SILENT SUPPRESSION

RESTRICTIONS ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS OF CHRISTIANS 1994-2014

Acknowledgements

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWARD

Over the years, the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL) has worked extensively to strengthen research on the freedom of religion or belief.

Silent Suppression: Restrictions on Religious Freedoms of Christians (1994-2014), is one such project undertaken by the NCEASL to strengthen religious liberty research in Sri Lanka. This study, which systematically analyses trends of restrictions faced by Christians over the past twenty years, aims to provide activists, academics, civil society, religious leaders and other relevant stakeholders, key insights on the nature of religious discrimination and violence faced by Christians in Sri Lanka.

It is important to acknowledge that this report is a collaborative achievement. As such, we are thankful to all who have contributed to its production. We, however, are especially grateful to Mrs Roshini Wickremesinhe (Attorney-at-Law, LL.B, University of Colombo), the former Director for Advocacy of the NCEASL for her meticulous documentation of incidents till 2014, Ms Yamini Ravindran (Attorney-at-Law, LL.B, University of London), the Legal and Advocacy Coordinator of the NCEASL for her tireless work in coordinating this publication, and the politics research practice of Verité Research for their outstanding work in compiling this report.

We are also indebted to USAID for supporting this effort; without which, this study would not be possible.

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General Secretary
NCEASL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THIS RESEARCH STUDY on religious discrimination and violence targeting Christians in Sri Lanka is based on over 20 years of reports gathered by the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka. The methodology used was created by Verité Research in 2013 as a form of classifying incidents reported by religious freedom groups into discernible categories as a way of understanding emerging trends in religious intolerance and violence.

A total of 972 events were analysed, and the primary findings are as follows:

There were two significant spikes in violence, the first in 2004 and the second in 2013. Not all incidents were directly related to national level events. However **both spikes corresponded to key developments in the national stage**. In 2004, the first Sinhala-Buddhist political party led by Buddhist clergy, the JHU, was formed. The party championed a bill prohibiting conversion to other religions and later a constitutional amendment to make Buddhism the official religion of Sri Lanka. In 2013, national actors such as the Bodu Bala Sena and Sinhala Ravaya (later Sihala Ravaya), became major national actors promoting a virulent Buddhist extremism. Both groups were able to garner prominent media coverage and act with impunity, suggesting tacit state support.

The meta-analysis of trends demonstrates that problems of religious intolerance are acute and regularly escalate to violence. Threats, Intimidation and Coercion was the most common category featuring in 35% of events between 1994-2014. However, almost **45% of events involved either physical violence or property damage.** The propensity towards violence is a deviation in the trend compared to the Muslim minority community were targeted by hate groups in the early 2000s and more significantly in post-war years which primarily focused on hate campaigns.

The district with the highest frequency of events between 1994 and 2014 is Gampaha (146) followed by Colombo (135). However, Polonnaruwa (a majority Buddhist area) and Batticaloa (a majority Hindu area) showcased the highest number of events when considered as a proportion of its population. This suggests that religious violence is more common in areas by dominant religious groups and where Christians are small minorities. **This indicates a pattern of targeting vulnerable minorities** as opposed to inter-religious tensions between competing religious groups. In the post-war period, the Buddhist-dominated Hambantota district, in the 'deep south' of Sri Lanka, had the highest number of incidents recorded both in absolute terms and when considered as a proportion to district populations.

Two of the primary targets that featured in approximately 67% of events between 1994 and 2014 were pastors/members of the clergy (398 events) and places of worship (430 events). One third of all events (133 events) targeting the clergy have taken place in the post-war period between 2010 and 2014. Similarly, 34% of events targeting places of worship also took place in the post-war period. The high incidence and increase in violent events during peacetime was a notable trend.

Members of the clergy, usually from other faiths, were responsible for 24% of incidents committed against pastors and 19% of events against places of worship. This is significant as it shows that the level of animosity between religions or religious denominations has led to physical violence or other restrictions on religious freedom. 177 events featured mobs led by Buddhist monks. Of these events, over 35% of the incidents involved the *Destruction of Property* or *Physical Violence*.

State involvement, particularly in the post-war period, remained a key factor and often state officials served to restrict, rather than protect the religious freedoms of Christians. **In 2013 and 2014 alone, 39 churches were forced to suspend activities** forced by the state (mostly actions carried out by police officials or administrative civil servants) or shut down for not having the 'proper authorisation to conduct worship services' under the authority of state legislation with a blatant disregard for the freedom of worship.

INTRODUCTION

Sʀɪ Lᴀɴᴋᴀ has long been a fragmented paradise. The conclusion of its three decade-long civil war brought an ostensible peace but did not deal with the social fissures and tensions that brought about the conflict. It also saw the rise of new fault lines, particularly the strong combination of ethno-religious tensions between Buddhists and Muslims.

The rise of hate groups such as the *Bodu Bala Sena* (BBS) and the culmination of tensions in the riots in Aluthgama and neighbouring towns highlighted the extent of the threat posed by religious intolerance. However, intolerance, discrimination and violence towards other religious minorities remain largely absent in public debate.

The following report analyses over 20 years of data collected from Christian churches (both independent and of multiple denominations) by the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL) which demonstrates consistent and often violent challenges to religious freedom in Sri Lanka. The study is limited to Christian churches and denominations monitored by NCEASL due to the absence of comparable data sets for religious groups not monitored by NCEASL.

The 972 events of religious intolerance, violence and discrimination have been identified and classified through data provided by NCEASL using a rigorous classification system developed by Verité Research. As attested by the data, religious intolerance in Sri Lanka is not a recent phenomenon that simply filled a vacuum left by the civil war.

