

INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION OF CHRISTIANS

2014

Compiled by

The National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL)

(Established 1952)



National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka

Incident Reports –2014

**Compiled by the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka
(NCEASL)**

NOTE:

- All incidents contained in this report are based on information received by NCEASL from member Churches and affiliates.

- As far as possible, all information has been verified through interviews with victims, Church leaders, eye witnesses and Police and through site visits by NCEASL staff.

- NCEASL has monitored and documented incidents since 1987.

- It is generally accepted that approximately 40% of incidents are never reported.

- Incident Reports from year 2013 can also be obtained from our website (www.nceasl.org)

- Crisis map on the incidents reported in 2014 can be accessed via ; <https://slchurchattacks.crowdmap.com/>

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Incident Reports –2014

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The National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL)

Mob attacks pastor's premises

Rathgama Christian Church

Rathgama (Galle District)

05th January 2014

At approximately 5 p.m. the Buddhist monk conducting a meeting held at the village school to observe Buddhist rituals, began to speak (from a loud speaker) against the pastor's religious worship activities. The Buddhist monk stated that the pastor's church was an unauthorized place of worship and falsely accused the pastor of unethically converting those in the village. As the pastor's premises is only a few meters away from the village school, he was able to hear all the false allegations spoken against him and his church.

Later on, at approximately 8.50 p.m. the pastor heard vehicles constantly driving past his premises. At around 9.10 p.m. someone knocked on the front door of his house. As the pastor was suspicious he questioned who it was, but the intruders refused to identify themselves. They continued to knock on the door and after a while they said a sick person needs healing and asked the pastor to open the door. As the pastor became more suspicious concerning the circumstances, he loudly proclaimed that he will call the area police station. Immediately the group of unidentified assailants began to attack the glass windows with poles. The pastor immediately alerted the area police station; the police officers arrived at the location and recorded a statement given by the pastor.

All the glass windows were broken and the pastor suffered damages to the value of Sri Lankan Rupees 50,000.

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State officials claim the church as an unauthorised place of worship and demand its closure

**Assemblies of God Church
Hikkaduwa (Galle District)**

05th January 2014

At approximately 9.30 a.m. whilst the Sunday prayer meeting was in progress, 5 police officers and an officer from the Divisional Secretary's Department arrived at the pastor's premises and demanded that prayer meetings held at the premises be stopped. The officers further requested the pastor to come with them to the area police station for an inquiry. However, the pastor refused to stop the prayer meeting and responded that he will attend the inquiry once the prayer meeting was over.

Prior to this incident, on 27th December 2013 the area Grama Sevaka visited the pastor's premises and handed over a letter from the Divisional Secretary claiming the religious worship activities conducted by the pastor as unauthorised. The letter explained that prior approval needs to be obtained from the Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs Ministry in order to continue with the religious worship activities.

07th January 2014

Buddhist monk attempts to assault pastor and police officer requests the pastor to register the church.

The pastor was informed to attend an inquiry held at the area police station at 5 p.m. While the Officer in Charge (OIC) was conducting the inquiry, 2 other Buddhist monks present began to shout at the pastor demanding that the prayer meetings should stop with immediate effect and attempted to assault the pastor as well. The OIC intervened and stressed that the pastor needs to register his church with the Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs Ministry. The pastor then questioned the OIC on the legal basis for such a requirement as well as claimed his fundamental rights. However, the OIC insisted that the pastor registers his church. The pastor informed the OIC that he will continue with the prayer meetings since he is not under any legal requirement to stop them.

Stones hurled at pastor's premises

**Assemblies of God Church
Nalle (Gampaha District)**

08th January 2014

At approximately 8.45 p.m., 11.40 p.m. and 5 a.m. stones were hurled into the pastor's premises by a group of unidentified persons. On previous occasions in the past, the pastor had been questioned on the legality of the church by the police and Buddhist monks.

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At a recent incident the pastor had stated to the Buddhist monks and the villagers that the church will not discontinue its religious worship activities. Since then almost every day stones have been hurled at the premises.

The pastor lodged a complaint with the area police station (police complaint number CIB 2280/484). Stones were hurled even whilst 2 police officers have been providing protection for the premises.

The perpetrators have not been identified and the pastor faces continuous attack.

Church attacked by violent mob during Sunday worship service
The Assemblies of God
Hikkaduwa (Galle District)

12th of January 2014

Whilst the church was engaged in Sunday worship service, at approximately 10 a.m., a mob of about 300 persons led by Buddhist monks stormed the church premises. The mob began to hurl stones at the church building, whilst some worshippers were trapped inside the building. Serious damage was caused to the church building by the mob.

The previous night, the pastor of the church received information of the impending attack. The pastor went ahead with the worship service based on the guarantee that police protection will be provided for the service.

The mob led by Buddhist monks from a group calling themselves Hela Bodu Pawura and monks from Hikkaduwa and nearby temples, continued to protest outside the church, demanding that the church needs to close down. The protesters obstructed the Galle – Colombo main road, creating a tense situation in Hikkaduwa. The situation prevailed past noon, with the Police unable to disperse the mob. A senior police officer who arrived at the scene gave an undertaking to the monks that the church will be closed for 2 weeks (until 10th February), during which time a solution will be sought. The mobs then dispersed.

Church attacked by violent mob, demanding to close down the church
The Calvary Church
Hikkaduwa (Galle District)

12th of January 2014

At approximately 10 a.m. whilst the Sunday morning worship service was in progress, a mob of about 300 persons led by Buddhist monks stormed the church premises causing

serious damage to the church building. Stones were thrown at the premises while some worshippers were trapped inside.

The previous night, the pastor of the church received information of the impending attack. The pastor went ahead with the worship service based on the guarantee that police protection will be provided for the service.

