

Toronto Statement on the Crisis in Sri Lanka Issued by the Religious Liberty Partnership April 2009

As members of the Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP) meeting in Toronto, Canada, we stand with our Christian brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka who seek the restoration of peace and reconciliation within their nation and who uphold fundamental human dignity, justice and rights, including religious freedom. We specifically call on all Christian denominations and organizations worldwide to take this appeal for prayer to their members in recognition that we are One Body united in Christ.

The RLP acknowledges:

- That the humanitarian crisis resulting from long-term ethnic conflict, heightened by senseless acts of violence, directed against civilian populations and the religious persecution now existing in Sri Lanka have curtailed the full functioning of civil society throughout the country.
- That although extreme elements within religious sectors have called for anti-conversion laws, the Sri Lankan government has taken care to protect the constitutional right to freedom of religious choice by not enacting proposed laws subjecting religious conversion to criminal scrutiny.
- That there are efforts being made by the Sri Lankan government to restore law and order to populations that have been threatened for years. We hope and pray for the protection of the innocent civilian populations recognizing this as a crucial goal to achieve. Our Sri Lankan brothers and sisters support efforts to resolve the complex divisions within society.
- That despite intimidations and irregularities, there is a functioning Parliamentary democracy in Sri Lanka with regular elections being held.
- That the Christian Church in Sri Lanka, representing all ethnic communities, is making every effort to care for and meet the humanitarian needs of all religious and ethnic groups.

We call on the worldwide church:

- To pray that no law will be enacted which would inhibit the free exercise of religious conscience and choice. Religious freedom is never advanced by coercion or compulsion, but by civil society development and the economic prosperity that results from the protection of this fundamental freedom.
- To agree with the church in Sri Lanka that the existing law is sufficient to address any suspicions of forced or of induced conversions.
- To support the Sri Lankan church as it fulfills its mandate to affirm human dignity and to care for and assist the marginalized and hurting people.

- To urge and support our governments to encourage the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to return to the negotiating table and resolve differences through a negotiated settlement.
- To pray that the LTTE and the government of Sri Lanka will cease hostilities, respect international humanitarian norms, safeguard passage for the evacuation of civilians, and take every effort to minimize civilian casualties by making safety zones and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps truly safe and widely known.
- To support humanitarian efforts to ensure that there is food and medical care available to the civilian populations, as well as to support the full provision of comprehensive services wherever civilians are located.
- To pray that internationally accepted standards of protection and care are carried out within IDP camps, including the freedom of movement to civilians and access of outside aid agencies to the civilians in the camps and among other displaced communities.
- To pray for and support the freedom of worship and access to priests and religious leaders, including allowing them to visit IDP camps, since there are no compelling security or other bases for constraining these fundamental rights.
- To pray for the many churches located within the conflict zones. These peace loving citizens from all ethnic backgrounds are uniquely placed to assist in restoring peace and rebuilding and reconciling the community.

The Religious Liberty Partnership commits:

- To support work towards the religious rights of all Sri Lankans, including the rights to freely change one's beliefs and freely propagate those beliefs without governmental interference or permission.
- To support international, regional, and local efforts to end hostilities, resolve the conflict and seek an enduring peace in Sri Lanka.
- To encourage other likeminded organizations to also promote and support this statement. We stand in solidarity with the church in Sri Lanka which endeavors to extend prayer, humanitarian assistance, and as loyal citizens of the country, urging their government to abide by international standards for humanitarian assistance and religious freedom for all.
- To call on the worldwide church to partner with the Sri Lankan church in extending its aid in the reconstruction and rebuilding of communities, as well in extending assistance to victims of religiously motivated violence and injustice.
- To call on the international community to renew its efforts to strengthen the governmental ability to affirm human dignity values.
- To call for all our constituencies and the church worldwide to pray for the Sri Lankan church as it seeks to respond in a Christ-like fashion to any religious liberty violations, and to pray until this crisis has been resolved and the freedom of all citizens are fully restored under the rule of law.

Members of the Religious Liberty Partnership (websites are listed for prayer resources and additional information):

- Advocates International, USA: www.advocatesinternational.org
- All India Christian Council, INDIA: www.indianchristians.in/news
- China Aid, USA: www.chinaaid.org
- Christian Solidarity Worldwide, UNITED KINGDOM: www.csw.org.uk
- Danish European Mission, DENMARK: www.daneu.dk
- Friends of the Martyred Church, FINLAND: www.martyredchurch.net
- HMK, SWITZERLAND: www.hmk-aem.ch
- Hilfsaktion Märtyrer Kirche, GERMANY: www.h-m-k.org
- International Christian Concern, USA: www.persecution.org
- International Institute for Religious Freedom, GERMANY, SOUTH AFRICA, SRI LANKA: www.iirf.eu
- Jubilee Campaign, USA: www.jubileecampaign.org
- Norwegian Mission to the East, NORWAY: www.nmio.no
- Middle East Concern, MIDDLE EAST: www.meconcern.org
- Open Doors International, THE NETHERLANDS: www.opendoorsuk.org
- Release International, UNITED KINGDOM: www.releaseinternational.org
- The Voice of the Martyrs, CANADA: www.persecution.net
- World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission, GLOBAL: www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc

The Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP) is a collaborative effort of Christian organizations from around the world focused on religious liberty. The RLP seeks to more intentionally work together in addressing advocacy and in raising the awareness of religious persecution globally. Members of the RLP are primarily involved (that is the majority of their time, personnel, and resources) with ministry to persecuted Christians and/or on religious liberty issues in whatever context and strategy.

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