Overall, several key trends emerge. First, restrictions on religious freedoms of Christians are overt and often violent. Second, the restrictions that have emerged are not a result of competing religious groups but small minorities facing restrictions by majority (and majoritarian) religious communities. Third, the state and the political climate have played a major role in exacerbating the number and intensity of the restrictions placed on religious minorities.

The reasons for an anti-Christian sentiment espoused by a section of the Buddhist population are manifold and will be explored further in greater detail. The study also looks at the role of the Buddhist clergy in organising or leading people in demonstrations that have frequently resulted in violence against Christian minorities. This study will also demonstrate however, that Christians are under attack not only by the Buddhist majority but also sporadically by Hindus, and infrequently, other Christians (reportedly in all instances Roman Catholics). It must be noted at this juncture that although in Sri Lanka parts of the population are frequently referred to by their ethno-religious status (e.g. Sinhala Buddhists) this study will only use their religious affiliation for the purpose of identifying inter-religious tensions.

Overview of Research and Report Contents

The data provided by the NCEASL for the years 1994 to 2014 has been classified into various primary and secondary categories, in order to analyse the trends in religious tensions and violence against Christians in Sri Lanka over a 20-year period. Although NCEASL has been monitoring religious tensions since 1987, this study does not analyse data collected prior to 1994 as the data collected was sufficiently detailed for the purposes of the analysis.

Classification

The data provided by NCEASL was categorised as 'events' with each individual event assigned a unique ID based on date and following a standardised format e.g. the sixth event that took place in April 2005 would be 05/Apr/E6.[1] For the purposes of analysis, each event was entered into a database with the corresponding ID and with classifications of the fields listed below. Each 'Event' was categorised in terms of 'Type of Incident', 'Primary Targets', 'Key Perpetrators' etc.

To qualify as an 'Event' the report provided by NCEASL had to fit one of the five types listed under the 'Type of Incident' category. These were;

- Destruction of Property

- Physical Violence

- Hate Campaign or Propaganda

- Threats, Intimidation or Coercion

- Discriminatory Practice or Action

A report that did not broadly fit any of the 5 options in the 'Type of Incident' category was not classified as an 'Event'.

Each event is a single data point. Therefore a series of related events or multiple events taking place at the same location at different times were classified as separate events. However, to prevent double counting a single event featuring multiple dimensions (e.g. hate speech and assault), multiple targets or multiple perpetrators was not classified as multiple events. Indicators such as total events or events by category therefore reflect the actual total number of events that occurred in the given period.

To reflect the full scope of an event however, single events therefore could feature one or more of the primary categories listed below e.g. Figure 3. The cumulative totals within these categories can therefore exceed the total number of events.

In addition to the 'Type of Incident', the primary categories analysed were:

- Primary Targets

- Key Perpetrators

- Perpetrator's Religious Affiliation

- Police Action

- Government Officials' Action

- Legality of Place of Worship

For each event, the primary targets are identified as an individual/s; a local community; a place of worship; a business; the wider community; and/or institutions, clergy, officials or public figures.

Similarly, the key perpetrators are categorised as unaffiliated/unidentified individuals or groups; political/social

movements or politicians; institutions or public servants; commercial interest groups or private sector firms; and/or a religious institutions or clergy. Key perpetrators were only classified as explicitly identified by the NCEASL reports. If no perpetrators were identified the 'unaffiliated/unidentified' category was used. No attempts were made to discern the identity of perpetrators based on other information within the event reports.

For each incident, the involvement of the police or of a government official is documented based on the NCEASL event reports. This involvement could be active/tacit; positive; or they could be inactive or absent.

Events can feature one or more type of incident, primary target, and key perpetrator categories. Therefore, the cumulative total of any of the above will be greater than the total number of events.

Parameters of the Study

Events are determined to be religiously motivated based on NCEASL classifications. However, certain events were omitted if Verité Research could not identify the event as religiously motivated based on the NCEASL report. The data was also checked carefully for possible duplicate recording of events and when found the record was omitted.

The event records provided by NCEASL may not always be exhaustive lists, but no attempt has been made to add to that list from third party sources of data. Apart from the basic error checking and data cleaning as described below, no attempt has been made to verify the data through third party sources.

There are certain gaps in the data that cannot be accounted for. For example, there are only 2 incidents recorded for the year 2007; 7 incidents recorded in 1998; and 8 incidents in 1995. Limitations in data collection must be taken into consideration, as such drastic drops in event frequency are not consistent with the prevailing trends. NCEASL staff noted that 2007 in particular represents some a loss of recorded data and noted that as many as 35 reports may have been received but the information was no longer verifiable and could not be used in this analysis.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

BETWEEN 1994 AND 2014, there were a total of 972 events directed at Sri Lanka's Christian community, as recorded by the NCEASL. These unique events recorded during the period in question have been categorised by event type, primary targets, and key perpetrators in the sections that follow.

The mid-2000s tensions saw the first peak in the period studied, but there was also a significant proportion of incidents that took place against Christians in the 1990s. The longevity in this trend suggests that an antipathy towards Christians, particularly evangelising movements, runs deep and that little has changed for Christians' ability to fully exercise religious freedoms across successive governments and changes in political context. According to Matthews, a great resentment was still identifiable amongst certain Sri Lankans 'who feel bitter about continuing Western and 'foreign' influences, including Christianity, which are perceived as polluting a national Buddhist heritage'.[2]

Moreover, the huge human cost of the civil war, the weak economy, and the sheer longevity of the war 'intensified Buddhist nationalism and arguably made it more bellicose'.[3] Compounded with a fear of the 'other', many Christians found themselves at the receiving end of Buddhist frustrations. Additionally, the perception that the LTTE received financial backing from Christian Tamils outside the country further exacerbated the antipathy of ardent Sinhala Buddhists towards their fellow Christians.[4]

There is a particularly high incidence of events in 2004, with 107 incidents recorded for the year, accounting for 11% of the events that took place over 21 years. There is also a sustained rise in the level of incidents from 2009 onwards.

