

**INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION OF
CHRISTIANS**

2013

Compiled by

**The National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka
(NCEASL)**

(Established 1952)



National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka

Incident Reports – 2013

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(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.

National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka

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Incident Reports – 2013

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The National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL)

Christian worship disrupted by mob

Assembly of God Church

Muthugala, Welikanda (Polonnaruwa District)

6th January 2013

At approximate 3 p.m. while a group of about 60 Christians were gathered together for prayer, a group of about 40 persons and a Hindu priest entered the premises. They attempted to drag the pastor outside and assault him. However, the worshippers succeeded in rescuing him and hid him from the attackers. The mob began to assault the worshippers with rods and poles. In the ensuing scuffle, four persons suffered injuries – three worshippers and one attacker. The Welikanda police produced both parties before the Magistrates Court the following day. The judge reminded both parties that according to the Constitution of Sri Lanka everyone has the freedom practice their religion and advised both parties to refrain from further conflict. The worshippers have been meeting in this location for the past 7 years, without any incident.

Mob obstructs renovation of pastors' premises

Glory to Jesus Church

Karukkupane (Puttalam District)

21st January 2013

At approximately 7pm a mob of about 75 persons protested outside the residence of the pastor and threatened to destroy his property. They accused him of building a church. The situation was diffused after some members from the village community came forward and explained that the pastor was merely renovating his home and not building a church.

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Monks damage church name board

New Life Church

Ratnapura (Ratnapura District)

29th January 2013

At approximately 6.45pm, 3 Buddhist monks forcibly entered the church premises and damaged the church name board. The church has been functioning in this village for 15 years, with a congregation of about 50 persons.

Police order Christians to stop worship services

Independent Church

Vennappuwa (Gampaha District)

3rd February 2013

At approximately 3pm, while some Christians gathered at a rented hall in Marawila for a prayer meeting, a group of about 10 persons together with the parish priest of the Mudukatuwa Catholic church arrived and objected to the prayer meeting. The pastor was threatened that if he did not stop, he will be assaulted by villagers.

24th February 2013

At approximately 3.50 pm mob of villagers disrupted the prayer meeting, assaulted pastor and forced the worshippers out of the building. On 26th of February 2013, an entry was lodged at the Marawila Police station (No. CIB 297/351 12.40) with regard to this assault. On the 3rd of March the Police informed the pastor to stop conducting prayer services, until the Officer in Charge (OIC) returns from leave and the matter is discussed with him.

08th March 2013

The OIC of the Police informed the pastor that enquiries have revealed that the Christians gathering for prayer were not harming or disturbing any one but since some villagers were against this prayer service, he should discontinue with immediate effect. He was further informed that if he continued the prayer meetings, a court order will be obtained against him, prohibiting the prayer meetings.

Christian meeting threatened

Calvary Church

Malabe (Colombo District)

10th February 2013

The *Bodu Bala Sena* held a public meeting and spoke against the person who rents a hall for the church to hold prayer meetings. The staircase and entrance to a rented hall

were defaced and a threatening message was received, forcing the church to cancel the Sunday meeting. The owner of the premises, through fear, discontinued rented the premises to the church.

Pastor threatened with death
Gospel Tabernacle Church
Grandpass (Colombo District)

14th February 2013

At approximately 11.30 am, the pastor received an anonymous call, threatening him with death if he did not immediately stop worship meetings. The caller further threatened to burn down the premises where the worship meetings are held and also threatened to inform the *Bodu Bala Sena* to attack the pastor and the congregation members.

The church has been conducting worship meetings in the same premises for the past 5 years with a congregation of about 75 persons.

Prayer meeting declared illegal by police and Divisional Secretariat
Christian Prayer Center
Ingiriya (Kaluthara District)

17th February 2013

At approximately 11am, 2 police officers, the *Grama Sevaka* and 5 officers of the Divisional Secretariat (who are reported to be members of the *Bodu Bala Sena*, - an extremist Buddhist religious activist group) intruded upon a prayer meeting which was in progress. They told the Christians gathered for prayer that the prayer meeting is illegal, claiming they did not have prior approval to hold prayer meetings. The police officers instructed the pastor to come to the police station immediately. He was asked to record his statement with regard to a complaint filed against the pastor by the Divisional Secretariat for conducting 'unlawful' prayer meetings. The pastor was admonished by the Officer in Charge of the police station for conducting prayer meetings.

The incident stems from a complaint made by some villagers to the Divisional Secretariat, accusing the pastor of unethical conversions; and the Divisional Secretariat had in turn complained to the police. (The proper procedure would have been for the police to inquire in to the complaint of unethical conversion. Arbitrarily declaring prayer meetings illegal is without any legal basis and not in keeping with procedure). The pastor made his statement denying the accusations and claimed his legal right to engage in prayer together with others.

18th February 2013

The pastor met with the Divisional Secretary of the area and clarified that he was conducting a prayer meeting and hence prior approval from the government is unnecessary. The Divisional Secretary claimed that in the event there are more than 10 persons gathering for worship, it will be considered a 'church' and prior approval must be obtained for such gatherings. (This claim again has no legal basis is against the Constitutional right to the freedom of worship Article 14 (1) (e).

The prayer meeting has been conducted for the past 07 years by the pastor and a group of 15-20 persons attend the meeting.

Mob disrupts prayer meeting, claiming it to be illegal

Light House Church

Hatharaliyadda (Kandy District)

17^h February 2013

At approximately 11.00 am, while about 30 Christians were gathered for a prayer meeting, a mob of about 200 persons with 2 Buddhist monks disrupted the meeting and forcibly entered the premises. The monks threatened the pastor to stop the prayer meeting, claiming that he had no prior permission to conduct prayer meetings. The pastor subsequently called the officer in charge of the local police station. The police officer informed the pastor that he would speak to the Buddhist monks.

The police complaint was lodged by the pastor, holding complaint number CIB189/296.

20th February 2013

The pastor was asked by the police to be present at the police station in order to reach an amicable settlement with the Buddhist monks. The pastor was confronted with three bus loads of persons and about 20 Buddhist monks at the police station. In the presence of the police, the monks accused the pastor of conducting unauthorized religious activity and issued a veiled threat that if there is a violent attack, they will not be responsible for it.

22nd February 2013

The pastor was informed to meet the Assistant Government Agent (AGA) of the area. The Buddhist monks were present once again and complained to the AGA that the prayer meeting did not have government approval. The AGA advised the pastor to obtain approval from the *Buddha Sasana* and Religious Affairs Ministry. (There is no legal requirement for worship activities to be approved by the government).

At approximately around 3 pm, the pastor received information of a plot to attack the pastor and the members attending the prayer meeting being planned by the Buddhist monks and some other villagers. The pastor informed the police. The officer in charge arrived and questioned some men loitering around the premises where the prayer

meeting is held. In an absolute travesty of justice, the police informed the pastor that if an incident occurs disturbing the peace, a case will be filed against the pastor for breach of peace.

