



SRI LANKA

Following the end of the civil war in 2009, attacks on both Christians and Muslims have risen – largely carried out by Sinhalese Buddhist nationalists. However, during the period under review there have also been increasing attacks on churches by Hindu extremist groups in Eastern Province.¹ Ninety attacks on Christians were recorded in 2017,² with 67 between January and September 2018 alone.³ Discrimination against Christians included assaults on churches, denial of burial in public cemeteries,⁴ and refusals to enroll Christian children in school.⁵

Some of the most notorious attacks occurred after the beginning of the Sinhalese New Year. On Palm Sunday 2019 – which coincided with New Year itself – a nationalist mob surrounded the Methodist Church in Anuradhapura and made “murderous threats” to Bishop Asiri Perera and his congregation, pelting the building with stones and firecrackers.⁶ But by far the worst attack occurred a week later when Islamist extremists targeted Christian Churches with bomb attacks on Easter Sunday.

1. "Violence, Discrimination against Christians Escalate in Sri Lanka," *Human Rights Without Frontiers*, October 29, 2018, <https://hrwf.eu/sri-lanka-violence-discrimination-against-christians-escalate-in-sri-lanka/>; "Violence, Discrimination against Christians Escalate in Sri Lanka," *Morning Star News*, October 19, 2018, <https://morningstarnews.org/2018/10/violence-discrimination-against-christians-escalate-in-sri-lanka/> (Sites accessed June 7, 2019).
2. Figures only to December 25, 2017. Final year-end figures might be higher. "Sri Lanka sees more than 90 attacks against Christians in 2017," *Tamil Guardian*, December 25, 2017, <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/sri-lanka-sees-more-90-attacks-against-christians-2017> (accessed March 29, 2019).
3. "Violence, Discrimination against Christians Escalate in Sri Lanka," *Human Rights Without Frontiers*, op. cit.
4. "Sri Lanka," *Open Doors World Watch List 2019*, <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Sri-Lanka-FINAL-WWL-2019-DOSSIER-December-2018.pdf> (accessed June 7, 2019).
5. "Christian child denied school admission," *Sri Lanka Church Attacks*, August 8, 2018, <https://slchurchattacks.crowdmap.com/reports/view/899> (accessed June 7, 2019).
6. "Palm Sunday's church attack ruins nation's aluth avurudu calm," *Sunday Times (Sri Lanka)*, April 21, 2019, <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/190421/columns/palm-sundays-church-attack-ruins-nations-aluth-avurudu-calm-346199.html> (accessed June 7, 2019).
7. "Sri Lankan human rights lawyer threatened," *CSW*, June 27, 2017; "Well-known Lawyer Lakshan Dias Flees Sri Lanka After Justice Minister Wijeyadasa Rajapakse Threatens to Take Action in Two Days," *DBSJeyaraj.com*, June 29, 2017, <http://dbsjeyaraj.com/dbsj/archives/53873>; "Sri Lanka," US State Government 2017 International Religious Freedom Report, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2017-report-on-international-religious-freedom/sri-lanka/> (all sites accessed June 7, 2019).
8. "Mob including government official threatens Christians," *Sri Lanka Church Attacks*, July 8, 2018, <https://slchurchattacks.crowdmap.com/reports/view/887> (accessed June 7, 2019).
9. "Attacks carried out by suicide bombers, Govt. Analyst confirms," *Ada Derana*, April 22, 2019, <http://www.adaderana.lk/news/54531/attacks-carried-out-by-suicide-bombers-govt-analyst-confirms>; "Death toll from Easter Sunday attacks climbs to 321," *Ada Derana*, April 23, 2019, <http://www.adaderana.lk/news/54578/death-toll-from-easter-sunday-attacks-climbs-to-321>; Citra Abbott and John Newton, "Priest says 'We are far away from peace,'" *Aid to the Church in Need (UK)*, April 30, 2019, <https://acnuk.org/news/sri-lanka-priest-says-we-are-far-away-from-peace/>; Ash Gallagher, "The Sri Lanka attacks show how Isis is moving east to recruit members," *Independent*, April 28, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/sri-lanka-isis-recruits-east-a8889791.html> (all sites accessed June 7, 2019).

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Government minister Wijeyadasa Rajapakse threatened to debar human-rights lawyer Lakshan Dias unless he retracted the claim that 195 anti-Christian incidents occurred from 2015 to June 2017. Mr. Dias made the statement on a TV talk show on June 14th. Mr. Rajapakse said: "He is a traitor... He is eagerly waiting to grab an opportunity to create unrest in the country." Dias received a police summons in response to a complaint.⁷

JULY 2018

50-60 villagers carrying sticks and rods surrounded Harvest Mission Church in Kiran, Batticaloa District during their Sunday service. Among the attackers were members of local government agency Korakallimadu Grama Niladhari. The mob said that they would attack the congregation if they did not halt their religious activities within 15 minutes. The attackers left after the pastor stopped the service.⁸

APRIL 2019

More than 300 people, including at least 45 children, were killed and more than 500 people injured in bomb attacks on three churches and hotels across Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday. Explosions hit St Anthony's Church, Kotahena; Katuwapitiya Church, Katana; and Zion Church, Batticaloa. Islamist group Daesh (ISIS) affiliates claimed responsibility for the attacks.⁹