The spikes in 2003 and 2004 can be explained by a number of factors, triggered in part by the death of the influential monk Gangodawila Soma. Soma Thera propounded radical 'anti-Christian, anti-Tamil and Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist sermons',[5] which resonated with significant factions of the population. When he suddenly died of a heart attack during a trip to Russia in December 2003, 'his supporters claimed he was murdered as part of a Christian conspiracy to undermine Buddhism, and this led to renewed attacks on Christian church houses and clergy'.[6]

With the electoral success of the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) party in April 2004 came a rising tide of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. When in May 2004 the JHU's Omalpe Sobhitha Thera announced the *Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion* bill, claiming, "Whereas the Buddhist and non-Buddhist are now under serious

FIGURE 1: TOTAL NUMBER OF INCIDENTS
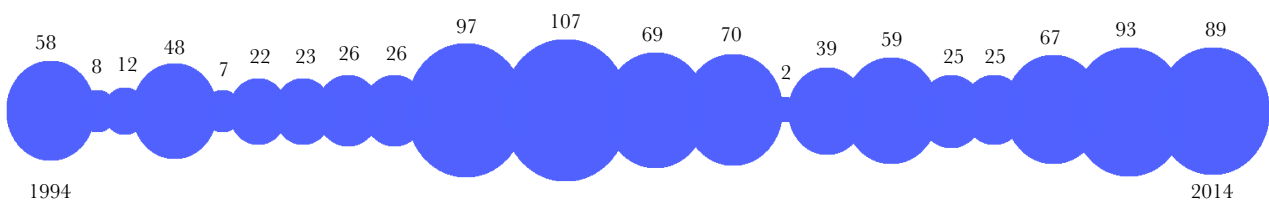
N.B. See information above on limitations in available data for 1995, 1998 and 2007

threat of forcible conversions and proselytising...no person shall convert or attempt to convert, either directly or otherwise, any person from one religion to another by the use of force or by allurement or by any fraudulent means nor shall any person aid or abet any such conversion", the prevailing sensitive issue of 'unethical conversions' by evangelicals and Christian missionaries was manipulated.[7] This resulted in heightened tensions and violence against Christians. In turn, the Supreme Court's decision which ruled certain provisions would need to be subject to change or require a constitutional amendment in August 2004 was followed by 'another spike in anti-Christian violence' across the nation.[8] Subsequently, in October 2004, the JHU went further by attempting to pass an amendment to the Constitution that would declare Buddhism the state religion.[9]

The rise in religious intolerance from 2009 onwards coincided with changing political context in Sri Lanka following the end of a bitter and protracted civil war. Extremist organisations or political movements that were virulently 'Sinhala-Buddhist' such as the *Bodu Bala Sena* (BBS) and *Sinhala Ravaya* (SR) were able to act with impunity and garner significant media coverage suggesting state protection. Thus it is important to analyse the role that the state has played in the restriction of religious freedom in the post-war era.

The post war years leading upto 2013 saw the emergence of hate groups, including some led by Buddhist monks such as the SR. Among other campaigns against religious minorities, the period also saw e highly public attacks on the Anuradhapura and Dambulla mosque in 2011 and 2012. The year 2013 saw the rise to prominence of the BBS. But whilst the BBS played an active role in hate campaigns targeting Sri Lanka's Muslim community, there was rarely a strong correlation between this organisation and local outbreaks of violence against Christians. Furthermore, the rise in religious violence was not necessarily a coordinated and organised effort across the nation. However, the tacit acceptance of these violently 'nationalist' anti-Christian and anti-Muslim organisations by the state is likely to have emboldened unaffiliated perpetrators at a grassroots level and in some cases national extremist organisations appear to have played a role in supporting and organising local groups.[10]

In addition, there was a correspondence between the state's actions to curtail religious freedom and the huge increase in other non-state actors' perpetration of religious violence. For example, similar to the rise of violence following the JHU's proposed amendment, after the Ministry for Buddha Sasana passed a Circular in 2008 requiring any new place of worship to have state authorisation, another gradual upsurge of violence and discrimination was prevalent. This is further evaluated in the section titled 'The State'.

Breakdown of Events by Date

As highlighted by the chart above, there was a surge in the number of events that took place between 2010 and 2014. These events accounted for almost 31% of all events recorded over 21 years. The most frequently recurring type of event between 2010 and 2014 was *Threats, Intimidation or Coercion*. This is largely consistent with the trends seen in the previous 16 years. However, when compared to the previous 5-year period, there is a marked increase in the number of events (from 38 incidents to 100 incidents) involving some form of *Discriminatory Practice or Action*. As will be highlighted in the section below entitled 'the State', many of these acts of discrimination involved some degree of state involvement, suggesting that the state increasingly comes to play a larger role in the perpetration of religious discrimination in the post-war era.

FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF INCIDENTS 2010-2014

Year	Incidents
2014	89
2013	93
2012	67
2011	25
2010	25

ANALYSIS OF TRENDS

All events have been categorised by **Type, Key Perpetrators and Primary Targets** to understand the trends in restrictions on religious freedom faced by Christians. They illustrate the nature of the events where Christians have been targeted on the basis of their religious identity or prevented from freely engaging in religious practice.