The protesting monks included Buddhist clergy from a group calling themselves 'Hela Bodu Pawura' as well as monks from Hikkaduwa and nearby temples. They claimed the Christian presence was illegal. The protesters obstructed the Galle – Colombo main road, creating a tense situation in Hikkaduwa. The situation prevailed past noon, with the Police unable to disperse the mob. A senior police officer who arrived at the scene gave an undertaking to the monks that the churches will be closed for 2 weeks (until 10th February), during which time a solution will be sought. The mobs then dispersed.

Premises set on fire during the night
Church of the Foursquare Gospel
Pitipana, Homagama (Colombo District)

12th January 2014

The house where Christians gather together for prayer was set on fire by unidentified persons during the early hours of the morning, at approximately 2.30 a.m. The fire was doused before serious damage was caused. A threatening note was found hanging on the gate of the premises warning the Christians of dire consequences.

Police officers question the pastor
Church of Grace
Warakapola (Kegalle District)

12th January 2014

At approximately 2p.m., two police officers visited the pastor's premises and questioned him why he had not stopped the worship services held in his premises since he was warned to discontinue the services. The pastor responded by stating his right to religious worship and his fundamental rights to continue with the religious worship activities. The police officers informed the pastor that a petition had been submitted to the area police station claiming the religious worship activities taking place in the pastor's premises as unauthorized. The pastor was requested to attend a police inquiry on 13th January 2014.

13th January 2014

The police inquiry commenced at 1p.m. and the police officers insisted that the religious worship activities held at the premises should be stopped. However, upon the pastor's

refusal to accept the request, the Officer in Charge (OIC) requested the pastor not to hold services only on 19th January 2014, due to information received by the Police of a threat of attack against the pastor and his congregation. The OIC informed the pastor that a case will be filed in the Magistrates Court against the pastor based on breach of peace in the community.

The case was called in the Magistrate Court on 22nd January 2014; the magistrate gave order for written submissions to be filed on 12th March 2014 defending the cause that the religious worship activities do not hinder the peace in the village community.

Premises set on fire during the night
Church of the Foursquare Gospel
Pitipana, Homagama (Colombo District)

12th January 2014

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Buddhist monks threaten to attack church
Suveya Doratuwa Church
Bibile (Monaragala District)

16th January 2014

The Officer in Charge (OIC) of the area police station visited the pastor's premises and questioned him on the legal validity of the church and if the church was registered. The pastor responded with his right to religious worship as a fundamental right. The Sri Lanka legislation does not require religious worship places to be registered.

17th January 2014

A meeting was convened by the Bodu Bala Sena in the village. The pastor received information from a verified source that the Buddhist monks declared to the villagers and all others present at the meeting that they will ensure the church is closed within one month.

The same night a group of unidentified persons uprooted the church name board from the church premises.

20th January 2014

At approximately 4p.m. a Buddhist monk together with a villager visited the pastor's neighborhood and questioned the neighbors on the services held in the church. The

Buddhist monk said that he intends to visit the church with a group of villagers to monitor the Sunday services. This was said a loud for the pastor to hear.

Pastors questioned by Criminal Investigation Officers

**Pastors Fellowship Vavuniya
Vavuniya (Vavuniya District)**

21st January 2014

Officers from the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) telephoned and visited two pastors and requested them to hand over details of their church and the church members in their fellowship.

Pastors and congregation members taken into unlawful custody by police officers

**Calvary Free Church
Rathgama (Galle District)**

26th January 2014

The pastor and some congregation members were praying together at the premises of a Christian member. Whilst the prayer meeting was in progress, at approximately 10.40 a.m., 8 police officers together with a Buddhist monk forcibly entered the premises. The Buddhist monk began to shout accusations “you’re committing an offence by gathering together in an unauthorised place of worship; it is illegal, you should be arrested for committing this offence”. Then the police officers requested all the Christians who had gathered to pray, to come to the police station.

The police officers whilst escorting some of the ladies to the police station began to call Christians as fundamentalists and that all the religious worship activities in the village needed to stop. The villagers were made to believe that a serious crime was committed by the Christians as they were escorted in the police vehicle whilst all the villagers were watching.

The pastor together with the other Christians were released after a statement and a complaint was made by the pastor and his spouse (police complaint holding number CIB 312/301, CIB 313/303). Upon the arrival of a lawyer and being questioned on the legal validity of the police officers’ actions, they responded that the necessary steps were taken to protect the Christians from further harm.

29th January 2014

Pastor called for inquiry

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The inquiry commenced at approximately 9 a.m. in the area police station. 1 Buddhist monk was present at the inquiry, who continued to accuse the pastor of committing unethical conversions. A case was filed by the police officers for breach of peace in the Galle Magistrate Court. The case will be heard on 31st January 2014.

Pastor assaulted and falsely accused of constructing a church

Jesus Touch and Healing Ministry Batticaloa (Batticaloa District)

2nd February 2014

At approximately 3 p.m., a mob of around 80 villagers led by the committee members of the Hindu temple in the village forcibly entered the pastor's property. They questioned the pastor on the new construction being built on his property. The pastor responded that he intended to build a shop in order to support himself and his family. The mob refused to believe the pastor and continued to shout stating that it was a church that he was constructing in the village.

Police officers arrived and dispersed the crowd.

11th February 2014

A mob of around 100 villagers forcibly entered the pastor's property at approximately 3.30 p.m., and began to demolish the shed which the pastor built for his livelihood. The shed was completely demolished and the fence around the property was also stripped down. Some of the members in the mob also physically assaulted the pastor with poles. The pastor's mother-in-law who attempted to stop the mob also suffered a cut in her palm by a knife. The pastor was hospitalized for a day following the attack.

The pastor had spent 500,000 Sri Lanka Rupees to build the shed and the fence. Presently, two cases have also been filed in the Magistrate Court against the pastor.

Buddhist monk demands pastor to close down church

Foursquare Church Sevanagala (Monaragala District)

08th February 2014

At approximately 9.30 p.m., 4 villagers led by a Buddhist monk visited the pastor's premises and demanded that the pastor stop all prayer meetings. The Buddhist monk threatened the pastor of serious consequences if the prayer meetings were not stopped.

