

THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

Oral Statement: 7th session of the Forum on Minority Issues

Agenda 6: Avoiding renewed violence - building the peace and managing diversity

Speaker: Taisuke Komatsu

26 November 2014

Thank you Mr. Chair,

We would like to endorse the draft recommendations for post-violence situations, especially the paragraph 68 (fact-finding and investigations), 69 (truth, justice and reconciliation programmes), 70 (transitional justice mechanisms), 74 (role of media) and 78 (UN commissions of inquiry).

In this regard, we would like to draw the attention of the Forum to the situation of religious and ethnic minorities in Sri Lanka. Although the Government of Sri Lanka has established the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliations Commission (LLRC) after the conclusion of the conflict between the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), the National Plan of Action to implement the LLRC recommendations did not include the Commission's core findings such as the necessity to re-establish independence of judiciary, law-enforcement, other public institutions and to facilitate independent investigations. The Commission's allegations of serious human rights violations remain unaddressed, which has led to the prevailing impunity in the country.

This climate of impunity has contributed to the recurrence of violence and crimes against minorities. Since its formation in 2012, the extreme Buddhist group, *Bodu Bala Sena (BBS)*, has been targeting religious minorities, especially Muslims. In June this year, the Muslim community in Aluthgama, southwest of Sri Lanka, was violently attacked by the BBS. It resulted in the death of 4 persons, serious injury of nearly 80 people and destruction of dozens of homes and business establishments. Not only the police failed to stop the violence promptly, but also the BBS has not been held accountable for its hate campaign including the incident.

Furthermore, minority Tamil victims and their families, especially those seeking justice and accountability, are exposed to threats. On 4th August this year in Colombo, a group led by Buddhist monks disrupted the meeting of families of the disappeared from the North, most of them were Tamil women. The group verbally abused the families and threatened their safety. Despite receiving complaints, the police failed to take immediate and effective actions against the group. Such reluctance of police to protect minorities has increased their vulnerability.

The failure of the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure accountability and inclusive reconciliation processes has led to the re-emergence of violence against the minority populations. The Government should re-consider its existing measures to comply with the draft recommendation of this Forum. Lastly, we encourage the members of the Forum to fully endorse the draft recommendations. Lessons we learnt have proven the importance of those recommendations. States have the legal obligation to prevent renewed violence and atrocity crimes against minorities, and the draft recommendations can serve as effective tools to implement minority rights in post-conflict situations.

Thank you Mr Chair.