Type of Event

Throughout the 21-year period, Threats, Intimidation or Coercion remained the most commonly recurring category in the events and featured in 35% of events. Typically, this type of event included a pastor or members of a church congregation being threatened with violence for worshiping or engaging in some other form of religious practice. A common feature of such events was that a mob would gather outside a church and prevent members of the congregation from entering. Often, mobs would force their way into a church whilst a service was in session and disrupt it by threatening the Christian clergy and the churchgoers. Other instances involved school children being threatened by their teachers or principals to stay away from church services and practice the religion that the school taught.

Violent Incidents

A high proportion of the 972 events in the 21 year period had elements of violence which included the Destruction of Property and/or Physical Violence targeting Christians.

As illustrated below, out of a total of **972 recorded events, 437 or just under 45% involved either physical violence or property damage.** The Destruction of Property ranged from damaging religious symbols in a church to burning a pastor's house down. On many occasions, a church was found to be broken into, with Bibles and other property stolen, or chairs destroyed. Churches were burnt down or partially damaged by arson, throwing stones and a particularly revolting act that recurred multiple times in the late 1990s was the throwing of faeces at or into Christian homes or churches.

The propensity towards violence is a deviation from patterns in events which hate groups targeted the Muslim minority community in the early 2000s and more significantly in post-war years. Hate speech was the dominant approach in targeting Muslims, with 302 recorded events in 2013 and 200 in 2014.[11] The delegitimisation and 'othering' of the much larger Muslim community may have been instrumental towards justifying the violence against Muslims in large-scale events such as the riots in Aluthgama, June 2014. However, isolated attacks against very small Christian minority populations in areas where other religions are dominant appear to manifest more directly in threats and violence.

Events classified under *Physical Violence* could range from striking a blow to murder. Very often, Christian clergy found themselves assaulted inside their places of worship by angry mobs or individuals. The only two verified incidents recorded for the year 2007 were both acts of physical violence. The first involved the death of a pastor, who was shot first in his stomach and then in his head; the second involved the disappearance of another pastor along with his two sons and another young man they were with.

FIGURE 3: TYPE OF EVENT

444

318

188

117

187

Destruction of property

Physical violence

Hate campaign or propaganda

Threats, intimidation or coercion

Discrimination

FIGURE 4: VIOLENT INCIDENTS

70

30

55

29

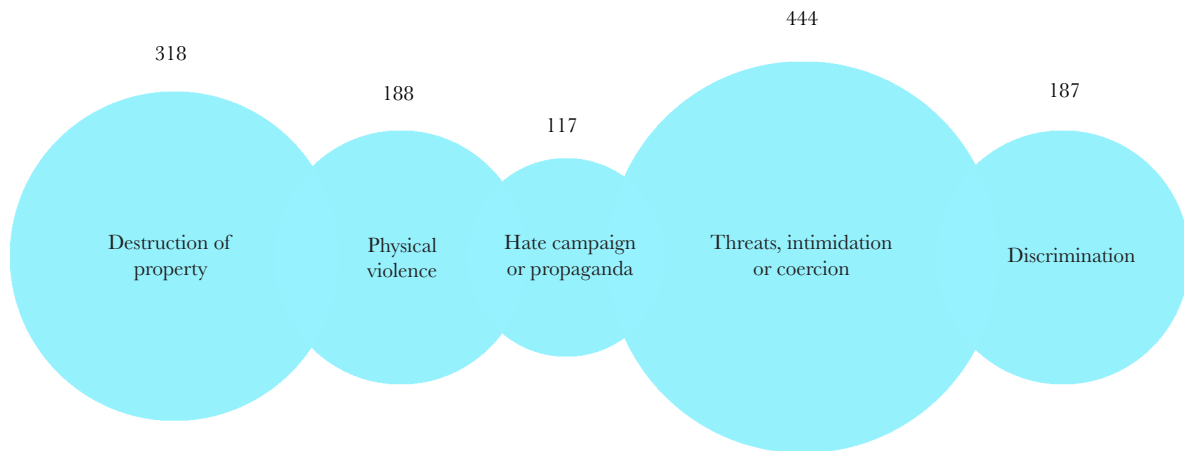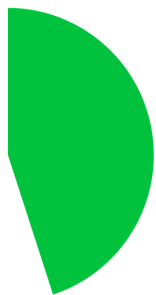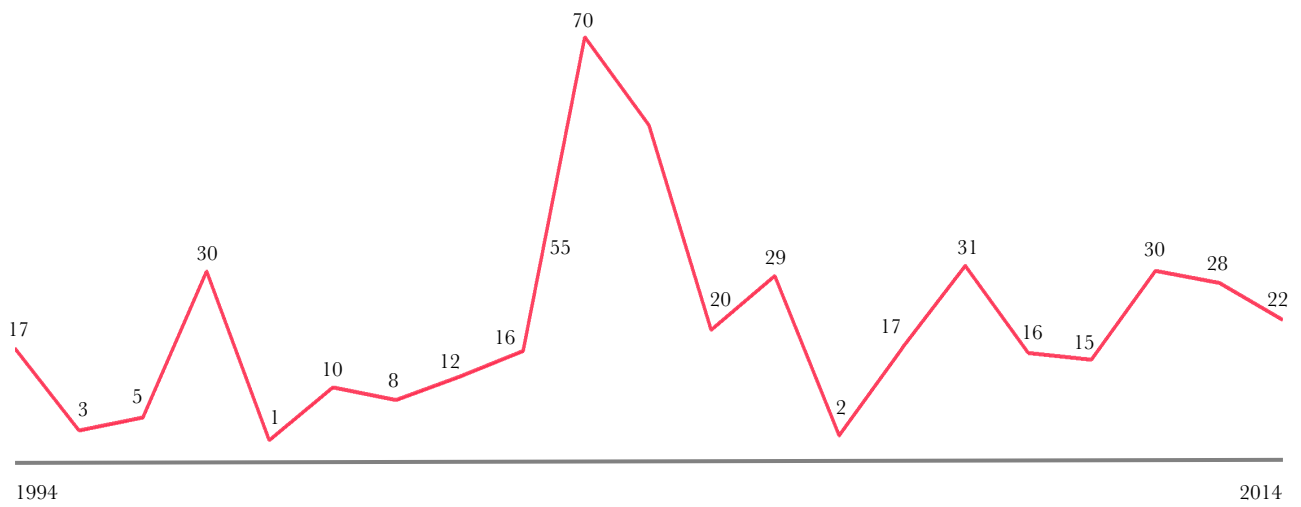31

30

28

17

16

20

17

22

10

8

12

16

3

5

1

2

16

15

1994

2014

NEARLY

45%

of all events involved either physical violence or property damage.