16th February 2014

At approximately 10.30 a.m., while the Sunday worship service was in progress, 2

Buddhist monks and a group of 5 villagers forcibly entered the premises. The Buddhist monks began to shout saying, “stop this, you all cannot have prayer meetings here.” Some members from the group then intimidated the members of the congregation by taking pictures of them. The area police station was alerted of the incident. The police officers who arrived on the scene spoke against the Buddhist monks’ action and requested both parties to be present for an inquiry at 9 a.m., on 17th February 2014.

Following the incident, at around 12.10 a.m., a group of unidentified persons pelted stones at the pastor’s premises. Some of the windows of the pastor’s premises were damaged in the attack.

17th February 2014

2 Buddhist monks and 6 villagers were present for the police inquiry. At the inquiry the Buddhist monks demanded that the pastor should stop all religious worship activities. The Officer in Charge (OIC), however, spoke on behalf of the pastor and informed the Buddhist monks that the pastor had the fundamental right to continue with religious worship activities.

Villagers protest against the church; police claims church an unauthorised place of worship

Fire of Revival Foundation Mission Church Batticaloa (Batticaloa District)

09th February 2014

At Approximately 9.30 a.m., while the Sunday service was in progress, around 150 villagers together with the Grama Sevaka of the area surrounded the church premises. The mob began to shout at the pastor and congregation in derogatory language questioning “where did you’ll come from? Who are you’ll? You’ll have no right to be here!”

After a while the mob forcibly entered the premises and began to take pictures of the pastor and congregation members further intimidating them. The pastor stated his fundamental right to continue with the religious worship activities.

The pastor immediately informed the area police station of the incident. The police officers arrived and disbursed the crowd. However, they informed the pastor that within the area a number of churches which are functioning are registered with the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs. The police officers informed the pastor that his church was an unauthorized place of worship.

They also handed over a letter addressed by the Divisional Secretary of the Batticaloa District dated 24th January 2014 stating that all places of religious worship must obtain

prior approval from the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs. However, the Sri Lankan legislation does not require places of religious worship to be registered with the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs.

Buddhist monks threaten villagers who support the pastor

Church of Grace

Warakapola (Kegalle District)

10th February 2014

A case was filed in the Magistrate Court concerning a violent attack against the pastor in December 2012.

At the recent hearing of this case, the Magistrate requested the pastor to provide evidence that the villagers did not object to his religious worship activities. A petition was drafted by the pastor stating that the villagers do not object the religious worship activities.

Approximately at 10 a.m., the village Buddhist monk demanded one villager who signed the petition to meet him at the Buddhist temple. The monk shouted at the villager accusing him of being a traitor because he signed the petition. The monk demanded the villager to take off his signature from the petition immediately. Subsequently, the villager visited the pastor and requested to take his name out of the petition.

The Buddhist monk later telephoned the pastor and told him not to create problems in the village.

Mob led by Buddhist monks assaults pastor, demands worship services to be stopped

Holy Family Church

Asgiriya, Kandy (Kandy District)

16th February 2013

Approximately at 6.30 p.m., a mob of around 250 villagers led by a group of 11 Buddhist monks belonging to the Bodu Bala Sena stormed the pastor's premises, demanding that worship services conducted at his premises be stopped immediately.

The pastor, however, explained his right to religious freedom to continue with the religious worship activities. While the pastor was talking to the General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena, Galaboda Aththe Gnanasara thero, who incidentally led the attack, he and his wife were forcibly dragged out of the premises and physically assaulted by the mob. The pastor's 18-year-old daughter was verbally abused in the incident.

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Subsequent to the incident, the General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena gathered the villagers outside the pastor's premises and warned them against traitors such as the pastor and his family. The monk went on to threaten that even Buddhist villagers will face the same consequence in the future if they continue to encourage such religious worship activities in the village.

A Christian member in the vicinity immediately called the police emergency hotline. The police officers subsequently arrived at the scene and took a statement from the pastor and his spouse.

The Buddhist monks have also been visiting homes in the village providing false information to the villagers stating that the pastor is planning to construct a church in the village and not to support him in any manner. The pastor has also received information that the monks intend on drafting an affidavit falsely accusing the pastor and getting the villagers to sign the affidavit to be submitted in court.

**Hate campaign against pastor
Assemblies of God Church
Kantale (Trincomalee District)**

16th February 2014

The pastor received information of a protest organised against him in the village by the *Sinhala Ravaya* and the *Bodu Bala Sena*. The pastor alerted the area police station about the protest. However, subsequently, the protest was cancelled.

In December 2013, a complaint was lodged against the church by the *Dutugamunu Balakaya*, stating that the church should be removed as it was an illegal entity. Moreover, the group complained that the church was built in a sacred area.

In the recent past the pastor has been targeted in hate campaigns carried out in the village and through social media, falsely accusing him of engaging in unethical conversions.

17th February 2014

Based on the complaint made against the pastor, a case was filed in the Magistrate Court on breach of peace against, both, the pastor and the *Dutugamunu Balakaya*. The case will be heard in the Magistrate Court on 10th March 2014.

**Christian students forced to observe Buddhist rituals
Somadevi Balika Vidyalaya
Kudaabathgamuva, Kollanawa (Colombo District)**

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17th February 2014

A 6-year-old student was punished by the school principal because she refused to observe sil (Buddhist ritual) in school. The child was enrolled to the school as a Christian.

The school principal demanded that all Christian children attending the school must follow the Buddhist rituals or they should leave the school.

On 18th February 2014, the principal requested all Christian parents also to attend the sil programme organised by the school.

The Education Ordinance 1939 and the Sri Lanka Constitution of 1978 both states that no child can be forced to observe any other religious activities which is not the child's belief.

