

# Report on the attacks on Muslim properties and places of worship

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From April 15 to May 24

*The Centre for Human Rights and Research (CHR) Sri Lanka*

**5/25/2017**



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# Report on the attacks on Muslim properties and places of worship

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Rajith Keerthi Tennakoon

May 25, 2017

In the past few weeks properties owned by Muslims and their places of worship have been attacked. Meanwhile Bodu Nala Sena (BBS) organization, which had remained relatively inactive after the election of the current administration, have once again come to the fore and have become brazen enough to barge into the office of the Minister of National Co-existence Dialogue and Official Languages, Mano Ganesan and threaten him.

Between 2012 and 2014 similar attacks took place targeting Muslims, which culminated in the racist riots at Aluthgama which caused a number of deaths and close to Rs one billion in property damages. However it seems that the current attacks are much more pre meditated and that the United National Front for Good Governance (UNFGG) is not willing to take action against those who carried out the attacks, similar to the attitude of Mahinda Rajapaksa administration.

CHR reiterates that the right to religion should be protected and that all citizens have the right to be free of discrimination and insecurity because they adhere to a particular faith. The government must also take firm steps against those who violate laws and ensure people of the country feel safe.

In addition to the attacks on Muslim owned properties, a number of churches of Non catholic Christian denominations, in Deniyaya, Ingiriya, Devendara and Vavuniya, have been vandalized in the last 40 days. The attackers expect to cause a fear psychosis among the victims.

CHR believes that the hesitancy of the government, in the last few years, to punish anyone who has been accused of corruption and sectarian activities is the main reason for this resurgence in extremism.

## **Civil Society response**

When minorities were targeted during the Mahinda Rajapaksa administration, a large number of civil society activists spoke out against such activities. However they have been

silent on the current attacks, although it is obvious that the gravity and the frequency of these attacks are increasing.

CHR insists that it is the responsibility of the government to ensure that no citizen feels intimidated because of their beliefs and must take action to create an environment where individuals don't have a reason to fear for their safety.

### **The list of attacks on Muslim owned properties and places of worship**

(These include instances of intimidation)

**16th April, 2017** Petrol Bombs thrown at Four shops owned by Muslims in Godapitiya, Pooruva. Even after a month, the police have still not apprehended the perpetrators.

**17.04.2017** The fences/wall of the Sheik Salih Waliyulla Shrine, in Galle Fort, near the naval base were broken by unidentified persons



**Sheik Salih Waliyulla Shrine in Galle**

**20.04.2017** Two and a half acre land in Mayakkalli, Irakkamam, Ampara was forcefully acquired by a group led by Buddhist monks and construction of a Buddhist vihara commenced which lead to tension in the area.

**25.04.2017** Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) General Secretary Galagodaatte Gnanasara Thero visited the above area and he verbally abused Muslims in the presence of GA.

**08.05.2017** Gnanasara Thero requested government to deport all the Rohingya Muslims arrested off Sri Lankan coast, while attempting to flee Myanmar, stating that these refugees are not welcome in Sri Lanka.

**10.05.2017** Buddhist religious activities conducted on Vesak Day at Mayakkalli, Irakkamam with Police Protection

**14.05.2017** BBS delegation including Gnanasara Thero threatened Muslims, damaged their cow sheds and used derogatory and abusive language against Allah during their visit to Onegama in polonnaruwa. Hiru TV publicized this incident.

**15.05.2017** Unidentified persons attacked a mosque in Panadura old bazaar area with petrol bombs around 3am. Interior of the mosques was damaged in the attack. No suspects have been arrested.



**Damaged mosque in Kohilawatta,Wellampitiya**

**16.05.2017** Al Ibraheemiya Jummah mosque in Kohilawatta, Wellampitiya, Colombo was attacked by a group of 8 persons around 1.45am. Mosque was damaged. No suspects arrested.

**16. 05. 2017** Around 200 persons attacked 16 houses in Neenakkani, Thoppur and a large number of people left the area.

**16. 05. 2017** At a press conference at BBS HQ, Gnanasara Thero once again used hate language against Muslims and insulted Allah

**17. 05. 2017** In Oluvil, Panadura a bakery and a communication centre that belongs to a Muslim was petrol bombed

**18. 05. 2017** Last Chance electrical shop in Chilaw was attacked at around 2 am.

**21. 05. 2017** Jumma Mosque in Mallawapitiya was petrol bombed. However Police have not arrested anyone.



**Lovers Bug Elpitiya**

**21. 05. 2017** Lovers Bug, a shop in Elpitiya, Galle was destroyed. Police has not arrested anyone so far.

**22. 05. 2017** A carpet shop owned by a Muslim, in Wijerama, Maharagama was set fire to.



**The Carpet Shop in Wijerama , Maharagama**

**23. 05. 2017** A Muslim owned shop in Kahawatte, Ratnapura was set fire to.

**24. 05. 2017** Harcourts Pharmacy in Navinna attacked.



**Kahawatta**

**Panadura**

**Harcourts Nawinna**

Rajith Keerthi Tennakoon,  
Executive Director,

25<sup>TH</sup> Of May 2017

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