EVENTS BY DISTRICT

THE DISTRICT with the highest frequency of events between 1994 and 2014 is Gampaha (146) followed by Colombo (135). In contrast, Kilinochchi does not appear to have any events recorded in the duration of this study; Mulaitivu and Vavuniya only recorded two events each.

It is also useful to adjust for variances in population by looking at the number of events taking place in a district, as a percentage of its population. Some districts with smaller populations have a greater proportion of violence when compared densely populated districts which may not be clear when looking at absolute figures.

When taking population size into account, it is Polonnaruwa- a relatively rural and Buddhist majority district- that boasts the highest number of events as a proportion of its population. According to census data 89.6% or 364,229 people in Polonnaruwa identified as Buddhists while only 1.1% identified as Christians (3,192 as Catholic, and 1,276 as 'Other' Christian).[12] There was a spike of events in 2006, with 14 incidents having taken place in Polonnaruwa. Out of these, 8 events involved the Four Square Gospel Church and its surrounding community in Aralaganwila. The events began in February when a church worker was threatened by a mob led by a Buddhist monk to stop Christian worship services. A few days later, a large mob of over a hundred people prevented the congregation from attending the Sunday service. In December 2006, the church was burned down in the middle of the night by an unidentified group or individual. Two weeks after the church was attacked, a poster campaign was begun in Aralaganwila against the church, and the Pastor reportedly faced threats and intimidation by those opposed to his ministry.

The district with the second highest incidence of events as a proportion of its population was Batticaloa. The Christian population makes up only 8.9% of the total population in Batticaloa. Being a majority Hindu (64.3%) and Muslim (25.4%) area, this represents a significant shift away from the pattern decipherable above in Figure 6, in which the highest prevalence of religious instability is in predominantly Buddhist areas. However, it does suggest that religious violence is perpetrated to a great extent in areas where there is a dominant religious group and where Christians are small minorities. This indicates a pattern of targeting vulnerable minorities as opposed to inter-religious tensions between competing religious groups of relatively equal size or power.

Post-Civil War Incidence of Events

In the post-war period the Buddhist-dominated Hambantota district, in the 'deep south' of Sri Lanka, had the highest number of incidents recorded both in absolute terms and in proportion to its population. In absolute terms, Hambantota displayed the highest religious tension and violence between 2010 and 2014. 30 (or 10%) out of a total of 295 events in Sri Lanka took place in Hambantota, as seen in Figure 6.

The district is overwhelmingly Buddhist. According to census data 96.8% or over 577, 284 people in Hambantota identified as Buddhists while only 0.5% identified as Christians (0.2% or 1, 098 as Catholic, and 1, 511 or 0.3% as 'Other' Christian). 7 of the 30 incidents between 2010 and 2014 in the district were targeting the small independent *Jeevana Alokaya* Church in Weeraketiya which had to suspend operations in 2013 after multiple violent attacks and death threats to the pastor in charge.