Divisional Secretary gives an ultimatum of 2 weeks for the church to close down

**Siloam Evangelical Mission
Balangoda (Ratnapura District)**

20th February 2014

The pastor received a letter from the area Divisional Secretary dated 19th February 2014. The letter requested the pastor to stop all religious worship activities conducted since prior approval from the Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs Ministry was not obtained by the pastor. A letter dated 06th February 2014 issued by the Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs Ministry was also annexed to the letter sent by the Divisional Secretary. The letter from the Ministry also stated that all churches need to be registered.

The letter gave the pastor an ultimatum of 2 weeks to stop all activities of the church.

Police officer together with Buddhist monk demand pastor to close down church

**Assemblies of God Church
Mamadalla (Hambanthota District)**

23rd February 2014

2 police officers visited the pastor's premises and requested the pastor to be present at the area police station for an inquiry at 10 a.m., on 24th February 2014.

24th February 2014

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2 Buddhist monks from the area Buddhist temple were also present at the inquiry. At the inquiry the Buddhist monk demanded that the pastor stop all religious worship activities. The pastor responded by stating that religious freedom is a fundamental right guaranteed by the constitution.

The Officer in Charge (OIC) then intervened and demanded that the pastor stop all religious activities since the area Buddhist monks were not in favor of the church. Furthermore, the OIC quoted the 2008 Circular issued by the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs and stated that the pastor did not have Ministry approval to continue religious worship activities.

The 2008 Circular, however, only requires new constructions of religious worship places to obtain approval from the Ministry. Sri Lankan legislation does not require religious worship places to register with the Ministry.

The church has been functioning in the area for the past 14 years. A congregation of around 30 members attend the church.

**Buddhist monks stage protest in village against the pastor
Assemblies of God Church
Naula (Matale District)**

25th February 2014

At approximately 9.30 a.m., the pastor received a phone call from an official of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) informing him that a protest was being held against the pastor by Buddhist monks in the village.

At the protest Buddhist monks held banners which said “do not send your children to the Sunday school.” Furthermore, handbills were distributed labelling Christians as fundamentalists.

1 week prior to the protest, the pastor received information of a threat of an attack on his church. The pastor also received information that village Buddhist monks were visiting houses encouraging people to attend the protest and to rise up against the activities of the pastor.

**Bodu Bala Sena threatens to attack churches
Foursquare Church, Assemblies of God, Lanka Faith Mission
Peradeniya (Kandy District)**

25th & 26th February 2014

Pastors of the Foursquare Church, Assemblies of God and Lanka Faith Mission received

information of a threat of an attack against their churches by the *Bodu Bala Sena*.

Information was received that the attack was planned to be carried out on Sunday, 1st March 2014.

**Hindu mob falsely accuses pastor
Foursquare Church
Panchankerni (Trincomalee District)**

2nd March 2014

At approximately 10.30 a.m., while the Sunday worship service was in progress, a mob of around 30 people led by members of the Hindu temple committee and the Rural Development Authority gathered outside the church premises. The mob then demanded the pastor to come out of the church. When the pastor refused to come out, a few leaders of the mob forcibly entered the church premises.

Previously, leaders of the Hindu temple committee had requested Christians in the village to hand over Rs. 1500.00 as a donation to the Hindu temple fund.

The mob, however, was angered that village Christians were not contributing towards the fund and accused the pastor of influencing the Christians to do so.

During the incident, the mob demanded that each Christian family should mandatorily contribute toward the Hindu temple fund.

The pastor immediately alerted the area police station about the incident. The Officer in Charge of the area police station then arrived and spoke against the demands of the mob stating that no person should be forced to contribute money towards any fund.

**Police questions pastor on church registration
The Christian Fellowship
Bulathkohupitiya (Kegalle District)**

03rd March 2014

At approximately 11.45a.m., a police officer visited the pastor's premises and questioned the pastor regarding the registration of the church.

The pastor responded by stating that religious freedom is a fundamental right and that there is no legal necessity to register his church. The pastor further requested the police officer to submit in writing the legal requirement for registration.

2 weeks prior to the incident also the pastor was questioned by the police regarding the

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legality of the church.

The church has been in existence for the past 17 years in the village. According to Sri Lankan legislation, there is no legal requirement to register religious places of worship.

Hindu villagers obstruct Christian burial in public cemetery

Prayer Church

Pavatkodichenai (Batticaloa District)

4th March 2014

At approximately 3.30 p.m., while the funeral service of a Christian was in progress, 4 Hindu villagers who were at the funeral home raised objections stating that only Hindu rites should be performed for burials in the public cemetery.

This led to an argument between the Christians at the funeral house and the Hindu villagers. During the incident, a Christian man was slapped by one of the Hindu villagers.

The area police station was alerted of the incident. Subsequently, 2 police officers arrived on the scene and advised the pastor to allow the burial ceremony to be conducted according to Hindu rites.

Later, when the pastor and the Christians attempted to enter the public cemetery for the burial, they were obstructed by a large group of Hindu villagers. The burial was then carried out according to Hindu rituals.

The pastor and the Christians lodged a complaint in the area police station and also informed the Divisional Secretariat about the incident.

Divisional Secretary instructs pastor to submit registration documents

The Apostolic Church

Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte (Colombo District)

7th March 2014

The pastor received a letter dated 07th March 2014 from the Divisional Secretariat stating that they had received information that the pastor was leading an unauthorized place of worship.

The letter instructed the pastor to submit registration documents to the Divisional Secretariat for further inquiry.

However, according to Sri Lankan legislation, there is no requirement to register religious places of worship. The 2008 Circular issued by the Ministry of Buddha Sasana

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and Religious Affairs only requires “new constructions of places of worship” to obtain Ministry approval.

Mob attacks pastor demanding closure of church

Good News Church

Mahiyangana (Badulla District)

09th March 2014

At approximately 9 a.m., while the Sunday service was in progress a mob of around 60 people led by 6 Buddhist monks gathered outside the pastor’s premises and questioned the pastor about the registration of the church.

