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## சர்வ மதப் பேரவை

### Congress of Religions

President - Most Ven. Dr. Ittapana Dhammalankara Maha Nayake Thero  
Secretary General - Rev. W. P. Ebenezer Joseph

3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2019

#### CONGRESS OF RELIGIONS STATEMENT

The Congress of Religions is dismayed at the attitude and behaviour of the country's present political leadership as well as our current legislators, in the way they have handled the affairs of the country, following the tragic incidents that took place on Easter Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

Their apathy and disregard for the welfare and security of the people is alarming, resulting in confusion, anxiety and fear among the people of the island.

This was demonstrated by the way the Members of Parliament behaved during the very first sitting of Parliament following this tragic event. It is evident that they are unable to address and transform the present chaotic situation but only use it for their own political ends, with no concern for the security and safety of the people.

It is very clear that the failure of the security apparatus to act despite the availability of intelligence relating to impending attack was due to the existence of two power centres in the current governance structure. Faced with the tragic loss of life and countless injuries to innocent people due to such failure we are compelled to question the wisdom of continuing with the Executive presidency in the country's governance structure.

Therefore, in order to bring stability to the country and regain the confidence of our people, we strongly urge the Government to respond to the following immediately:

- 1] To make public immediately the full report of the Special Commission appointed by His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena to inquire into the incidents that took place on Easter Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2019.
- 2] To immediately investigate the violent incidents that took place on May 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> in the North Western Province and the Gampaha District and reveal to the public the persons and the groups responsible for instigating such attacks, as well as the action taken to prosecute them.
- 3] Allegations have been made that certain persons such as Politicians and officials had subversive links with some of those responsible for the April 21<sup>st</sup> incidents. We urge the authorities to thoroughly Investigate these allegations and reveal the truth to the public.
- 4] His Excellency the President, Hon. Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and all party leaders represented in the parliament should have face to face meetings and work together for the welfare of the country taking into account the hardship faced by our people



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and the socio-political and economic challenges we are faced with, and reveal to the people the proposed collective action they intend to embark on.

5] All Members of Parliament should immediately make public their current assets in accordance with the declaration of assets law together with the assets they held at the time they were first elected.

7] We appreciate the security operations that are now in place and request that these operations be conducted with courtesy and respect for all and without casting suspicions on one religious or ethnic community only. The setting up of check points in some parts of the country needs to be done with sensitivity

We also call upon the government and all those concerned to create a national policy on education and ensure that immediate steps are taken to –

- a. Introduce the teaching of the basic tenets of all religions to all Children in order to create better understanding and strengthen harmonious relationships among all religious communities.
- b. To ensure that all children are taught Sinhala, Tamil and English, competently throughout their educational careers in schools.
- c. To introduce the teaching of Sri Lankan history and cultures to all students of schools, drawing on our diverse traditions as well as the positive and inclusive values of these traditions.

Given the serious lapses of our political leadership and in our structures and mindful of the coming elections, we are of the opinion that there must be an immediate change in our political culture. We therefore encourage competent and non-violent persons of integrity to come forward to serve the people. We also urge the people not to vote for those with a record of incompetence, corruption and violence.

We call upon all Clergy and those in religious leadership to strengthen and edify our adherents to foster communities of justice, reconciliation and compassion using all our spiritual resources to which we commit ourselves as well.

As religious Leaders, we will continue to strive for justice and peace to reign in our dear Island and work towards reconciliation between all communities, so that all communities in our country will rise above an exclusive mind-set and foster a common Sri Lankan identity in which all will live in dignity and without fear or hatred.



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*Signed by;*

Most Ven Dr. Ittapana Dhammalankara Mahanayake Thero

**(Chairperson – Congress of Religions)**

His Eminence Malcom Cardinal Ranjith – Arch Bishop of Colombo

Ven Banagala Upatissa Nayake Thero – President Mahabodhi Society

Ven Professor Kollupitiye Mahinda Sangharakkhitha Nayake Thero

Ven Thiniyawala Palitha Nayaka Thero

Rt Rev Dr Cletus Chandrasiri Perera O.S.B. – Bishop of Rathnapura

Rt Rev Dhilloraj Canagasabey – Bishop of Colombo, Church of Ceylon

Rt Rev Duleep de Chickera – Bishop Emeritus of Colombo, Church of Ceylon

Rev W P Ebenezer Joseph – (Secretary General – Congress of Religions)

Rev Maxwell Doss – General Secretary, National Christian Council of Sri Lanka

Fr. Noel Fernando - Church of Ceylon

Siva Sri Vytheeswara Kurukkal – President, Hindu Priest's Association

Ash-Shaikh Muhajireen M Zafeer – Member, Jammiyathul Ulama

Mr A Javid Yusuf

Mr Shirley Tissera

Mr Andrew Samarathunga