FIGURE 5: EVENTS BY DISTRICT

Jaffna
4

Kilinochch 0

Mullaitivu 2

Mannar
5

Vavuniya
2

Anuradhapura
40

6 Trincomalee

Puttalam
61

Polonnaruwa
47

Kurunegala
78

15 Matale

Batticaloa
45

Gampaha
146

Kegalle
21

Kandy
45

Ampara
10

Colombo 135

Nuwara
Eliya
5

Badulla
15

Kalutara
83

Ratnapura
28

Moneragala
17

Galle
75

Matara
31

46
Hambantota
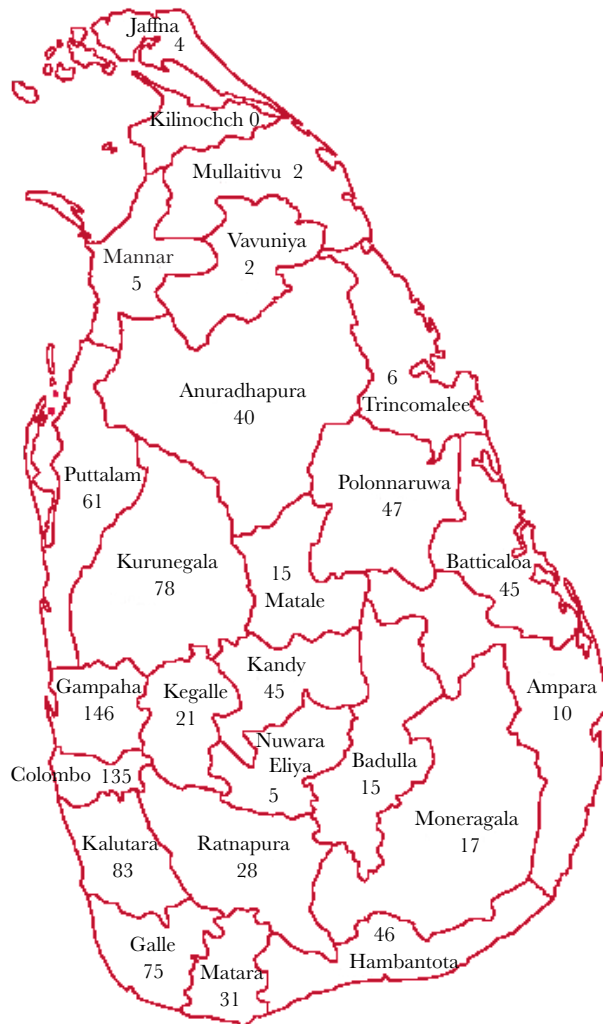
FIGURE 6: NUMBER OF EVENTS 2010-2014

District	Events
Ampara	1
Anuradhapura	20
Badulla	6
Batticaloa	20
Colombo	25
Galle	24
Gampaha	17
Hambantota	30
Jaffna	1
Kalutara	20
Kandy	13
Kegalle	11
Kurunegala	11
Mannar	0
Matale	10
Matara	14
Moneragala	15
Mullaitivu	0
Moneragala	2
Polonnaruwa	9
Puttalam	28
Ratnapura	15
Trincomalee	2
Vavuniya	1
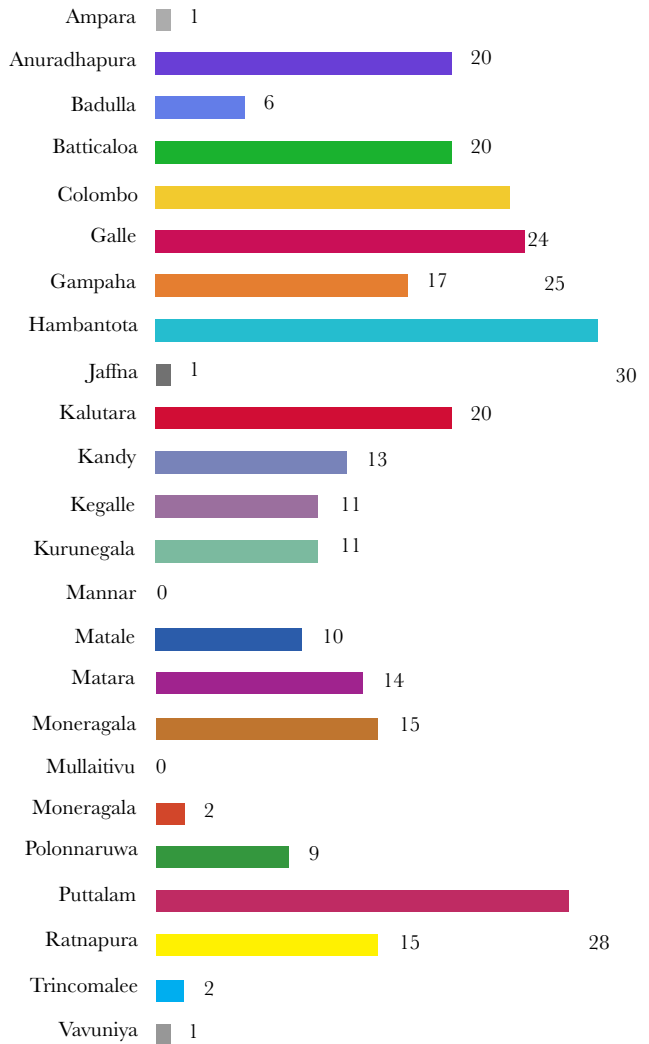
TABLE 1: NO. OF EVENTS AS A PROPORTION OF POPULATION, 2010-2014

District	Population*	Number of events	Events as a proportion of population
Hambantota	599,903	30	0.005%
Batticaloa	526,567	20	0.0038%
Puttalam	762,396	28	0.00367%
Colombo	2,324,349	24	0.00104%
Gampaha	2,304,883	17	0.000738%

*As per the Census of Population and Housing 2012 http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2012Visualization/htdocs/index.
php?usecase=indicator&action=Map&indId=10

PRIMARY TARGETS

TWO OF THE PRIMARY TARGETS of events pertaining to religious intolerance and violence that featured in approximately 67% of events between 1994 and 2014 were pastors/members of the clergy (398 events) and places of worship (430 events).

The term Places of Worship is used in a broad sense as often, prayer services would take place not only in churches but also in the houses of churchgoers. (See also section Violent Incidents)

This direct approach of targeting religious actors and institutions is again in contrast to the targeting of Muslims through hate speech directed at the wider community.[13] One third of all events (133 events) targeting the clergy have taken place in the post-war period between 2010 and 2014. Similarly, 34% of events targeting places of worship also took place in the post-war period. The high incidence and increase in violent events during peace-time was a notable trend.

The remaining primary targets- Individuals, Local Community, Business and Wider Community- were affected in different ways. Individuals were often attacked, physically or verbally, for their religious beliefs and their act of worshiping. For example, an individual could be accosted by his or her fellow villagers for simply attending prayer services. Local Christian communities could be targeted by hate campaigns, decrying the 'evils of Christianity and its proliferation'.

Christian-owned businesses do not appeared to have suffered discrimination in the findings of this study, although it is difficult to find substantial evidence linking an act of discrimination in business to religion unless openly stated. The only known instance took place in Kalutara in 2013. About 30 villagers led by 4 Buddhist monks arrived at a grocery shop owned by a Christian woman and demanded that she remove the Christian wall hangings which ornamented her shop. They further demanded that she place a Buddha statue in her shop and worship at the village Buddhist temple.

If the 'Wider Community' was a target, this was often at the national level. For example, the announcement of plans by the Minister for Justice and Buddhist Affairs to introduce the Anti-Conversion law into parliament in 2003 targeted the Wider Christian community.

