



Canadian Peace Alliance

L'Alliance canadienne pour la paix

H.E. Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa,
President of Sri Lanka,
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Dear Mr. President,

We address this letter to your Government as members of Tamil and Muslim communities as well as concerned members of the broader society in Canada to strongly condemn the attack on the Dambulla Mosque. We are deeply concerned by the threats faced by our Muslim sisters and brothers and the flagrant violation of their fundamental human rights as seen in the recent attack on the Dambulla Mosque.

The attack against the Mosque comes against the backdrop of a series of alarming incidents that have targeted Muslims, Hindus and Christians in the island. For instance, on Friday April 20, 2012 a mob of nearly 2000 people led by radical Buddhist priests occupied and ransacked the Masjidul Khaira Mosque, obstructing those engaged in prayer. The police and the Special Task Force did not prevent the mayhem. The attack was carried out on the pretext that the mosque had been constructed on a site designated as 'sacred Buddhist area'. A day earlier a firebomb had exploded in the same area that fortunately caused no casualties. This attack followed another against a mosque in Anuradhapura, last September, by a mob, again led by Buddhist priests, and by the series of attacks against Christian, Hindu and Islamic religious institutions in other parts of the island- all with complete impunity.

The monks are emboldened by the tacit support given by the Sri Lankan police and this is evidenced in the monks exposing their genitals in the face of the Mosque worshippers, which reveals an underlying religious fanaticism, bigotry and hatred that is raised and nurtured by the politics of Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism. We remind the government that these recent actions are completely contrary to the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha who taught and practiced the principles of non-violence, equity, and universal compassion.

The very same government that speaks about 'national reconciliation' must show by practical example in condemning unequivocally the attack on the Dambulla Mosque. Instead, your Prime Minister colluded with the anti-Muslim mob and ordered relocation of the Mosque.

We stand in solidarity with the protesters against the government's decision by Tamils



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and Muslims in the island and by the Muslim community in Tamil Nadu, India. Other Temples and Mosques in the area are now being threatened with destruction or relocation. Regardless of the government's political mindset, the government in Colombo has an international obligation to uphold the fundamental human right of religious freedom protected by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Acharn Sulak Sivaraksa, a prominent Buddhist and social activist from Thailand, affirms, "A society that does not enable and support all of its members to pursue their personal vision for spiritual growth is hollow and doomed to endless squabbling over material goods and political power."

The attack on the religious rights of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka speaks to the broader problem of the utter disregard for the rule of law, a culture of impunity, and absolute disregard for human rights. Even today the lives of Sinhalese and Tamil journalists critical of the Sri Lankan government are under constant threat, and the Tamil people living in the Northeast continue to endure militarization and colonization. The absence of war in the island does not mean peace. True peace is a proactive, comprehensive process of respect and putting into practice a philosophy of non-harm for all peoples and nations in the island.

As Muslims, Tamil and Canadians we are united in our solidarity with our sisters and brothers in Dambulla. We call on the Sri Lankan government to work in good faith with the Muslim community by respecting their religious freedom and places of worship. We further call on the Sri Lankan government to uphold its international human rights obligations towards the Muslim community and all religious groups in the island.

Ongoing discrimination and human rights abuses like the Dambulla Mosque attack are unacceptable and will merely bring more international opprobrium on the already tarnished name of the government of Sri Lanka.

Best regards,

Aafaq Monthly Publications
Ahlul Bayt Assembly of Canada
Al-Haadi Musalla
Al-Huda Lebanese Muslim Society
Canadian Arab Federation
Canadian Peace Alliance
Canadian Shia Muslims Organization



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Crescent International News Magazine
Flemingdon and Thorncliffe Park Muslim Association
Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought
Islamic Society of York Region
Middle Eastern Student Association
National Council of Canadian Tamils
Tamil Youth Organization-Canada
TARIC Islamic Centre, Toronto
TheMuslim.ca
Toronto Coalition to Stop the War
The Seerah West Organization
Toronto Council of Pakistani Canadians
University of Toronto Mississauga Campus Muslim Students' Association

C.C.

Hon. John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Canada
Hon. Paul Dewar, Foreign Affairs Critic, Official Opposition of Canada
Hon. Dominic LeBlanc, Foreign Affairs Critic, Liberal Party of Canada
H. E. Mr. Mohamed Abdulla Al Ghafli, United Arab Emirates Ambassador
H.E. Ali Al-Sammak, Kuwait Ambassador
Mr. Kambiz Sheikh-Hassani, Islamic Republic of Iran Ambassador
Mr. Maingul Akbarzeb, High Commissioner of Pakistan in Canada