



PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BROTHERS & SISTERS

Pray for the Persecuted Christians in Sri Lanka



Total Population: 20,409,600

Self-Proclaimed Christian Population: 8.38 % of population

Evangelical Witness: 0.6% of population

Buddhist: 70%

Islamic Attacks on Churches

Last year on Easter Sunday, Sri Lanka saw one of the world's largest coordinated terrorist attacks since Sept. 11, when radicals carried out eight suicide bombings at targets that included three churches, claiming almost 300 lives, most of them Christians. However, persecution in the southeast Asian country typically stems from radical Buddhist and Hindu groups that harass and discriminate against converts to Christianity.

How Christians Are Suffering

Sri Lanka has a constitution that gives Buddhism preferred status, and this Buddhist supremacy view is widely shared in the country. Additionally, Christian churches are frequently opposed by neighbors, and local officials sometimes demand they close their buildings-leading to mob protests, especially in rural areas. The Christian minority is partly tolerated, but converts to Christianity are not.

Examples

On April 21, 2019, Easter Sunday, three bomb blasts went off in three churches in three different parts of Sri Lanka: St Anthony's Church in

Kochikade, Colombo; St. Sebastian's Church in Negombo; and Zion Church in Batticaloa. Three hotels were also targeted. These coordinated attacks, which claimed 253 lives and injured hundreds of others, were later claimed by Islamic State extremists. Some 176 children lost one or both parents.

On March 24, 2019, a mass protest was held outside the premises of Christ Gospel Church in Ja-ela, Gampaha District, during Sunday afternoon worship. The 2,000 townspeople, led by a traders' association, distributed leaflets and set up a petition, calling for the removal of the church. This is a more typical example of persecution in Sri Lanka, which often involves small mobs.

The majority of state schools do not teach Christianity as a subject, forcing Christian students to resort to studying Buddhism or Hinduism. Some reports indicated that children were forced to participate in Buddhist rituals.

Pray for Sri Lanka

- Pray for the survivors of the Easter Sunday attacks. Pray for strength and comfort for the targeted Christian communities and for unity among the Sri Lankan churches.
- Pray for the pastors in Sri Lanka who are mocked and frequently disturbed by their neighbors for leading worship services. Please pray that they would not waiver in their faith and that they will draw strength from the Lord when they feel weary.
- Aside from the bombings, the persecution of Christians in Sri Lanka is experiencing a transition from violence to administrative and legal forms. Many believers and churches are unaware of their legal rights and unprepared financially to face charges in courts. They quickly give up the legal battle in many cases. Consequently, if not jailed, they end up having criminal records, which can compromise their standing in the community.
- Pray for legal protection for pastors in Sri Lanka-that they will not be abused and bullied by the government. Ask God to bring them refreshment and encouragement.

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the Body also.

(Hebrews 13:3)