1 of the Buddhist monks demanded that the pastor shows proof of the church’s registration. When the pastor stated there was no registration, the Buddhist monk began to scold the pastor. The Buddhist monks then demanded the pastor to stop all religious activities, stating that, “*this is a Buddhist village; you have to stop these prayer meetings*”. The pastor was also falsely accused of unethical conversions. A Church member then came forward and questioned the Buddhist monk on his behavior. While the church member was speaking, the monk and some of the members of the mob began to slap him. Another Buddhist monk then slapped the pastor and assaulted him.

The area police station was alerted of the incident. However, police officers arrived on the scene only after the mob had dispersed. The pastor lodged a police complaint. The pastor was informed to attend a police inquiry on 10th March.

10th March 2014

The police inquiry began at 9 a.m., led by the Sub Inspector (SI) of the police station. 50 Buddhist monks and a group of villagers were present for the inquiry. The Buddhist monks demanded that the pastor stop all religious worship activities, claiming that villagers did not want a church in the village. Following the inquiry, the SI informed the pastor that he can only conduct prayer meetings for his family members and not for any outsiders. The pastor was also instructed to register his place of worship in the event he wanted to continue with religious worship activities.

According to Sri Lankan legislation, there is no requirement to register religious places of worship. The 2008 Circular issued by the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs only requires “new constructions of places of worship” to obtain Ministry approval.

Police officers question pastor
Church of Grace
Warakapola (Kegalle District)

09th March 2014

At approximately 8.50 a.m., while the pastor and a few other Christians were praying, 2 police officers visited the pastors' home and questioned the pastor as to what was going on in his premises. The police officers then informed the pastor that they had received a complaint about prayer meetings conducted at his home.

The police officers then took statements from the Christians who were present and questioned them as to why they had gathered at the pastor's home. The Christians present responded that they gathered together for prayer meetings and they were entitled to observe their religious worship activities according to the fundamental right enshrined in the Constitution of Sri Lanka.

Christian student forced to observe Buddhist rituals
Welapura Maha Vidyalaya
Kalutara (Kalutara District)

31st March 2014

The pastor was called for a meeting at 8.a.m., with the school principal. At the meeting, the principal complained that the pastor's 13 year-old son was defying school regulations as he was refusing to observe Buddhist rituals.

During the meeting the principal also stated that the child could not go on learning Christianity in school.

The pastor was advised to remove the child from the school if he was not willing to observe Buddhist rituals and follow Buddhism as a subject.

The Education Ordinance of 1939 and the 1978 Sri Lankan Constitution both states that no child can be forced to observe any religious activity that is not the child's belief.

Arson attack on Church
Jesus has Risen Ministry
Kalkuda (Batticaloa District)

04th April 2014

At approximately 11.25 p.m. the church premises was set on fire by a group of unidentified persons. The church premise was completely damaged by this arson attack, together with Christian reading materials which were also in the premises.

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BBS monks verbally abuse Christians gathered for prayer

**Assemblies of God Church
Sapugaskanda (Gampaha District)**

26th April 2014

At around 6 p.m., while a group of 5 Christians was gathered for prayer, 5 Buddhist monks from the Bodu Bala Sena forcibly entered the premises and started to verbally abuse the Christians.

The monks shouted death threats, falsely accused the Christians of engaging in unethical conversions and attempted to physically assault one of the Christians gathered for prayer.

A vehicle of a Christian was also attacked in the incident. The Buddhist monks finally threatened the Christians that they would be killed if they were to enter the village again.

No police complaint has been lodged on the incident.

Buddhist monks and authorities demand prayer meetings to be stopped

**New Life Living Church
Bandaragama (Kalutara District)**

27th April 2014

At approximately 10.30 a.m., while a group of 30 Christians was engaged in prayer, a mob of 30 persons led by Buddhist monks stormed the premises they were praying in, and demanded that prayer meetings be stopped.

The Christians immediately informed the area police station about the incident. The Office in Charge (OIC) of the area police station then arrived on the scene and instructed the Christians to stop the prayer meetings. The OIC asserted that prayer meetings cannot be held in the village without prior approval. He went on to say that, the Christians needed approval from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to gather for prayer meetings.

According to Sri Lankan legislation, there is no necessity for prior approval for religious worship activities.

The Constitution of Sri Lanka through article 10 and 14 (1) (e) provides the fundamental right for all persons to engage in religious worship activities.

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**Divisional Secretary requests registration information from churches
Margaya Fellowship of Sri Lanka & Gospel Grace Church
Valaichenai (Batticaloa District)**

28th April 2014

Both pastors received letters from the Divisional Secretary of Koralaipattu, Valaichenai requesting detailed information on church registration documents, bank details, documents relating to land, account details, pastors details and some other confidential information of the church.

The above details were only requested from the churches in the Valaichenai area.

According to Sri Lankan legislation, there is no legal requirement to register religious places of worship.

**Divisional Secretary orders Christian to obtain Ministry approval for prayer meeting
Moragahahena (Colombo District)**

4th May 2014

A Christian in Moragahahena received a letter from the Divisional Secretary of the area claiming that prayer meetings held at his premises were unauthorized. The letter stated that prior approval from the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs was necessary to hold prayer meetings at his premises.

In the letter a 30-day ultimatum was given to register the prayer meeting. The letter asserted that failure to obtain registration before the deadline would result in the prayer meeting being forced to be stopped.

Sri Lankan legislation does not require prayer meetings to be registered. The 2008 Circular issued by the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs only requires new constructions of religious worship places to obtain prior approval from the Ministry.

**Mob threaten Christians to stop prayer meetings
Madu (Mannar District)**

11th May 2014

At approximately 6.30 p.m., 4 Christians travelling back after a prayer meeting were accosted by a mob of 30 villagers. The mob warned the Christians to never enter the

village again, stating "this is our village, you'll don't belong here!" The Christians were threatened that they would be assaulted in the event they continued to come to the village for prayer meetings.

