

freedom

human rights for minorities in Sri Lanka

(RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION OF THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP OF SRI LANKA)

P.O.Box 122, Nugegoda

Mob.077-417434 email:margaya@sltnet.lk

12.04.2004

Church attacks commence again!

Women and children attacked on Easter Sunday service...

On Easter Sunday, a day of true significance to all Christians, a church where Easter Service was being held, was attacked by a Buddhist monk led group. The church, located at Wadduwa, approximately 30km from Colombo; had been conducting services there for over 06 years, according to Pastor Sunil of Christian Fellowship Church who confirmed that the attack was led by a group of over thirty, led by the Buddhist monk.

The church, which was forced to close last year under duress from the same monk, had Good Friday services - The Pastor received a call in the afternoon threatening him with attacks. On Easter Sunday, as service was being held, the attackers led by Ven. Rahula of Bodhidhumaramaya, Talpitiya Wadduwa started throwing stones, threatening the people worshipping inside. When the Pastor & his believers came out, the crowd assaulted them, unashamedly beating up innocent women and children including the Pastor. The police has been informed and an entry lodged by the Pastor, but independent sources say that police may be unable to enforce law and order against a Buddhist monk under the current political situation. The Pastor has been threatened with death, according to human rights activists probing the case, if he were to pursue with legal action against the Buddhist monk

The attacks against churches, which died down in the run up to the election, seems to have started again. Human rights activists groups believe that this may be a result of the monks, entering parliament, as their main emphasis has been to bring in legislation to curtail Christian activities.

The church in question has been in peaceful co-existence with the village for over six years says Pastor Sunil who says that the attack has resulted in his congregation not being able to worship there anymore since the Buddhist monk has threatened the Pastor to discontinue services. This has resulted in the congregation of this church being denied their fundamental right of worship & following their religion; a right assured and guaranteed in the Sri Lankan Constitution.

Rohan Ekanayake
Secretary-freedom

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April 13, 2004

Mr. Lalith Abeysinghe
Officer-in-Charge
Police Station
WADDUWA.

Dear Sir,

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, WADDUWA -ATTACK

Thank you for giving us your valuable time and patient hearing on the 11th instant pertaining to the attack on Pastor, women and children of the abovementioned church.

We wish to reiterate that at our meeting with the S.S.P. and A.S.P. on 8th instant we were informed that they would instruct you about commencing of services on Good Friday. They requested copies of the original documents that we showed the S.S.P. be handed over to you. As we did not have copies at the time and as I needed to get back to Colombo for an urgent appointment the documents were not handed over the same day. We understand that you have been informed about our meeting and our intentions of commencing services on the 9th.

Please note our action on that day was circumstantial and in no way intended to offend you.

On the 9th the Pastor concerned had received a call threatening him not to go ahead with the meeting.

However we are forwarding copies of the following as requested by you.

1. A copy of the Deed indicating the ownership of the property in the name of the church.
2. Building Plan No..... duly approved by the Panadura Pradeshiya Sabha

In view of the current situation we would appreciate if you would treat these documents as confidential and return same after perusal.

Yours faithfully,

Rev. Rohan de S. Ekanayake
Secretary – Freedom
Religious Liberty Commission
National Christian Fellowship of Sri Lanka.

12.04.2004

Daily Mirror,

ATTN. Dulani.
Fax No. 25330811

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For further information on the above contact

Rev Rohan Ekanayake

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April 13, 2004

S.S.P. Dayananda
PANADURA.

Dear Sir,

ATTACK ON CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, WADDUWA

This refers to the discussion we had with you on 8th April 2004 at your office pertaining to the threats received by the Pastor and the congregation of the abovementioned church.

For purpose of clarity I wish to detail the background to the current situation.

1. Pastor Sunil Hewage the Pastor in charge has been ministering in the area for the last 18 years and he has been conducting services at the current location for the last 6 years.
2. The property belongs to the church – Deed No 22871.
3. The church has been registration under the Companies Act and therefore permitted to hold property.
4. The building has been approved by the Panadura Pradeshiya Council by their approval DB128/96
5. On 28th December 2003 a mob led by Buddhist monks had invaded the premises. They had threatened and demanded that the meetings be stopped.
6. On 4th January 2004 the monks along with a mob had stormed the premises while the services was going on. With the intervention of the Police the Pastor was forced to sign a document under duress, that the meetings would be stopped.
7. This church has approximately 200 adherents who gather for worship on Sundays.

You may recall; to the many questions raised by you and the A.S.P. who was in attendance, we pointed out that we have not violated any law and we were only exercising our rights as guaranteed in the Constitution under Article 14. We also pointed out that the question about the church being planted in a Buddhist village or any person practicing his religion in private in his home too is no violation of any law. The position taken by some that no Christian place of worship should be tolerated in Buddhist villages' amounts to religious cleansing. It is an irony that these same people condemn the ethnic cleansing being carried out in some parts of our country.

As you may be aware on 11th April 2004 (Easter Sunday) when the congregation had gathered Ven. Rahula of Bodhidhumaramaya, Talpitiya. Wadduwa along with a mob disrupted the service, attacked the building and assaulted the Pastor, women and children.

We regret that even after bringing this matter to your notice that no proper action has been taken to prevent such a situation. It is sad that arguments are being leveled and attempts are made to raise issues to prove that the existence of this church are illegal even though there is no trace of evidence to say so, while no action is

taken against those who take the law into their hands and engage in violent attacks against people who are innocently practicing their religion.

In our conversation you inquired about the case at Keselwatte where an injunction had been obtained by the O.I.C. Keselwatte and the church has now made a fundamental rights application to the Supreme Court. We are disturbed at the comments made by you saying "Wait and see there is a coup being planned against the church." We call upon you to take immediate action on the apparent information that you possess about the situation at Keselwatte.

We trust that these matters would receive your attention and law and order would be maintained without fear or favour.

Yours faithfully,

Rev. Rohan de S. Ekanayake
Secretary – Freedom
Religious Liberty Commission
National Christian Fellowship of Sri Lanka.

c.c: D.I.G. Kohombavitarne
I.G.P.
Hon. Chandrika Kumaranatunga – Minister for Defence
Minister for Christian Affairs
The Police Commission
Mr. Elmo Perera, Attorney-at-Law