Types of Incidents Targeting Pastors

In the various types of incidents featuring Christian clergy- namely the pastors of small churches- Threats, Intimidation or Coercion was the most common category, featuring in 40% of events. However, in 39% of the events, there was Destruction of Property and/or Physical Violence. Of the 103 acts of Physical Violence against pastors, one third (or 35 events) were committed in the post-war period. Similarly, 38 out of the 99 events involving the Destruction of Property took place between 2010 and 2014. This evidence suggests that in the ongoing victimisation of pastors, the attacks became more violent and direct in the post-war period.

Key Perpetrators Targeting Pastors and Places of Worship

As depicted in Figure 9, the key perpetrators of violence against pastors and places of worship were unidentified individuals or groups. Their attacks accounted for over 59% of incidents against both target groups between 1994 and 2004. For example, this could indicate that unknown assailants attacked a pastor's property or a church in the middle of the night. Alternatively, a pastor could be confronted by village groups and threatened for carrying out Christian religious practices.

However, members of the clergy, usually from other faiths, were responsible for 24% of incidents committed against pastors and 19% of events against places of worship. This is significant as it shows that the level of animosity between religions or religious denominations has led to physical violence or discrimination. Figure 10 below gives a breakdown of the clergy as perpetrators by religion.

The state also played a substantial role in the perpetration of religious discrimination, accounting for 13% of events against pastors and 18% of events against places of worship. The type of action taken by the state is clearly depicted in Figure 15.

FIGURE 7: PRIMARY TARGETS

Local community
54

Wider community
16

Business 1

Individuals
331

Place of worship
430
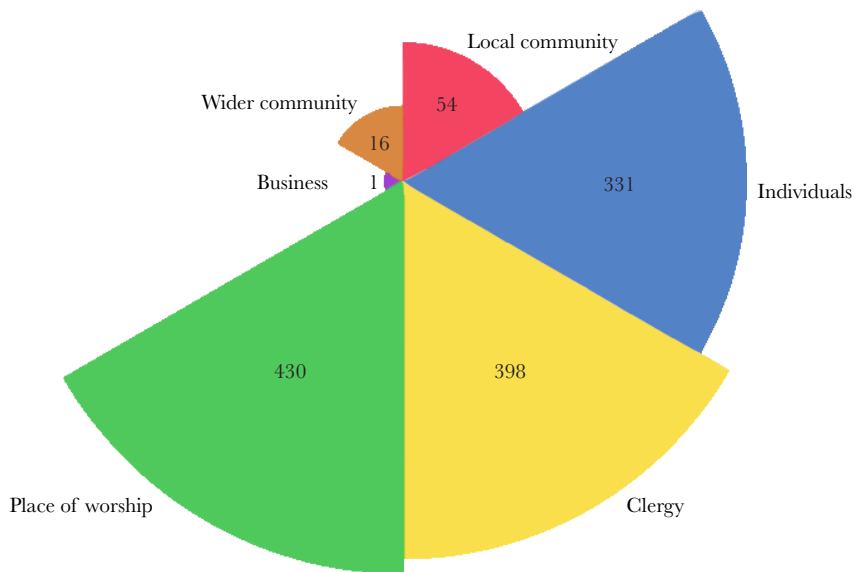
Clergy
398

FIGURE 8: TYPE OF INCIDENT TARGETTING PASTORS

Destruction of property — 99
Physical violence — 103
Hate campaign or propaganda — 43
Threats, intimidation or coercion — 208
Discrimination — 63

FIGURE 9: KEY PERPETRATORS TARGETTING PLACES OF WORSHIP & PASTORS

315   Unidentified/unaffiliated individual or group   302

125   Religious institution or clergy   102

96   Public official or institution   67

15   Political/social movement   11

2   Commercial interest group/ private sector firm   6

Places of worship   Pastors

KEY PERPETRATORS & THE ROLE OF THE CLERGY

Two of the primary targets of events pertaining to religious intolerance and violence that featured in approximately 67% of events between 1994 and 2014 were pastors/members of the clergy (398 events) and places of worship (430 events).

Whilst unaffiliated individuals or groups were responsible for the majority of religiously motivated attacks (whether physical or verbal) against Christians in Sri Lanka, members of the clergy bear a disproportionately high claim to th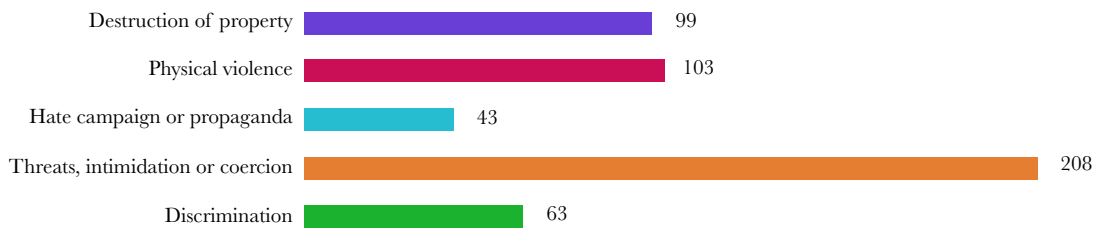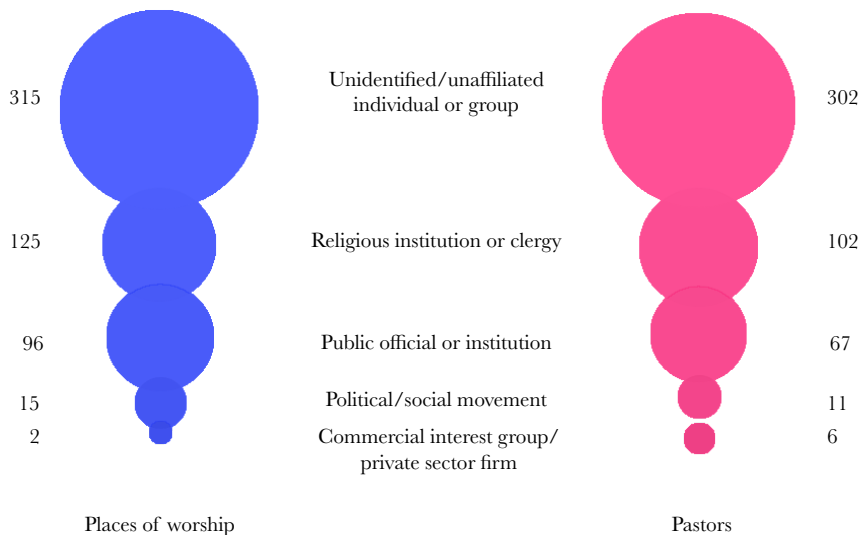e incidents. Moreover, the state too must shoulder the blame for a significant proportion of events, which will be discussed at greater length in the section The State.

