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THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

June 27, 2014

H.E. Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa
President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Presidential Secretariat
Colombo 01, Sri Lanka

Request to the Sri Lankan Government: Take Urgent Action to Stop Attacks on Muslims

The International Movement Against all Forms of Discrimination and Racism-Japan Committee (IMADR-JC) expresses our grave concern to the latest horrific violence led by the extreme right-wing Sinhala Buddhist organisation, the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS, Buddhist Power Force) against the Muslim communities in the towns of Aluthgama, Beruwala, Velipenna and Dharga in Southwest Sri Lanka.

According to the British Broadcasting Corporation, at least 4 people have died including one Tamil in the violence led by the BBS. 80 people have suffered serious injuries including shooting and knife wounds. The extremists have torched and stoned mosques. They have also attacked and destroyed many Muslim-owned houses and businesses.

It is regrettable that the President of Sri Lanka and his Government took no immediate, effective measure to stop the violence or to provide clear orders to the security forces to maintain law and order as well as to protect civilians. On the contrary, the BBS has been allowed to lead its campaign of violence against Muslims over the past three years. The campaign includes attacks against individuals, places of worship and businesses. To date, most perpetrators are not arrested; they continue the campaign of hatred and violence.

Few days after the incident, Wataraka Vijitha Thero, a moderate Buddhist monk who has criticised the BBS, was reportedly found undressed and with numerous cuts on his body in the district of Panadura, near Colombo. We condemn the incident and demand the immediate arrest and prosecution of those responsible for the crime. We also are concerned that such targeted attack would fuel religious intolerance, and discourage people who are supportive to Muslim communities.

According to reliable sources, independent journalists, community leaders, and politicians have been refused entry into the area to report on events or to seek ways to address them. Vans carrying relief supplies have been set alight. The Government must allow those independent journalists and community leaders to access the area without a security threat when reporting on events.

Furthermore, the Government must act now to bring to an end this three-year campaign of hate speech and violence by the Bodu Bala Sena. IMADR-JC calls upon the President of Sri Lanka to immediately take actions to stop hate speech and religious intolerance as well as to prevent any reoccurrence of such incident. We regret the failure to avoid such violent attacks against the Muslim community in spite of the early warning given by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Kinhide Mushakoji
President

Yuriko Hara
Secretary-General