Mob disrupts service, beats up pastor and threatens congregation

**Jesus Good News Ministry
Wennappuwa (Puttalam District)**

24th February 2013

At approximately 3.50 pm, a mob of about 50 persons forcibly entered the worship service. They beat up the pastor and threatened to set the premises on fire and beat up the congregation members. The pastor and the congregation members were forcibly evicted from the premises and the doors locked by the attackers. The owner of the premises who gave the premises on rent has no objection to the worship services being held there. A police complaint was filed with regard to the incident.

3 weeks prior to the above incident, the pastor was visited by a few individuals from the village and advised to stop worship services with immediate effect or face a mob attack.

Renovations of residence and prayer meetings declared illegal

**Emmanuel Prayer Center
Yakkala (Gampaha District)**

01st – 3rd March 2013

Police question pastor with regard to renovation of his residence and tell him it is illegal and claim he needs permission from the *Buddha Sasana* and Religious Affairs Ministry. The pastor responds that he has obtained permission from the *Pradeshiya Sabhava* (local government authority), but does not need permission from the Ministry as this is his personal residence. *Pradeshiya Sabhava* revokes the authorization by letter dated 26th February 2013.

On 2nd March Police inform him that there is a petition filed against the renovation of his house and record his statement. The Officer in Charge of the police station inform him that if there are any further petitions against him, they will be compelled to file a case against him.

03rd March the Officer in Charge informs the pastor that three further petitions have been filed against him, claiming that his prayer meetings are a disturbance to the village and hence action will be filed against him in court for breach of peace. He was further summoned to the police station on 17th March and informed that the case against him will be filed on the 18th of March 2013 in the Magistrates Court.

Church premises burnt down by unidentified persons

Living voice of Life

Morakottanchenai (Batticalou District)

03rd March 2013

During the early hours of the morning at approximately 2 am, the pastor's wife was awakened by the sound and smell of fire. The thinly built temporary church structure made of tin sheets was completely damaged by the fire. The pastor has received several threats to stop worship services or the church will be burnt down. A case against the pastor has also been filed for breach of peace, with the aim of halting the worship services. A congregation of about 100 persons gather for worship.

Christian lady dragged from house by mob and demands she observe 'sil'

Light House Church

Hatharaliyadda (Kandy District)

04th March 2013

At approximately 5.30 pm, a mob of over 100 persons forcibly entered the house of a Christian lady where a prayer meeting was being held. The mob forcibly dragged the lady to the community hall in the village, verbally abusing her for being a Christian. She was threatened with a severe beating if she continued to hold prayer meetings in her home and demanded that she observe *sil* (Buddhist prayer). The pastor who was informed of the incident immediately informed the police. The police arrived at the community hall and dispersed the mob. They stated that the matter will be referred to the court.

06th March 2013

A court order dated 06th March 2013 was issued by the Magistrate, stating that religious activities can be conducted but they should not obstruct others, should not entice those belonging to other religions or race, and should not disturb the peace in the area. The pastor was informed by the police that they may continue the prayer meetings.

9th March 2013

At approximately 5.30pm, a meeting was convened by the Buddhist monks and villagers opposing the Christian prayer meeting. It is reported that a public protest against the prayer meetings as well as action against any authorities supporting the prayer meeting were discussed. Later that same evening the police informed the pastor to discontinue the prayer meetings, considering the threat of violence.

**Village meeting convened by *Bodu Bala Sena* to stop Christian ministry
Assembly of God
Angunukolapalassa (Hambanthota District)**

10th March 2013

The *Bodu Bala Sena* convened a meeting, reportedly to discuss eradicating Christian churches and pastors ministering in the village. The pastor received information that his ministry was one of the main topics of discussion and a decision had been made to issue him an ultimatum of two days to stop worship activities.

At approximately 6.30 p.m., the Officer in Charge of the police station visited the pastor's residence and questioned him on the validity of his ministry. The officer warned the pastor that the meeting held earlier that day was aimed at stopping his worship services and instructed him to limit his worship services and prayer meetings to avoid any confrontation.

11th March 2013

At approximately 11.30 a.m., two officers from the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) visited the pastor and questioned him further on the validity of the prayer meetings.

**Christian physically assaulted by Buddhist monks
Galkulama (Anuradapura District)**

13th March 2013

A Christian couple who dropped their daughter at school was engaging in conversation with two other parents outside the school – Mahinda Maha Vidyalaya, Anuradhapura - at about 9.30 a.m. when six Buddhist monks arrived and began questioning the Christian couple as to their identity. They were accused of engaging in unethical conversions. They questioned the other parents (2 ladies) who were there if they were being converted. However, they both denied the accusation and stated that they remain Buddhists.

One of the monks hit the Christian man on the back of the head with a wooden plank. Another snatched his Bible and some pictures that were with it. They also tore off a sticker on their vehicle which carried a Scripture verse. The incident took place in the presence of two police officers in civilian attire. More officers arrived and took the Christian couple, the two other ladies and one Buddhist monk (not the one who assaulted the man) to the police station. At the police station the Buddhist monk stated that they are willing to settle the matter amicably and agreed to return the Bible and photographs the following day near the school.

On the following day, the Christian man arrived at the school premises at around 10 a.m. to meet the principal as well as to retrieve his belongings from the monk as agreed

the previous day. The two Buddhist monks arrived and began shouting at him that he is engaging in unethical conversions and threatening that they will ensure his daughter is barred from attending school. Other parents who were in the vicinity were alarmed by the accusations made by the Buddhist monks and joined them in verbally harassing the man. Police arrived on the scene and the Christian man made a formal complaint. His belongings were not returned by the monks.

This Christian family suffered an attack on their home while celebrating their daughter's Birthday, by a group led by Buddhist monks in 2007 during which a valuable camera and equipment were stolen. The family's membership in the village Death Donation Society was cancelled due to their being Christians. There are two cases pending in the Magistrate Court and the Supreme Court with regard to these violations.

**Divisional Secretary orders church to close down, claiming it is illegal
Assemblies of God
Bulathkohupitiya (Kegalle District)**

16th March 2013

The pastor received a letter dated 8th March 2013 from the Divisional Secretary stating a committee appointed to look into unauthorized religious places has decided to close down such places of religious activity with immediate effect. The letter went on to instruct the pastor to close down the church with immediate effect. The Assemblies of God is a Christian denomination incorporated under Act of Parliament in 1947. Further there are no legal provisions in Sri Lanka for religious activities to be approved by the state.

**Mobs disrupts worship service, pastor forced to discontinue services
Gethsemane Church
Watapola (Galle District)**

16th March 2013

At approximately 10 a.m. a mob of over 500 persons together with Buddhist monks staged a protest outside the premises in which the worship service took place. Some members of the mob, led by Buddhist monks, forcibly entered the premises in spite of several police officers being present. They shouted at the worshippers and threatened the pastor with death if he continued the worship services. The pastor, under duress, made a statement that he will discontinue the worship services.

Three days earlier, the pastor received information of a plot to protest against the worship services and had requested for police protection for the service. However, the officers present failed to stop the disruption of the worship service or the forced statement from the pastor.

