



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SRI LANKA

22 May 2017

His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena
Presidential of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Presidential Secretariat
Colombo 1.

Your Excellency,

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka is gravely concerned about the acts of violence and aggression targeting the Muslim community, which have aggravated in recent days.

The Commission notes that previously similar conduct led to the violence at Aluthgama in June 2014, resulting in the loss of lives and destruction of property. We also do note that to date no meaningful action has been taken to make those responsible for instigating and perpetrating the Aluthgama violence accountable.

The Commission is alarmed at the hate speech conveyed over social media as well as some mainstream media targeting the Muslim community and Islam, which seek to instigate people to commit violence against the Muslim people, their religious institutions and businesses.

The Commission also wishes to bring to the attention of Your Excellency the spate of attacks on places of Christian religious worship in the recent past, which adds to an alarming trend of religious bigotry and intolerance which has gone unchecked.

There is no doubt that such expressions of hate and violence targeting a specific community amount to crimes under the ICCPR Act, No 56 of 2007 and the Penal Code of Sri Lanka. It is necessary that the perpetrators of such acts are apprehended and dealt with according to law. Laws existing on the statute books without implementation have a corrosive impact on the Rule of Law. As such it is essential that these laws are implemented in the best interests of the country.

Both national law and international human rights obligations of Sri Lanka obligate the government to prevent such acts of violence and to take timely action to stop the spread of hate speech, which foster and promote violent conduct. Failure to do so will be a black mark on the human rights record of the country and will be another serious obstacle to the reconciliation process in our country, on which Your Excellency has placed much emphasis.

In these circumstances the HRCSL requests Your Excellency to give urgent directions to Ministry of Law and Order and the Inspector General of Police to take all necessary action against the instigators and perpetrators of violence and hate speech targeting the Muslim community as well as other religious minorities.

Chairperson
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka