

Statement on Easter Sunday Attacks in Sri Lanka

27th April 2019

The AFRIEL Youth Network is shocked and dismayed at the senseless violence unleashed by a group of misguided extremist individuals in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday which took the lives of over 350 innocent people and caused injuries to hundreds more.

At this time of grieving, our thoughts and prayers are with the families and loved ones of victims as well as the Christian communities living across the country. Our thoughts are also with the Muslim community who have for years lived peacefully side by side with other communities of Sri Lanka, and who are now fearing a backlash due to the acts of this small group of extremists. It is in moments like these that our strength and resolve is tested. Therefore, it is crucial that we stand in solidarity with our fellow brethren in these times of confusion and uncertainty.

We strongly condemn the indiscriminate bombing of churches and hotels. We urge the authorities to urgently and expeditiously investigate these attacks and hold the perpetrators accountable in a proper judicial process. At the same time, we urge the government to ensure that the unconnected persons are not unjustly arrested or prosecuted.

We further urge our politicians not to use this incident for cheap political mileage and instead rise above their political differences to rebuild Sri Lanka. This is not the time to evade responsibility or play the blame game. Urgent introspection and reflection are needed and an acknowledgement of our lapses is essential in moving forward.

We would like to remind our fellow Sri Lankans that terrorism and extremism have no religion and that we must get together and unify as one to defeat these extremist groups. This is not a time for anger or vengeance; justice and accountability must be left in the hands of the authorities alone. We must understand that the extremists alone are responsible for their actions, and not their communities or religions. We must exercise caution in our conduct both online and offline in ensuring that our acts do not spread fear, and are not racist, hurtful or divisive. We must act wisely to prevent the spread of misinformation.

As Civil Society we have a crucial role to play to ensure that Sri Lanka stays strong in these trying times. We must put more effort in to trust building between communities, promoting pluralistic and inclusive values, and in finding solutions through democratic means. Ultimately, we all have a shared responsibility in creating a society where such atrocities cannot recur.