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Mob with monks disrupts worship service and threatens pastor with death; worship services suspended by police

Harvest Church

Suriyaweva (Hambanthota District)

17th March 2013

While the church members were engaged in Sunday worship, a mob of about 15 persons led by four Buddhist monks entered the premises at approximately 10.45 a.m. They threatened the pastor to stop the worship service. The Buddhist monks shouted at the pastor and threatened him with death claiming “this is a Buddhist country and you have no right to engage in Christian worship services”. They accused the pastor of carrying on an illegal place of worship. One of the Buddhist monks called the police and the mob dispersed after arrival of the police. The police officer instructed the pastor to be present for inquiry on 20th March 2013.

Approximately 8 p.m., unidentified persons threw stones at the homes of congregation members. The police were immediately informed of the tense situation, but the police did not respond to the complaint.

On 20th March when the pastor arrived at the police station for the inquiry, a large crowd with Buddhist monks was gathered at the entrance to the police station and demonstrated against the Christian worship services. They shouted death threats and verbally abused the pastor. During the police inquiry, Buddhist monks present stated that no church can exist in the Hambanthota District since it is a Buddhist village and threatened the pastor with death if he did not leave. The Officer in Charge advised the pastor to discontinue the worship service temporarily for his own protection. No action was taken against those who disrupted the worship service or those who threatened him with death in the presence of the police.

Mob attack on pastor’s residence and family

Jeevana Alokaya Church

Weeraketiya (Hambanthota District)

17th March 2013

In the late hours of the night, the electricity connection to the pastor’s premises was disconnected.

18th March 2013

The pastor was in Colombo attending the hearing of a Fundamental Rights petition filed in the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka (SCFR 19/2013) with regard to a violent attack on the church on 9th December 2012.

At approximately 5 p.m., the pastor's wife and two children were returning home after visiting the shops when they were accosted by a mob outside their premises, led by about 8 Buddhist monks. The family immediately withdrew in to their residential area and locked the front door behind them. However, the pastor's wife then noticed that the back door was broken and their belongings were strewn around. Frightened that the mob would enter the house and harm them, she called the police.

Subsequently, 4 police officers arrived at the premises around 5.30 p.m. In spite of their presence, six Buddhist monks and two others forcibly entered the premises and tore down Christian Scripture passages and banners from the walls. They also removed Bibles and set fire to them. Some members of the mob began hurling stones at the premises while others climbed on the roof and damaged roofing sheets. About 20 asbestos sheets were damaged; glass window panes were shattered, curtains torn down and some furniture was damaged.

A letter was delivered to the pastor's wife by one of the protesters ordering them to stop Christian worship services with immediate effect. The mob refused to leave until this ultimatum was met. Unable to contain the mob, the Officer in Charge of the police station arrived there and scolded the pastor's wife, that the attack was a consequence of their own acts of carrying on a Christian ministry. Fearing for the safety of her two terrified children, the Pastor's wife was forced to make a declaration by loud speaker, apologizing to the mob for their Christian worship services and promising that they will cease with immediate effect. However, the mob did not cease to hurl stones at the premises, damaging the roof and shattering windows. In the meantime the pastor's wife was asked by the police to record a statement and while she was making her statement to the Officer in Charge, she was struck in the eye by a piece of shattered glass from a window.

The counsels handling the Supreme Court case, senior police officers, M.P.s and media personnel were alerted while the attack was in progress. The Attorney General as well as the Inspector General of Police was informed to intervene. The attack lasted for approximately 3 hours. After most of the mob was dispersed, the police were instructed to remove the family out of the immediate vicinity for their safety. A few journalists arrived at the scene. It is reported that one from an independent news agency was assaulted by the mob. A distorted version of the attack was later aired by one local station, claiming that Christians were carrying out the attack.

The pastor's family was moved to a safe location outside the District. His wife was hospitalized and underwent surgery to remove a glass particle embedded in her eye. Thankfully it has not affected her sight.

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On **19th March 2013**, police arrested 4 or 5 persons in connection with the attack. Later that day a large mob with Buddhist monks protested outside the police station, demanding their release. The mob hurled stones at the police station. It is reported that due to the attack on the police as well as orders given by a politician, the arrested were released from custody.

One month after the attack, the family has not been able to return to their home.

Buddhist monks question legality of Christian ministry
I am the Way (Margaya) Church
Sevanapitiya (Polannaruwa District)

19th March 2013

Two young female members of the church were accosted by five Buddhist monks as they were entering the premises to attend a prayer meeting. They were questioned as to why they do not attend the *Daham Pasala* (Dhamma School) conducted in the Buddhist temple. A cameraman was present with the monks and proceeded to videotape the two young ladies being questioned. The monks also questioned the pastor as to the legality of the ministry threatened him not to encourage or permit any Buddhists to attend the prayer meeting.

Police orders prayer meeting to be discontinued
Assemblies of God
Wallasmulla (Hambanthota District)

19th March 2013

The pastor of Assembly of God church received a call from a person claiming to be a CID officer seeking to question him about his church. The pastor went to the local police station and was questioned by the police with regard to a prayer meeting that was being held at the residence of a church member and details of persons attending the meeting. He was cautioned by the police to be diligent due to the situation of religious tension prevalent in the country.

24th March 2013

During the evening, Police officers visited the church member's house where the prayer meetings were held and questioned her as to the legality of the prayer meetings. She was also summoned to the police station and warned of possible attack on the prayer meeting and advised to stop. She affirmed her legal right to have prayer gatherings in her home and refused to discontinue the prayer meetings.

Police orders worship services to stop temporarily, subsequent to complaint by Buddhist monks

**Heavenly Vision Church
Kurunegala (Kurunegala District)**

21st and 22nd March 2013

On the 21st, the pastor was informed by the police of a complaint lodged against him by Buddhist monks, with the accusation that he was conducting healing services and unethically converting villagers. He was instructed to attend a police inquiry the following day. On the 22nd March, at the police inquiry, there were several Buddhist monks and villagers present. The Buddhist monks insisted the pastor must discontinue worship services as this is a Buddhist village. The pastor denied the accusations of unethical conversion. The police instructed the pastor to discontinue the worship service temporarily until the Officer in Charge returns and investigates the complaint. The pastor was made to place his signature on a document which stated that he will stop the worship services temporarily.

On **23rd March**, the Christian members of the church submitted a petition to the police that as per the rights guaranteed under the Constitution of Sri Lanka, they are free to engage in worship and that the order to stop worship services is a breach of this right.

Monks stage public protest against church, worshippers attacked

**Assemblies of God
Kottawa (Colombo District)**

24th March 2013

The pastor and the congregation members were engaged in Sunday worship when at approximately 10 a.m., ten Buddhist monks and a large group of over 100 persons surrounded the church premises. The Buddhist monks (reportedly from the *Bodu Bala Sena*) staged a sit-in protest blocking the main High Level Road and refused to stop the protest, unless the pastor agreed to discontinue the worship service. Concurrently, some members of the mob forcibly entered the church premises and physically assaulted some of the worshippers. Two female worshippers were among those assaulted by the mob. The mob continued to shout threats and hurled verbal abuse at the pastor and the worshippers. The mob continued to disrupt traffic for several hours.

