්තර සඳහන් කර තිබීම අත්‍යවශ්‍ය වන අතර අමාත්‍යාංශයේ එකඟතාවය ලබාදීම සඳහා මෙය ඉතා වැදගත්වේ. අයදුම්කරු විසින් සඳහන් කරනු ලබන කරුණු වල නිරවද්‍යතාවය පිළිබඳව සැලකිලිමත්වීමේ වැදගත්කම අවධාරණය කරන අතර සාවද්‍ය තොරතුරු සඳහන් කර ඇති විටකදී ඒ බවට සටහන් තබමින් නිවැරදි තොරතුරු ආකෘති පත්‍රයේ II කොටසේ සඳහන් කළයුතු වේ. ඉල්ලුම සම්බන්ධයෙන් අදාළ ක්‍රියාටීය භාර ප්‍රාදේශීය ලේකම්ගේ නිරීක්ෂණ හා නිර්දේශ ඉදිරිපත් කිරීම අවශ්‍ය වනවා ඇත. මෙම අමාත්‍යාංශයේ එකඟතාවය ලබාගැනීම, ඔබ ආයතනය වෙත සපුරාලිය යුතු පොදු අවශ්‍යතාවයන්ට අමතරව විය යුතු බව කරුණාවෙන් සලකන්න.

නිසි පරිදි සකසන ලද ආකෘතිය අමාත්‍යාංශය වෙත ලැබීමෙන් අනතුරුව අදාළ කරුණ අධ්‍යයනය කොට වාර්තා කිරීම සඳහා පත්කරන ලද කමිටුවක් වෙත යොමු කරනු ලැබේ. එම කමිටු වාර්තාවේ සඳහන් කරුණුද සැලකිල්ලට ගනිමින් අපගේ තීරණය ඔබ වෙත දන්වා එවනු ලබන අතර ඒ අනුව ඉදිරි පියවර ගැනීම ඔබ විසින් කළ යුතු වනවා ඇත.

ප්‍රාදේශීය ලේකම්වරුන් වෙතින් රජයේ ඉඩම් ආගමික ස්ථාන ඉදිකිරීම සඳහා ඉල්ලා සිටින විටකදී ඉහත ක්‍රියා පිළිවෙත ඔවුන් විසින්ම අනුගමනය කරනු ලැබීම අවශ්‍ය වන්නවා ඇත.

මෙහි සඳහන් ක්‍රියා පිළිවෙතින් බැහැරව කෙලින්ම අප අමතා එකඟතාවය ලබාගැනීමට නොහැකි බවට ඉල්ලුම්කරුවන් දැනුවත් කරනු මැනවි.

විධිමත් පරිදි අනුමැතිය ලබාගැනීමකින් තොරව ඉදිකිරීම් කිරීමට ඉඩ නොදිය යුතු අතර එසේ කරනු ලබන සියළු අකාරයේ ඉදිකිරීම් වෙතොත් නවතාලීමට කටයුතු කරන මෙන්ද කරුණාවෙන් දන්වා සිටිමි.

ඉහත සඳහන් විධිවිධානයන් ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීමට ඔබගේ සහාය කාරුණිකව අපේක්ෂා කරමි. තවද ආගමික ස්ථාන ඉදිකිරීම සඳහා අවසර ලබාදීමේදී මෙම අමාත්‍යාංශයේ එකඟතාවය ලබාගැනීමේ අවශ්‍යතාවය ඉතරු ව්‍යවස්ථා පැනවීම මගින් විධිමත් කිරීමට පියවර ගන්නා මෙන්ද ඉල්ලමි.


