

THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

IMADR Oral Statement: 25th session of the Human Rights Council

Item 5: Recommendations of the Forum on Minority Issues

19 March 2014

Thank you Mr. President,

Please permit me to share with you the good news of the release of the two Sri Lankan human rights defenders Ruki Fernando and Fr Praveen by the authorities. We wish to express our appreciation to all those member States, civil society activists and NGOs all over the world who joined us in our call to release them. We are humbled by your solidarity and assure to uphold the confidence and trust placed on us.

The arrest and detention of the Sri Lankan human rights defenders illustrate the difficult conditions under which we work to promote the rights of minorities. The two human rights defenders come from two different ethnic backgrounds, Sinhala and Tamil. The community they work on, whose rights are violated belongs to another religious minority. Our work as human rights defenders therefore also challenges us to recognise and affirm the cultural, religious and ethnic plurality.

Unfortunately not only in Sri Lanka, but also all over the world we see the upsurge of attack on minorities. As an international movement relating to the Romas, the dalits, the Muslims, we welcome the recommendations made in the Report presented to the Council by the Forum on Minority Issues. In particular we wish to endorse the following general recommendation proposed by the Forum.

- a) The translation of the provisions of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities by States into domestic legislation.
- b) The compliance and implementation of article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Declaration by all members States.
- c) Strengthening institutional capacity as appropriate and measures to improve the mainstreaming of minority issues in national-level bodies, including government ministries or departments working on central concerns for minorities, national human rights institutions, consultative bodies and mechanisms, and other relevant national entities.

We wish to draw the attention of the Council to the attacks against the Hindu community in Bangladesh in the recent past, the continuing discrimination against the Christians in Pakistan, the increased militarisation in the North of India and North of Sri Lanka where minority population live. We are alarmed at the increasing violence and hate speech against the Muslim and Christian groups.

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The State has failed to properly investigate and take action against the perpetrators. On the other hand, the Defence Secretary has several occasions seen gracing events of the Bodu Bala Sena the religious extremist group who lead these attacks against minority religious groups.

We endorse the recommendations of the Forum and hope an effective action plan will be put in place by all stake holders to give meaning to these deliberations.

Thank you Mr. President.