Some journalists were present covering the protest and it was reported in a few news media, erroneously claiming that the church is not registered. While the Sri Lankan law does not require places of worship to be registered, the Assemblies of God is a well established Christian denomination incorporated under Act of Parliament in 1947.

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A police complaint falsely accusing 4 youth from the church of physically assaulting, some Buddhist youth was lodged in the police station. The 4 accused youth were asked to give statement in relation to same. The previous day, the pastor received information from the police that there will be a protest against the church and hence a few police officers were already present in the area. The police office instructed the pastor to stop the worship services temporarily for his protection.

A case was filed in the Magistrate Courts holding number B/ 3146 for breach of peace against the protesters and the pastor. The case was heard on 27th March 2013 and postponed to 5th April 2013. The case is continuing.

Prayer meeting disrupted by mob, pastor injured

Believers Fellowship

Ambalanthota (Hambanthota District)

24th March 2013

While the pastor and about 15 other Christians were engaged in prayer at about 10.20 a.m., 25 Buddhist monks from the *Bodu Bala Sena* together with a mob of about 50 persons forcibly entered the premises and disrupted the prayer meeting. The mob assaulted several persons who were engaged in prayer and caused damage to furniture and shattered the glass window panes. The pastor was hit in the eye with a rod causing injury.

The police was informed of the attack taking place, but arrived 2 hours later by which time the mob had dispersed. The pastor was admitted to the Hambanthota government hospital for treatment. The damage caused to the premises is estimated to be over Rupees 100,000. A police complaint was lodged by the pastor.

Pastors visited / questioned by unidentified persons

There were reports from many parts of the country of such incidents, ranging from the **Southern Province, Central hills, North Central Province and Western Province.**

The following are some verified locations:

Kandy, Gampola and Matale Districts (Central Hills)

During the last 2 weeks of March 2013

Pastors of the following churches reported being visited and questioned with regard to their Christian ministry by unidentified persons.

1. Assemblies of God, Pussellawa, Kandy
2. Lighthouse Church, Hatharaliyadda, Kandy
3. UPC Church, Paththunpitya, Nawalapitya, Kandy

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4. New Life Church, Nawalapitya, Kandy
5. Mizpha Church, Nawalapitya, Kandy
6. New Assembly of God, Nawalapitya, Kandy
7. Shalom Church, Westhall, Kandy
8. Navagivisuma Church, Udahantenna, Gmapola
9. Lighthouse Church, Galewela, Matale

**Polonnaruwa District (North Central Province)
Between 23rd March and 1st April 2013**

1. Church of the Foursquare Gospel, Polonnaruwa
2. Assemblies of God, Polonnaruwa
3. Independent Church, Polonnaruwa

**Police orders prayer meeting to be discontinued
Wallasmulla (Hambanthota District)**

06th April 2013

The police officers arrived at the residence of a church member where a prayer meeting was held, while she was absent. Her son who was there was instructed to come to the police station. The member's son, who is also not a Christian and has no connection to the prayer meetings held in his mother's house, was instructed to place his signature upon a document which stated that the prayer meetings will be discontinued in the premises. (This incident is continued from 19th and 24th March 2013)

07th April 2013

Two officers from the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) arrived at the premises and instructed the Church member to discontinue the prayer meetings according to the instructions of the OIC of the area police station. The meetings have since been discontinued.

It has come to light that neighbors of this lady have been questioned by the police. Later they have been summoned to the police station and 'advised' that if the house where the prayer meetings are taking place is attacked - in a manner similar to the attack that took place in Weeraketiya - the mobs are likely to attack their own neighbouring houses as well and hence it is in their own best interest to inform the police if the pastor visits that home or attempts to resume prayer meetings.

Arson attack

Assemblies of God

Sooriyawewa (Hambanthota District)

24th April 2013

Part of a closed down shop space (room), situated within the premises occupied by the pastor was set on fire during the night, by unidentified persons. An entry was lodged at the Sooriyawewa Police station on 1st May 2013 (No. CIB 204/08).

Pastor set up and falsely accused of hiding explosives

Believers Church

Aralaganwila (Polonnaruwa District)

27th April 2013

During the morning, Police officers visited the pastor and conducted a search in his premises, looking for hidden explosives. They informed him that they were acting on a tip off received by the police that he was hiding bombs (explosives). They found one hand grenade exactly where the anonymous caller had said it would be, in a pile of sand in the garden. The pastor was taken in by the Police for questioning. However, finding that the accusation was false and that he was being set up, he was released after recording his statement.

Police order not to continue worship services

HBI Opma Ministry

Deniyaya (Galle District)

27th April 2013

The pastor received news that there will be a protest against his ministry. He was visited by the Police and questioned as to the registration of the church. He was ordered to stop worship services and prayer meetings.

Anti-Christian rally, hate speech – forces church to close down

Assemblies of God

Sooriyawewa (Hambanthota District)

04th May 2013

An anti-Christian and anti-Muslim public rally was organized by the *Sinhala Ravaya* group, the Buddhist clergy of the Sooriyawewa temple and local businessmen, near the Sooriyawewa bus stand, at 2 pm. Handbills circulated about the meeting called upon Sinhala Buddhists to rally together to be informed about ‘*enemy forces of Buddhism and their activities*’. Another handbill called upon Sinhala Buddhist businessmen to close shops, raise a Buddhist flag and gather together for a meeting about ‘*extremist missionary groups operating in Sooriyawewa against the Sinhala race and Buddhism*’.

The pastor was informed by the Police and the Criminal Investigation Division officers (CID) that there is a threat of attack on the church after the above mentioned rally. Some persons attempted to come to the church premises before the rally began but police turned them away. During the rally, Buddhist monks spoke against Christianity and churches in degrading language, inciting hatred against them. Muslims too were verbally attacked. As the situation turned volatile police officers again warned the pastor and his family to vacate the premises and they did so at about 5 pm. The next day's worship service was cancelled. Police officers questioned the pastor on the legality and registration of the church, number of persons attending the worship service etc.

The pastor was asked to come for two subsequent inquiries at the Police station on 8th April and 15th April. The Police told the pastor that they had to legal right to have Christian worship services and advised that they close down 'for their own safety'. However, at the meeting on the 15th April, the Officer in Charge (OIC) agreed that the church has a right to continue. However, the church members feel insecure and under threat to meet as before for worship.

Meetings convened by District Secretary Hambanthota Hambanthota District

10th May 2013

The District Secretary (DS) of Hambanthota who is the highest official representing the Government in a District called a meeting of other local government officials, high ranking police officers from the Province, an official coordinating the Christian Affairs Department at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Buddhist clergy and Christian clergy (including about three Christian pastors) for a meeting to address issues affecting religious harmony in the District. A letter dated 24th April 2013, under the signature of the Hambanthota District Secretary Mr. R.C. De Soysa titled 'Activities carried out harming religious harmony' was sent to some of the clergy, inviting them for the meeting.

At the meeting, there were questions raised as to the legality of the churches led by pastors. During the tense meeting which lasted about 3 hours, Buddhist clergy set forth various accusations against the pastors but the pastors were not given much opportunity to speak. At the end of the meeting, the DS instructed the Police to bring all pastors from the District be present at a subsequent meeting (set for the 16th and later postponed to the 17th May). An indirect ultimatum was given to the pastors to show proof of their 'legality' or they will be closed down - either legally or by the 'law of the jungle' (*kela neethiyen*).

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On Friday 17th May 2013, at the follow up meeting, all the pastors from the District who were informed by police to attend the meeting as well as senior Denominational leaders representing two of the main Denominations present in the area attend the meeting. Others present were the DS, other local government officials, Police officers, and the official coordinating the Christian Affairs Department at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Buddhist clergy from Hambanthota. One of the Buddhist monks present said that they have already closed down 17 churches. There were demands and threats to close those functioning in Hambanthota. After a volatile meeting of more accusations by Buddhist clergy and hostile comments from officials, the pastors and their leaders explained that the law of the land gives them a right to practice their religion anywhere in Sri Lanka and that the law does not require registration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. They also explained that some of the larger Denominations were in fact incorporated under Act of Parliament and have a long history of presence in this country. The meeting closed with a decision that a follow up meeting will be held in 3 months time. Although there was no decision taken to close down any churches at this meeting, the situation in the District remains tense.

**Arson attack, burning down door
Assembly of God
Angunukolapalassa (Hambanthota District)**

27th May 2013

The front door of a house where prayer meetings are held was set on fire and destroyed during the night at approximately 1 a.m. A complaint was made to the police but no arrests have been made.

This Christians from this church have not been able to have their Sunday worship service since the incident of 10th March 2013 and the prevalent hostility in the Southern Province targeting Christians. Some of them were meeting in this location for prayer.

**Break-in and desecration of church
St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church
Angulana, Moratuwa (Kaluthara District)**

05th June 2013

Unidentified persons had broken in to the church during the night, and attempted to burn the Blessed Sacrament by pouring petrol on it. However, according to news reports, it had not caught fire and about thirty lit matches were found on the premises. They had also damaged a 143 year old statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary and destroyed the sound system of the church.

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Four perpetrators were later apprehended and according to media reports, released without charge, on the instructions of Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith Arch Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church.

Anti-Christian poster campaign, threat to attack pastor

**Kings Revival Church
Ingiriya (Kaluthara District)**

07th June 2013

At approximately 9.30 a.m., the pastor was visited by two police officers who questioned him about the church. They also informed him that there were large numbers of posters displayed on the town streets against Christian churches. The posters stated “we don’t need a church in the village, all we need is a Buddhist temple, chase the Christian pastor from the village”

Later on the same day, the pastor was informed by the police that there is a threat against him. The church consists of 60-70 congregation members.

Anti-Christian meeting and threats against pastors

Gangavereliya (Kegalle District)

15th June 2013

A meeting was held in the village by Buddhist monks together with Buddhist and Hindu villagers, against Christians. Several posters were put up in the village about the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to restrict activities of the churches and unethical conversions. At least one pastor in the area has received threats to stop worship services.

Violent mob attack injures congregation members and damages church

**Methodist Church of Sri Lanka
Sugankerni, Valachchennai (Batticaloa District)**

16th June 2013

While the Sunday morning service was in progress, a mob entered the church premises armed with clubs, knives and swords. The mob began to shout at the pastor and the congregation members to stop the worship service and to close down the church. They beat up worshippers and the pastor causing injury. Some of the injured victims were admitted to the Valachchenai hospital. The mob further caused serious damage to the modest church building.

False allegations against a pastor
Assembly of God
Ambalanthota (Hambanthota District)

16th June 2013

At Approximately 3.30 p.m., the pastor of the above church was on his way to the village shops when he came across a meeting held in the village by Buddhist monks from *Sinhala Ravaya* and a group of villagers. A man from the village who was attending the meeting saw the pastor and identified him as a Christian pastor to the Buddhist monks who were leading the meeting. Some of the Buddhist monks demanded the pastor to come up on stage. Fearing that he may be assaulted, the pastor fled from the area and made his way to the local police station. However, the Buddhist monks pursued him to the police station and falsely accused him of taking pictures and videos of the meeting. The pastor denied the allegations to the Officer in Charge (OIC). Subsequently, police let the pastor return to his home.

Reportedly, this meeting was part of the march from Kataragama to Colombo organized by *Sinhala Ravaya* to collect signatures against cattle slaughter. A Muslim owned beef stall was set on fire by them on 18th June in Tangalle - which is another coastal town in South - during the march.

Mob attack foiled

17th June 2013

The pastor received a telephone call from the officer in charge (OIC) of the local police station that there was information of an attack on the pastor. At approximately 9 a.m., a mob of about 30 persons with 5 Buddhist monks surrounded the pastor's premises, shouting threats against him. They demanded that the worship services should be discontinued. The presence of the police prevented the attackers from entering the premises. The police succeeded in sending the mob away. The pastor receives threats of attack almost every day.

Pastor and his family assaulted by mob and Buddhist monk

New Life Church
Neluwaththuduwa, Hanwella (Colombo District)

23rd June 2013

At approximately 9.45 a.m., the pastor of the above church was on his way on a personal errand when a Buddhist monk followed the pastor and began to shout at him in derogatory language and physically assault him. The monk picked up a fallen coconut branch and assaulted the pastor. Fearing that he might suffer serious injury the pastor fled, running towards the church, followed by the Buddhist monk. When he neared the church, the pastor found a mob of about 20 young men gathered outside the church

premises waiting to assault him. They surrounded him and began to assault him, falsely accusing him of assaulting the Buddhist monk. The mob then forcibly entered the church, disrupting a worship service that was taking place and began to assault the devotees who were praying. They also caused damage to the musical instruments in the church.

The mob assaulted the pastor's 19 year old son and his 3 year old son. The 3 year old sustained minor head injuries. One member of the mob also attempted to hit the pastor's wife with a wooden club, but some congregation members protected her. The victims alerted the police who arrived and dispersed the mob. The pastor and 4 other congregation members who sustained injuries were taken to the police station and questioned on the incident. The Buddhist monk too was present with some of the other attackers. The Police warned the monk and the attackers that such attacks are in violation of the law. The pastor lodged a police complaint and a case was filed in the Magistrate Courts.

One week prior to the incident the same Buddhist monk had met with the village school principal, instructing him to remove the pastor from the village school committee.

The church has a congregation of 70 persons.

Anti-Christian meeting and threats against pastors

Gethsamane Church

Kokkawila (Putalam District)

29th June 2013

A meeting was held in the village by Buddhist monks and villagers against Christians. The church was discussed and various accusations leveled against the pastor.

4th July 2013

At approximately 4p.m., two police officers visited the pastor residence and informed his spouse that they have received information of a protest to be held against the pastor, organized by the Buddhist monks of the village. The officers further questioned the legality of the church and its registration; even though Sri Lankan law does not require place of worship to be registered. The pastor requested protection from the police department for the following day.

5th July 2013

The protest which was planned by the Buddhist monks and the villagers was not held due to police presence surrounding the pastor's premises. However, the Monks convened a meeting in the village Buddhist temple. The police instructed the pastor to stop conducting prayer meetings or worship services.

Intimidation by police officers
Assemblies of God
Naula (Matale District)

5th July 2013

At approximately 10 a.m., four police officers in civilian attire visited the pastor's premises where several Christians were gathered together in a time of silent prayer and meditation. The officers claimed they are there to inspect the premises for possible dengue mosquito breeding ground (dengue prevention inspections are conducted only by officers from the Environmental Department and not by police officers in civilian attire). The officers inspected the premises, questioned the pastor about the prayer meeting and asked if he had permission from the state to do so.

A few hours later, two other police officers visited the premises. They informed the pastor that they have received complaints from some villagers that he was unethically converting Buddhist villagers by paying them Rs. 5,000/= each. The officers informed the pastor that a police complaint against him will be lodged for committing a criminal offence. The pastor who had endured attacks and harassment before informed the police that he is innocent of the accusations brought against him, but they are free to inquire in to the matter. The police informed him that an inquiry will be held on the 29th August.

Court orders prior approval from the Ministry of Religious Affairs for worship services to continue
Power Gospel Mission
Kandalama (Matale District)

01st August 2013

The pastor received notice requesting him to be present at the Magistrate Court on 01st August 2013, regarding a case filed against the worship services conducted by him. The case has been filed on the basis of unauthorized religious worship activities taking place in the village. The Magistrate ordered the pastor to obtain relevant approval from the Ministry of *Buddha Sasana* and Religious Affairs, and the matter was fixed for 1st December 2013. Further, the pastor was instructed to stop all worship services until such approval from the Ministry is obtained.

The Sri Lankan law does not require the Ministry of *Buddha Sasana* and Religious Affairs to grant approval in order for any religious worship activity or place of worship.

On a previous occasion when the pastor was asked to stop worship services, he called the police department officials dealing with religious disputes and was advised of his Constitutional right to continue the worship services. There is a clear lack of

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understanding and bias among state officials as well as the justice system on the laws governing fundamental rights, including the right to religious freedom.

The pastor has been serving in the area for the past 10 years and 127 members attend his services.

Forced closure of church by state authorities

Calvary Worship Church Padukka (Colombo District)

04th August 2013

At around 4.30 p.m., two police officers visited the church disrupting the Sunday worship services and asked the pastor to be present at the police station the following day regarding complaints received against the church.

05th August 2013

At the police inquiry, the Officer in Charge (OIC) informed the pastor of a petition filed against the church by a group of Buddhist monks and some villagers. The petition claimed the church is an unauthorized place of worship. The accusations were not based on any legal grounds. The complainants claimed the extent of land owned by the church was only 10 perches and too small to have a place of worship (although the law does not specify an extent of land for a place of worship), also that the worship services cause noise pollution (even though the worship services take place in a sound proof worship hall) and led to disturbing the peace of the village.

Prior to this incident, the pastor was questioned by local authorities on the legality of the church. The Divisional Secretary in a letter dated 15th May 2013 informed the pastor to stop all religious activities, referring to a decision reached by a group vaguely referred to as 'group protecting Buddhism in the provincial area'. Subsequently, a letter from the Ministry of *Buddha Sasana* and Religious Affairs dated 01st August 2013 was also received by the pastor quoting the Divisional Secretary's letter and the decision reached by the group. The letter sent by the Ministry was also quoted to the pastor by the OIC during the police inquiry stating "now I will ensure your church is closed and you will not be able to do anything, since the Ministry has called you an unauthorized place." (These letters do not form any legal basis to close down a place of worship).

The church has been functioning in the said area for the past 20 years.

A case was filed in the Magistrate Court of Sri Lanka by the church, challenging the classification of the church as an unauthorized place of worship. The case will be heard in court on 08th August 2013.

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**Fire crackers thrown into pastors premises
Assemblies of God Church
Agunukolapalassa (Hambanthota District)**

05th August 2013

Shortly after mid night, a group of unidentified persons threw lit fire crackers into the pastor's home, while the family was sleeping inside. The pastor and his family were traumatized by this attack since they were woken up by the deafening noise of explosions close by. Similar acts of intimidation have been carried out against the pastor and his family and chase them away from the village.

Buddhist monks and Police threaten Christians to stop prayer meetings in home

**Gospel to the World
Medawachchiya (Anuradhapura District)**

26th July 2013

At approximately 3 p.m., while a private prayer meeting was going on in a Christian's home, a group of villagers led by 4 Buddhist monks forcibly entered the premises. The group carried cameras and immediately began to take pictures of all the members present at the prayer meeting. The Christians asked them to stop taking pictures; however the group of villagers continued to take pictures, intimidating them. The Buddhist monks threatened the pastor who was present and stated that prayer meetings were illegal. They also warned the Christian house owner that they would assault him if he continued Christian worship activities. Further, the Buddhist monks called the police station and informed them of an unauthorized prayer meeting being conducted. The police officers arrived and spoke on behalf of the pastor, house owner and their Fundamental Right to hold prayer meetings.

11th August 2013

The Christian house owner received a call from the area police station requesting him to come to the police station for an inquiry. A Buddhist monk was already present at the police station. The Officer in Charge (OIC) informed the Christian to stop holding prayer meetings in his premises, further he was threatened with imprisonment in the event he entertains the pastor again at his residence. The house owner fearing imprisonment requested the pastor not to come to his residence and the prayer meetings have been stopped.

**Christian woman threatened to recant her faith
Pitipana (Kaluthara District)**

25th August 2013

At approximately 10.30 a.m., about 30 villagers led by 4 Buddhist monks arrived at a grocery shop owned by a Christian woman and threatened her to remove Christian wall hangings with Bible verses which ornamented her shop. They demanded that she places a Buddha statue in her shop. Further, they threatened her to recant her faith and worship at the Buddhist temple in the village.

**Police officers claim the church as illegal place of worship
Praise Prayer Lanka
Rathmala (Colombo District)**

26th August 2013

The pastor of the church was informed by police officers of the area to attend a police inquiry concerning the religious activities of the church. During the police inquiry, the Officer in Charge (OIC) inquired regarding the functions of the church and informed the representative from the church that the church can no longer function in the said area unless prior approval from the Ministry of *Buddha Sasana* and Religious Affairs is obtained. The OIC gave an ultimatum of 2 weeks for the approval to be obtained from the Ministry.

Sri Lankan legislation does not require prior approval in order for a church to function. The church has been functioning in the area for the past 10 years, since 2003.