එච්. එම්. හේරත්
ලේකම්,
ආගමික කටයුතු හා සදාචාර වර්ධන අමාත්‍යාංශය

පිටපත් -

- 01. ජනාධිපති ලේකම්, ජනාධිපති ලේකම් කාර්යාලය.
- 02. ලේකම්, පළාත් සභා සහ පළාත් පාලන අමාත්‍යාංශය
- 03. ලේකම්, රාජ්‍ය පරිපාලන හා ස්වදේශ කටයුතු අමාත්‍යාංශය
- 04. ලේකම්, නාගරික සංවර්ධන සහ පුජා භූමි සංවර්ධන අමාත්‍යාංශය
- 05. ප්‍රධාන ලේකම්, පළාත් සභාව
- 06. දිස්ත්‍රික් ලේකම්,
- 07. බොද්ධ කටයුතු කොමසාරිස් ජනරාල්
- 08. අධ්‍යක්ෂ, නින්ද ආගමික හා සංස්කෘතික කටයුතු දෙපාර්තමේන්තුව
- 09. අධ්‍යක්ෂ, ක්‍රිස්තියානි කටයුතු දෙපාර්තමේන්තුව
- 10. අධ්‍යක්ෂ, මුස්ලිම් ආගමික හා සංස්කෘතික කටයුතු දෙපාර්තමේන්තුව
- 11. පළාත් පාලන කොමසාරිස්, පළාත් සභාව - අතුරු ව්‍යවස්ථාව පැනවීම මගින් මෙම අවශ්‍යතාවය නිත්‍යානුකූල කිරීමට පියවර ගන්නා මෙන් ඉල්ලමි.

Ministry Of Religious Affairs and Moral Upliftment
2008.10.16

Mayor, Municipal Council
Chairman, Provincial Council
Divisional Secretary,

Construction of New Places of Religious Worship

A further elaboration of the letter dated 2008.09.10 and the aforementioned matter.

A form to obtain approval from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Moral Upliftment on the construction of new places of worship, as described in the third paragraph of the aforementioned letter, is attached herein. Henceforth, when submitting a request for the approval of construction of new places of worship, I kindly entreat the applicant to take the necessary measures to furnish this Department with a completed copy of this form and forward your observations and recommendations, as per the form. In order to enlist the co-operation and support of this Ministry it is mandatory that each section of this form is completed with sufficient information. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all information provided is true and accurate and, in the event that certain facts may be incorrect, it should be noted and the correct information stated in Part II of the form. The observations and recommendations of the relevant Divisional Secretary should be forwarded in addition to the form. Kindly note that, in addition to fulfilling the general requirements, receiving approval is at the sole discretion of the Ministry.

Subsequent to receiving a duly filled form, the Ministry will appoint a committee that will analyse the facts presented and submit a report. The Ministry will then take the facts presented by this report under advisement and will inform you of our decision; the execution of any further measures to this regard is your duty.

It is necessary for the relevant District Secretaries to follow the aforementioned procedures when making a request for the construction of places of worship on state land.

Please inform any potential applicants that they cannot attempt to obtain approval from the Ministry directly, without following the procedures mentioned herein.

Permission should not be granted for construction without prior approval. Moreover, you are expected to take necessary steps to discontinue such constructions in the event they are carried out.

I kindly expect your co-operation in implementing the aforementioned rules and regulations. Additionally, I request you to pass any relevant by-laws to emphasize the necessity of obtaining this approval from the Ministry.

H. M. Herath,
Secretary,
Ministry of Religious Affairs and Moral Upliftment.

CC-
Secretary to the President, Presidential Secretariat
Secretary, Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government
Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs
Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development and Sacred Area Development
Chief Secretary, Provincial Council
District Secretary,
Commissioner General of Buddhist Affairs
Director, Department of Hindu Religious and Cultural Affairs
Director, Department of Christian Affairs
Director, Department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs
Commissioner of Local Government, Provincial Council- I request you to take measures to pass necessary by-laws to legalize this requirement



Department of Christian Religious Affairs
Ministry of Tourism Development and Christian Religious Affairs

2017.08.02

Miss Annouchka Wijesinghe,
No. 4, D. J. Wijesiriwardana Road,
Mount Lavinia.

Dear Madam,

Notice of information as per the Right to Information application no. 04/2017

Listed below are the responses to your request for information bearing registration number 04/2017, under the Right to Information Act.

- a. There is no legal requirement or regulation to register Christian places of religious worship with the Department of Christian Religious Affairs.
- b. There is no legal requirement or regulation for Christian clergy to register with the Department of Christian Religious Affairs.

Yours Sincerely,
M. C. N. Pinto,
Information Officer/Assistant Director
Department of Christian Religious Affairs

[MINORMATTERS.ORG](https://minormatters.org)