The Christians were also specifically instructed to not visit the premises in which prayer meetings were being held.

The Christian family who hosts the prayer meeting in the village alerted the area police station about the incident.

12th May 2014

Violent mob attack on pastor and Christians

The day following the attack, the Christian family who hosted the prayer meeting lodged a complaint at the area police station over the incident.

The police informed the Christians that they would come to the family's house at 4 p.m., for a meeting. The police requested the family's pastor and the Christians who were threatened to be present for the meeting. The police, however, did not arrive on time. While the Christians were waiting for the police to arrive, the Catholic Church in the village began to ring the church bell and summoned villagers to the church through an announcement on a public address system.

A few minutes later, around 150 villagers surrounded the home where the Christians were gathered and began to verbally abuse them. The pastor and the Christians immediately called the police, who assured them that they were on their way.

Subsequently, at approximately 5.30 p.m., about 40 people from the crowd broke through the fence surrounding the premises and forcibly entered the home. The crowd then pelted rocks at the pastor's vehicle which was parked in the premises and smashed it with poles. Few persons from the mob physically assaulted the pastor with poles. The rest of the Christians in the house including the pastor's wife were also assaulted in the incident.

During the attack the pastor was knocked unconscious by a blow to the back of his neck with a pole. Fearing that the pastor was dead, the mob then fled the premises.

The police officers arrived at the family's home 10 minutes after the mob dispersed. The pastor and the Christians were then taken to the police station where they lodged a police complaint on the incident (**Complaint number: GCIB 126/35**). The Christians were kept at the police station and questioned for approximately 7 hours. None of the attackers were, however, questioned or arrested by the police.

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A case was filed in the Magistrate Courts of Mannar 2 weeks after the incident. The case was heard on 29th May 2014 during which the Magistrate reprimanded the police and gave instructions for immediate arrests to be made of all 30 attackers. The next hearing is on 10th June 2014.

Following the attack, the pastor was hospitalized for 4 days. 3 other Christians were hospitalized for 2 days. Damage caused to the pastors van is estimated to be around, 1.5 million rupees. (USD 11,500)

Christian worker assaulted by mob and threatened with death Waththegama (Kandy District)

15th May 2014

At approximately 3 p.m., while a female Christian worker attached to the Light House church in Kandy was visiting a Christian family for prayer, 2 strangers visited the family's home, and requested for prayer from the Christian worker.

Few minutes later, while the Christian worker was praying for the strangers, 5 Buddhist monks and 20 youth from the village stormed the premises and physically assaulted the Christians.

The mob then forcibly led the Christian worker to the Buddhist temple in the village and snatched her Bible and National Identity Card. At the temple, she was drenched with water, verbally abused by the mob, and threatened with death by a youth who strangled her neck and warned her to never to enter the village again.

The police later arrived at the temple and dispersed the mob. Following the incident, the Christian woman was informed by the police that a case was filed against her in the Magistrate Courts for unethical conversions.

Following the attack, the Christian worker was hospitalized for 2 days.

It has since been revealed that the 2 strangers who visited the home of the Christian family were sent by the mob. The Christian worker lodged a complaint over the incident at the area police station (**Complaint number: CHT 781/14**). The court case is due to be heard on 26th June 2014.

Pastor summoned to Ministry to prove legality of church
Prayer Tower Church
Mahawewa (Puttalam District)

29th May 2014

The pastor received a letter dated 29th May 2014 from the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs requesting him to attend a meeting at the Ministry with all legal documents pertaining to the church.

The pastor received information that the meeting was arranged based on a petition sent to the Ministry against the church.

The Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs is not legally equipped to conduct investigations into church matters.

Authorities question pastor on church's registration
Gospel for All Nations
Nuwara Eliya (Nuwara Eliya District)

29th May 2014

At approximately 11 p.m., 2 officers from the Assistant District Secretary's office visited the pastor and questioned him on whether the church was registered with the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs.

The pastor was also informed that the Assistant District Secretariat had received a petition against the church and that the pastor was being questioned on the basis of this petition.

According to Sri Lankan legislation, there is no legal requirement to register religious places of worship.

Authorities question pastor on legality of prayer meetings
The Christian Fellowship
Bulathkohupitiya (Kegalle District)

12th June 2014

At approximately 10.30 a.m., 2 officers from the criminal investigation department (CID) visited the pastor's premises and questioned the pastor on the legality of prayer meetings held in his premises.

The pastor was instructed to obtain approval from the Divisional Secretary in order to continue with the prayer meetings.

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According to Sri Lankan legislation there is no legal necessity to obtain prior approval for religious worship activities. A Circular issued in 2008 only requires new constructions of places of religious worship to obtain prior approval from the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs.

**Police demands pastor to stop prayer meetings
Assemblies of God Church
Angunukolapalassa (Hambanthota District)**

05th June 2014

At around 11.30 a.m., 2 police officers visited the pastors' premises instructing him to meet the Officer in Charge (OIC) of the area police station.

06th June 2014

At approximately 10.30 a.m., the pastor met the OIC at the area police station. The OIC questioned the pastor whether prayer meetings were still conducted in his premises. The pastor responded in the affirmative and subsequent to the pastors' response, the OIC began to shout at the pastor demanding him to stop all religious worship activities.

The OIC asked the pastor to leave the village in the event he intends on continuing with religious worship activities in his premises. The pastor responded by stating that he has the fundamental right to practice and observe his religious beliefs.

**Villagers petition against worship activities led by pastor
Suveya Doratuwa Church
Bibile (Monaragala District)**

06th July 2014

At approximately 3 p.m., an officer of the Civil Defense Committee visited the pastor's premises and informed the pastor that a petition has been submitted to the Divisional Secretary and the area police station against religious worship activities conducted at his premises.

The pastor was then questioned by the officer on the legal status of religious activities conducted at his premises. The pastor was further instructed to submit relevant registration documents of the church.

The petition falsely claimed the use of loudspeakers in the premises and that religious worship activity was conducted illegally.

The pastor has been subjected to the scrutiny of the authorities ever since the Bodu Bala Sena visited the pastor's premises in March 2014 and demanded that religious worship activities be stopped. A week prior to this incident the pastor was questioned by 3 other State officials.

According to Sri Lankan legislation, there is no necessity for prior approval from a State body for religious worship activities. A Circular issued in 2008 by the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs only requires prior approval for new construction of religious places of worship.

Villagers led by Buddhist monks demand prayer meetings to be stopped
Good News Ministry
Mawallawatte (Ratnapura District)

06th July 2014

At approximately 8 a.m., a mob of 25 villagers led by 2 Buddhist monks forcibly entered the premises while a worship service was in progress and disrupted its proceedings. The Buddhist monks then began to shout at the pastor demanding "you'll have to stop the prayer meetings, if not we will demolish this place." One of the Buddhist monks then attempted to assault the pastor.

The mob forcibly removed Bibles and Christian banners that were at the premises. Following the incident, the pastor lodged a police complaint holding number **B2/323/114** at the area police station.

Police officers demand pastor to stop religious worship activities
The Grace Church
Warakapola (Kegalle District)

12th July 2014

At approximately 10 a.m., the Officer in Charge (OIC) of the area police station and 2 other police officers visited the pastor's premises and questioned the pastor if he was still continuing with religious worship activities. The pastor responded stating that he was continuing with religious activities. The OIC then warned the pastor against conducting worship services. The pastor responded stating that the OIC's request was in breach of his fundamental rights and that he would not stop the religious worship activities.

13th July 2014

Police officers attempt to stop Christians from attending worship services

While a Christian was on his way to attend the Sunday worship service, a police officer

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standing near the pastor's premises stopped the Christian and questioned him on why he continued to go for the Sunday worship service as it was an unauthorized place of worship.

The Christian responded stating that he had the right to attend Sunday worship services.

Buddhist monks, villagers and police officers demand pastor to stop construction of religious place of worship

**The Christ Church
Welikanda, Bowatta (Polonnaruwa District)**

13th July 2014

At approximately 9.30 a.m., while a group of villagers were gathered for prayer, 5 Buddhist monks led a mob of about 150 villagers against the prayer meeting. The villagers began to shout and threaten the Christians present, demanding them to stop all religious worship activities.

2 police officers who were also present began to shout at the worshippers stating that they would not allow a construction of a Christian place of worship in the village and that a case would be filed against the construction.

Prior to the attack, a credible source alerted the pastor about a threat of an attack by Buddhist monks against him. The source said that the monks were planning to assault the pastor and drag him to the village Buddhist temple.

No police complaint was lodged by the villagers.

Mob led by Buddhist monks disrupt worship service

**Jesus is Good Church
Mawallawatte, Ratnapura (Ratnapura District)**

13th July 2014

The pastor received information on 06th July 2014 that Buddhist monks were planning to attack the pastor and the prayer meeting led by him.

At approximately 10.45 a.m., while the pastor and a few other Christians were gathered for Sunday worship, a mob of about 25 villagers led by 2 Buddhist monks forcibly entered the premises and disrupted the worship service.

1 Buddhist monk attempted to assault some of the Christians and demanded to know who the pastor was. When the pastor came forward the Buddhist monk pulled him by

his shirt and attempted to assault him. An elderly Christian lady intervened and attempted to stop the assault on the pastor. The Buddhist monk, however, pushed away the lady and verbally abused her.

Some members of the mob removed bibles that were in the premises. The mob then went outside the premises and began to shout to the neighbors stating, “*these people are a nuisance to the community, they will ultimately kill you’ll, beware of them and do not entertain them or their activities*”. The Buddhist monks also threatened the Christians and demanded that the prayer meeting be discontinued.

The pastor immediately alerted the area police station about the incident. Police officers, however, arrived on the scene only after the mob had left the premises.

A police complaint holding **P132/211** was lodged at the area police station by the pastor against 4 villagers and 2 Buddhist monks who led the attack. Subsequently, a case was also filed holding number **B-1152-14** in the Ratnapura Magistrate Court. The case was heard on 21st July 2014, during which the Magistrate upheld the pastor’s right to religious freedom. The attackers were released on surety bail. The case is to be heard on 24th September 2014.

Buddhist monks attempt to assault pastor; demands church to be closed down

Independent Church Dimbulagala (Polonaruwa District)

16th July 2014

At approximately 7.45 p.m., 2 police officers from the Polonaruwa police station visited the pastor’s premises and requested the pastor and his spouse to be present for an inquiry at the Office of the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) at 10 a.m., on 17th July 2014. The police officers were not aware of the actual reason for the inquiry but rather were under the impression that there was a conflict between the pastor and his spouse.

17th July 2014

The pastor arrived at the police station and was alarmed to see around 25 Buddhist monks standing outside the police station. The General Secretary of the Ravana Balaya, 3 other Buddhist monks, the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), the Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) and the Inspector of Police (IP) were present for the inquiry. The police officers informed the pastor that a petition was filed against him by the Buddhist monks who were present accusing him of unethical conversions and illegally continuing a religious place of worship.

During the inquiry the Buddhist monks verbally abused the pastor and attempted to

assault him. The police officers instructed the pastor to join his congregation and religious activities with other mainline churches in the area. The police officers also warned the pastor against holding prayer meetings at his premises. In response the pastor stated that he had the fundamental right to observe and practice by himself or together or with others his religious beliefs. (according to Article 10 and 14 (1) (e) of the Sri Lanka Constitution 1978).

While coming out of the police station after the inquiry, the pastor was accosted by approximately 25 Buddhist monks who attempted to assault him. The monks verbally abused the pastor and shouted threats at him. The police then escorted the pastor to his premises and provided the pastor with police protection till the following day. (19th July 2014).