Prayer meeting disrupted by mob. Pastor prohibited by Police to not enter village

**Calvary Church
Pitipana, Kalutara District**

27th August 2013

A Christian church worker and his wife were visiting a congregation member's home to participate in a private prayer meeting. Whilst the prayer meeting was in progress at approximately 8 p.m., a mob of about 100 villagers led by 4 Buddhist monks attempted to forcibly enter the premises. They demanded the Christian worker to come out of the premises and continued to shout threats to assault him. The mob accused the Christian worker of converting Buddhist in their village and influencing them. The police was alerted of the incident and a few officers arrived and disbursed the mob. The Christian worker and the house owner were requested to come for a police inquiry together with the Buddhist monks.

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Police inquiry

28th August 2013

The Christian worker and the pastor of the church where he serves attended the police inquiry. The Officer in Charge (OIC) spoke against the activities of the pastor and the worker; he falsely accused them of unethically converting Buddhist, not backing up his accusations with any evidence. The OIC further instructed that no Christian from any other village could enter their village. Under duress, the pastor was forced to place his signature on a document which stated that he will not visit the said village of Pitipana.

Attempted act of arson on pastor's house

Assembly of God Church

Agunukolapalassa (Hambanthota District)

2nd September 2013

At approximately 2.35 a.m., a group of unidentified persons threw plastic bags filled with kerosene and petrol at the pastors' house. The intention appears to be to set fire to the premises. However, the pastor and his family woke up due to the noise caused and when they came out of the house, the attackers ran away. Evidence of lit matchsticks were found outside the premises.

A police complaint was made, complaint number CI56/12. The pastor has been facing a series of similar incidents of threat and intimidation in the recent past.

Threat of attack against church and Sunday service cancelled

Praise Prayer Lanka Church

Rathmalana (Colombo District)

07th September 2013

The pastor received a call from the police station notifying him of information they had received of a threat of attack against the church planned by the *Bodu Bala Sena (BBS)*.

08th September 2013

At approximately 6.30 a.m., about 25 police officers arrived at the church premises and provided protection for the church. They also turned away all the congregation members who were coming to attend the church service. The service was effectively cancelled.

On **26th August 2013**, local police officers informed the church that prior approval needs to be obtained from the Ministry of *Buddha Sasana* and Religious Affairs in order for the church to function in the said area (although by law, there is no such requirement).

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Mob led by Buddhist monks attack Christian prayer gathering
Jeevana Diya Church
Kadjugahadeniya, Meegoda, (Colombo District)

08th September 2013

At approximately 11 a.m., while a group of 30 to 40 Christians were gathered together for prayer, a mob of about 30 villagers led by 3 Buddhist monks forcibly entered the premises. They destroyed all the musical instruments in the premises and caused damage to furniture and glass windows. The pastor who was leading prayer was assaulted by one Buddhist monk who hit him over the head with a guitar until the guitar broke and the pastor fell unconscious to the floor. The pastor's mother who attempted to intervene and begged the monk to stop assaulting her son was scolded in derogatory language and was beaten by some members of the mob. Both the pastor and his mother who is also a heart patient were admitted to the area hospital following the attack.

The other Christians were verbally abused by the attackers who told them that this is a Buddhist village and demanded that the prayer meetings are stopped immediately.

Police officers arrived on the scene after the mob left the premises. No arrests have been made so far.

Church services disrupted
Golathwaye Church
Galmuruwa (Puttalam District)

13th October 2013

At approximately 09.45a.m. whilst the Sunday worship service was in progress, 2 Buddhist monks together with another youth from the village forcibly entered the premises where the worship service was being held. The Buddhist monks together with the youth shouted "Christianity is a western religion, stop all prayer meetings". The Buddhist monk threatened the pastor and the congregation of serious consequences which they will face in the event the worship service activities are not stopped with immediate effect.

14th October 2013

A police officer visited the pastor's premises and informed him to meet the Officer in Charge (OIC) of the area police station. The OIC informed the pastor that a police complaint has been lodged against him claiming that Buddhist statues have been desecrated by him in the village. The pastor denied the false accusations which were lodged against him and explained that he has not done any act of that nature. The OIC informed the pastor that an investigation will be conducted looking into the complaint

filed and instructed the pastor to stop all worship service activities. However, the pastor explained to the OIC his Fundamental Rights to practice and observe his belief.

Villagers complain against the Church

**Church of Glory
Kegalle (Kegalle District)**

11th October 2013

A complaint against the pastor was made by a neighboring villager to the Municipal Council stating that an unauthorised church had been founded in the village. The mayor informed the pastor that he would be visiting his premises and to ensure that the church is closed down.

Pastors premises attacked

**Gospel Power Mission Church
Kandalama (Matale District)**

06th October 2013

At approximately 10.45pm, once the pastor and his family had fallen asleep. An unidentified group of persons began to pelt stones at the pastors' residence. Some of the stones caused damage to the glass windows of the premises.

A police complaint was lodged, holding complaint number 61/88/CID 2.

04th November 2013

At approximately 10.45pm, a group of unidentified persons began to attack the pastors' premises by pelting stones at his house. The attack continued until 11.30pm, the police officers were informed, upon their arrival the attack ceased. The pastor was informed to lodge a police complaint.

Once the police officers left the premises, around 1.15am the attackers once again began to pelt stones at the premises which continued until 1.30am. A police complaint was lodged, holding number CID 1-149/71. The pastor has an ongoing case filed in the Magistrate Courts claiming his church as an unauthorised place of worship. Fearing further attacks, the pastor is holding prayer meetings in various different locations. A congregation of 127 members attend the church.

Buddhist monks and villagers degrade a Christian member at a meeting
Four Square Church
Sevanagala (Monaragala District)

12th October 2013

A meeting was organised by the village Buddhist monks together with the villagers of Sevanagala. The Christian member was informed to be present at the Buddhist temple situated in the village. Upon the pastors arrival, around 20 villagers together with the Buddhist monks who were gathered together began to use derogatory language against the Christian member. The villagers shouted “Don’t bring Christianity to this village” and “This is a Buddhist village; you have no right to be here; you don’t belong here”. The Christian member left the meeting stating his right to belief to the villages and explaining that he has caused no harm to the village.

14th October 2013

Offence of arson committed against Christian member by unidentified group

At approximately 2 a.m. the Christian member and his family were awakened by a fire; their tractor had been set on fire by an unidentified group of persons. This tractor being the only source of the members livelihood, they attempted in vain to save the vehicle. However, it was completely damaged by the fire. The police authorities were immediately informed of this incident. Whilst inspecting the premises, the police officers found a petrol can and traces of petrol within the premises. They further noted that an attempt had also been made to burn down the house with the Christian family.

A police complaint was lodged following which the police officers warned the villagers and spoke against this offence. However, no arrests have been made to date with regard to this offence.

Buddhist monks threaten a Christian member to stop prayer meetings
Anuradhapura (Anuradhapura District)

30th September 2013

At approximately 10 a.m. a mob led by 15 Buddhist monks and 15 other villagers forcibly entered a Christian members premises. The mob began shouting threats stating “We will demolish this house if you don’t stop conducting prayer meetings”. The mob gave an ultimatum to the Christian member to stop prayer meetings conducted in the premises within 3 days, declaring that they would destroy the premises if the prayer meetings continued.

01st October 2013

The police requested the Christian member in a call to be present at the police station for an inquiry at 9.30 a.m. However, shortly after the call, a police vehicle arrived at the

Christian persons premises and without prior notice instructed her to come with them to the police station. At the police station, 7 Buddhist monks together with some other villagers were also gathered. The police officer instructed her to stop all prayer meetings conducted at her premises. The police officer further threatened her of arrest under the Emergency Regulations in the event more than 5 people gather at her premises. The Emergency Regulations were only in force in Sri Lanka during the time of the ethnic war and it was used against possible terrorist suspects. The police officer together with the Buddhist monks forced the Christian person to place her signature on a document which stated that she will discontinue all prayer meetings held in her premises with immediate effect.

**Divisional Secretary requests all religious worship activities discontinued
Church of Grace
Warakapola (Kegalle District)**

19th November 2013

The pastor received a letter dated 11th November 2013 from the Divisional Secretariat of the area, stating that the Divisional Secretary has been informed of prayer meetings held at the pastors' premises. The letter further referred to a Circular (reference 08/2009) and explained that religious worship activities taking place at the pastors premises cannot be recommended by the Divisional Secretary in reference to this Circular. The letter further instructed the pastor to stop all religious worship activities taking place in his premises with immediate effect.

The pastor was previously violently attacked on December 2012 and suffered serious physical injuries and damages to his premises. A case is presently ongoing in the Magistrates Courts concerning this attack.

The pastor has been conducting prayer meetings at his premises for the past 8 years. The Sri Lankan legislation does not require prior authorization for the performance of any religious worship activities.

05th December 2013

Government officials visit pastor's premises and add pressure to stop the prayer meetings

At approximately 10am the Grama Sevaka of the village together with an officer from the Government Agents Department visited the pastor's premises. The officials questioned the pastor on prayer meetings conducted at his premises and requested him to stop the prayer meetings in reference to the letter which was sent by the Divisional Secretary. However, the pastor responded that he is entitled to continue with the

religious worship activities taking place in his premises in accordance to the fundamental rights provided in the Sri Lanka Constitution.

Mob attack church premises and demand church to close down

Methodist Church

Habarana (Anuradapura District)

01st December 2013

At the opening day service of the Methodist church, a mob of 200 villagers led by Buddhist monks stormed into the church premises intending to demolish the church building. The mob claimed that a church cannot be opened in the village and demanded that the church be closed with immediate effect.

2 Criminal Investigation Officers (CID) arrived at the incident and instructed the pastor to close down the church and stated that the church has no legal recognition to function in the village. The CID officers further said in accordance with a Circular issued by the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs, the church cannot function if prior approval from the Ministry is not obtained. Sri Lankan legislation does not require registration of church or religious worship places.

Stones pelted at the church premises

God's Word Missionary

Jaffna (Jaffna District)

24th November 2013

At approximately 9.40 a.m. whilst the church service was in progress a group of unidentified persons began to pelt stones at the church premises. A stone hit the left eye of a 15 year old youth who was worshipping during the service; she obtained a serious injury to her eye. The youth was immediately rushed to the hospital where she underwent an eye surgery. The local police station has arrested one person under suspicion.

A place of religious worship forced to obtain registration with the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs

Believers Church

Habarana (Anuradapura District)

02nd December 2013

At approximately 1 p.m. two officers from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) visited the pastor's premises. The CID officers questioned the pastor on the registration of the church and the officers further instructed the pastor to close down the church in the event the church had not been registered with the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and

Religious Affairs. When the pastor questioned the CID officers on the basis of their claims, he found out that they were acting on a letter sent by the said Ministry instructing all places of worship not registered with the Ministry to close down.

The Believers Church is incorporated by an Act of Parliament, which is deemed as the highest form of legal recognition in Sri Lanka. However, the CID officers refused to accept the legal incorporation of the church and insisted that it is mandatory to obtain registration from the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs. The pastor was informed to attend a meeting on 4th December 2013, convened by the Divisional Secretary together with the Buddhist monks.

Believers Church has been functioning in the village for the past 7 years and it has a congregation of 70 members attending the church.

Buddhist monks disrupt services and demand to close the church

Assemblies of God

Divulpitiya (Gampaha District)

08th December 2013

A mob of 12 Buddhist monks forcibly entered and disrupted a prayer meeting in progress. The Buddhist monks questioned the pastor on the legality of the prayer meeting and demanded to stop all religious worship activities.

The pastor has faced violent attacks and been threatened to stop all religious worship activities on previous occasions.

Arson attack on church premises by unidentified group of persons

Jeevana Diya Church

Kadjugahadeniya, Meegoda (Colombo District)

12th December 2013

At approximately 1.45 a.m. the pastor and his family were awakened by a fire. The church premises which is annexed to the pastor's premises had been set on fire by an unidentified group of persons. As the church premises had been built by wooden planks, the front portion of the premises was completely burnt down by the fire. The pastor together with his family ran out of their house escaping the fire just in time.

The pastor immediately called the emergency police hotline. The police officers arrived and investigated into the incident and informed the pastor that either petrol or kerosene oil had been used by the perpetrators for the arson attack on the church.

Earlier this year in September the pastor similarly faced a violent attack led by Buddhist monks and villagers. A case was also filed stating the pastor's church as an "unauthorized place of worship" in the Magistrates Courts, which is presently ongoing. The musical instruments which were damaged in the previous attack, was set aside in the corner of the church to be repaired. However, all the musical instruments were completely burnt in this attack. The pastor suffered damages up to 241,200 Sri Lanka Rupees in the previous attack as well.

The pastor and his family are suffering from tremendous shock. Please pray for the pastor and his family, for God's strength to endure this difficult time.

Protestors stop construction of church

**Methodist Church
Buttala (Monaragala District)**

27th December 2013

In the latest incident, it is reported that approximately 200 protestors demanded the construction of a church to be halted. Although the police and the Divisional Secretariat intervened, the situation remained tense and construction work has been temporarily suspended.

Petrol bombs hurled at premises occupied by Pastor and family

**Samaritan Church
Ahangama (Galle District)**

21st December 2013

At approximately midnight, two petrol bombs were hurled by unidentified assailants into the pastor's premises. The pastor alerted the area police station concerning the attack. Thankfully, the pastor and his family did not suffer any physical injuries.

Pastor shot at by unidentified assailants

Western Province (location and identity withheld for security reasons)

10th December 2013

At approximately 11.30 p.m., the home of the pastor was shot at by unknown gunmen. No injuries were reported. The incident has been reported to the police for investigation.

Buddhist monks stop a Christian from conducting a Christmas program for the village children

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Mahiyangana (Badulla District)

27th December 2013

Buddhist monks forcibly stormed into the Christian's premises demanding the Christmas programme which was in progress to be stopped immediately. The Buddhist monks falsely accused the Christian and his family of unethically converting the villagers. The villagers present at the programme, protested and stated that no person has converted or been forcibly converted by the Christian family. The Christian has been conducting the Christmas programme for several years in the past.

Total – 103