Following the incident, the police filed a case against the pastor in the Polonnaruwa Magistrate Court holding number **B852-14** based on Section 341, 343, 483 and 486 of the Penal Code of Sri Lanka Act No 6/1968 which deals with offences against criminal force and criminal intimidation.

Notably the case was filed against the pastor and not the Buddhist monks who threatened and attempted to assault the pastor.

Buddhist monks threaten pastor with death

The Christian Centre

Hingurakoda, Polonuruwa (Polonnaruwa District)

19th July 2014

At approximately 3.45 p.m., a group of 8 people led by a Buddhist monk claiming to be from the Ravana Balaya visited the pastor's premises and questioned the whereabouts of the pastor. The pastor's spouse responded stating that he was not in the premises.

The group informed the pastor's spouse that they were following the pastor for some time and that they had even visited the church premises before. They demanded that the church close down and all religious activities be stopped immediately. In the event religious worship activities continue, the group threatened them with death. The pastor's spouse responded saying that they had the fundamental right to continue with religious worship activities and a Magistrate Court order granting the church permission to continue with religious worship activities.

The church obtained the Magistrate order following an attack on the church by village Buddhist monks in 2001.

The group left the pastors premises warning the pastor's spouse not to hold Sunday

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worship services on 20th July 2014. The pastor lodged a complaint in the area police station holding number **CIB 71/203**.

Pastor denied of an electricity connection

Assemblies of God Church

Naula (Matale)

19th July 2014

At approximately 8.30 a.m., while officers from the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) were visiting the pastor's premises to issue an electricity connection, some of the neighbors instigated by village Buddhist monks, began to threaten the CEB officials to refrain from giving electricity to the pastor's premises. The villagers claimed that the premises was an unauthorized place of worship.

Following the protest by villagers, the CEB officers left the premises. The pastor lodged a police complaint in the area police station with regard to the incident. The Officer in Charge (OIC) instructed the pastor to resolve the issue with the area Divisional Secretary (DS). Upon meeting the DS and an Officer of the CEB, the pastor was informed of a petition lodged against him by village Buddhist monks claiming his premises was an unauthorized place of worship. The pastor was instructed to obtain approval from the Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs Ministry in order to get the electricity connection.

According to the Constitution and The Electricity Act No. 20/2009, the pastor is entitled to obtain an electricity connection to his premises without any discrimination.

Police officers instruct pastor to stop prayer meetings

The Revival Good News Church

Mahiyangana (Badulla District)

3rd August 2014

At approximately 11 p.m., 2 police officers visited the pastor's premises and stated that they had received a call about a disturbance at his premises. The police officers left after they were informed that no such incident took place.

Subsequently, at 12 p.m., 4 women from the village visited the pastor's premises and demanded the pastor to stop conducting prayer meetings at his premises. The pastor responded stating that he had the fundamental right to continue with religious worship activities. 1 of the women then immediately called and informed the area Buddhist monk that the pastor was claiming he had the legal right to continue with prayer meetings.

Just after the women left the pastor's premises, at about 1 p.m., 2 police officers visited

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the pastor and informed that a petition had been filed against him. The police officers instructed the pastor to stop the prayer meetings with immediate effect.

09th August 2014

The pastor received information about a threat of an attack against the pastor and the church. The pastor met with the Officer in Charge (OIC) of the area police station on 10th August to notify the OIC about the threat.

The OIC advised the pastor to register the church so that he can be legally protected. There is, however, no legal requirement to register religious places of worship in Sri Lanka.

State Authorities instruct pastor to discontinue prayer meetings The Bethel International Pentecostal Assembly Marathanai (Ratnapura District)

3rd August 2014

At approximately 10 a.m., while a prayer meeting was in progress, the Office in Charge (OIC) of the area police station visited the premises and claimed that the meeting was an unauthorized gathering. The OIC informed the pastor to be present for a police inquiry on 5th August 2014.

05th August 2014

During the inquiry, the OIC stated that the pastor should discontinue prayer meetings as it was being held illegally.

The OIC instructed the pastor to obtain permission from the Divisional Secretary in the event the pastor wished to continue with the prayer meetings.

The pastor met with the Divisional Secretary on **5th August 2014**. The Divisional Secretary instructed the pastor to obtain approval from the Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs Ministry in order to continue with the prayer meetings.

Sri Lankan legislation does not require religious worship activities to be registered with the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs. According to a 2008 Religious Affairs Ministry Circular, only new constructions of religious places of worship are required to obtain prior approval from the Ministry.

Ministry worker threatened East Gate Evangelical Ministry Pelmadulla, Allina Estate (Ratnapura District)

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06th August 2014

A Christian ministry worker received a telephone call between 10.30 a.m. – 11.30 a.m., by an unknown person who threatened to physically assault her if she enters the village for prayer meetings.

The caller also informed her that the village Hindu Committee was planning on questioning her.

The Christian worker responded stating that she had the right to continue with prayer meetings.

Police officers demand prayer meeting to be discontinued

Way of the Truth

Moratuwa (Colombo District)

08th August 2014

At approximately 12.30 p.m., 2 police officers visited the pastor's premises and requested the pastor to come to the area police station immediately.

Upon arriving at the police station, the pastor and his spouse were instructed by police officers to discontinue prayer meetings held at their premises with immediate effect. The pastor was advised to register the prayer meeting with the Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs Ministry in the event they wished to continue the prayer meetings.

The police officers warned the pastor that if he did not follow their advice, a case would be filed against him.

Police officer instructs pastor to register place of worship

Good News Ministry

Mawallawatte (Ratnapura District)

11th August 2014

The pastor visited the area police station at approximately 10 a.m., to inquire about a case filed on the 06th of July 2014 at the Ratnapura Magistrate Court (case number 323/114) regarding an incident of a mob assault on the pastor and the disruption of a worship service.

The headquarters Inspector present at the police station instructed the pastor to register the religious activities in the event he wished to continue worship services. The case which was filed in the beginning of July is yet to be called in the Magistrate Court.

Total - 69

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