Whilst politicians and political movements such as the BBS do play a role in the religious intolerance (41 events), particularly in 2013 and 2014, they are relatively less active than other perpetrators. Similarly, there are only 8 incidents in which Commercial interest groups or private sector firms are involved. Here, often the commercial groups are local businesses acting as part of the local community, rather than organising against rival commercial interests.

The breakdown of clergy-led events by religion reveal that out of 265 events, only 4 were committed by Hindus; 8 were committed by Christians; and no recorded events were committed by Muslims. Buddhist monks were key perpetrators in the remaining 253 events. They did not always act on their own but often provided leadership to larger groups. This will be discussed further in the section Buddhist Clergy as Key Perpetrators. The events identified here may be less than the total number in which there was involvement by the clergy; the ones included here are only those which the reports explicitly identified clergy as perpetrators.

It is important to note that the religious affiliation of perpetrators was identified for only clergy-led events. Thus, although Buddhist clergy were found to be key perpetrators in most events, this cannot be extrapolated to reflect the religion of key perpetrators for the rest of the study, unless specifically reported.

Intra-Religious Conflict among Christians

The data shows that intra-Christian conflicts do feature, albeit infrequently. In all recorded cases it was the clergy of the numerically superior Roman Catholic Church that was reported as targeting other Christian churches. Other Christian denominations have not featured as perpetrators. The most common type of incident between Christians was *Threats, Intimidation or Coercion*, as illustrated below. For example, a Catholic priest would order worshipers at an evangelical church to attend Catholic services or else fear retribution.

Police Response to Clergy Led Incidents

In Figure 13, the response of the police to events in which Buddhist monks were the key perpetrators is analysed. Out of 253 events, the police intervened to prevent attacks or diffuse threats against Christians on 37 accounts. For example, if there was a mob protesting outside a church, the police would arrive and disperse the mob.

However, the police were either actively/tacitly involved, or chose to remain inactive, in 39 instances. Often, the police would refuse to entertain complaints lodged by pastors or individuals for cases of verbal or physical assault. At other times, the police would stand by as threats were being shouted at Christian villagers for their beliefs. The police were not present and had no recorded involvement after the event in 155 incidents and they intervened after the event on 22 accounts. Intervening

after the event could involve following up on a complaint and taking action or simply agreeing to conduct inquiries.

Buddhist Clergy as Key Perpetrators

It was often found that Buddhist monks would give leadership to others in their intolerant treatment of Christians. This type of incident could involve vastly varied numbers ranging from two laymen following a monk to a group of monks leading hundreds of villagers in protest of Christian worship or the actions of a pastor. A total of 177 events were recorded in which this Bud-

dhist monk-led mob phenomenon arose, with a rise to 17 events in 2003 and a peak of 24 incidents in 2013.

50% of the events that occurred during the Buddhist monk-led mob action involved Threats, Intimidation or Coercion. However, over 35% of the incidents involved the Destruction of Property or Physical Violence.

In fact, between 1994 and 2004 there were 32 incidents of Physical Violence and Destruction of Property. In the last ten years of the study, between 2005 and 2014, this figure almost doubled to 63 events, showing an increase in the potency of the monk-mob phenomenon, and its propensity towards violence.
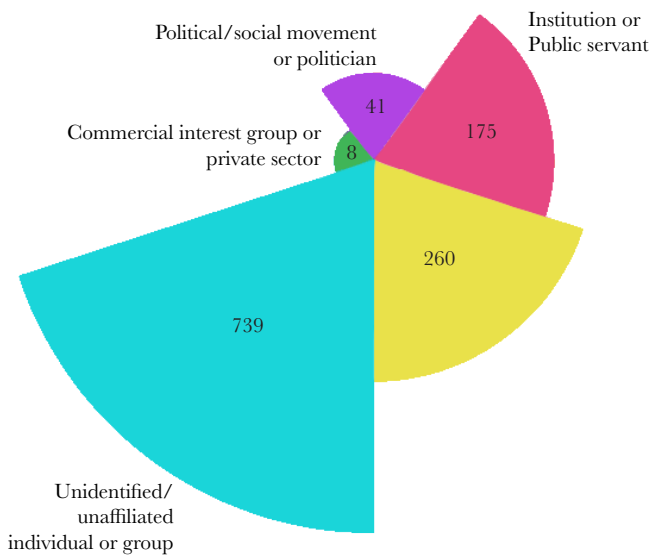
FIGURE 10: KEY PERPETRATORS

FIGURE 11: CLERGY AS PERPETRATORS BY RELIGION
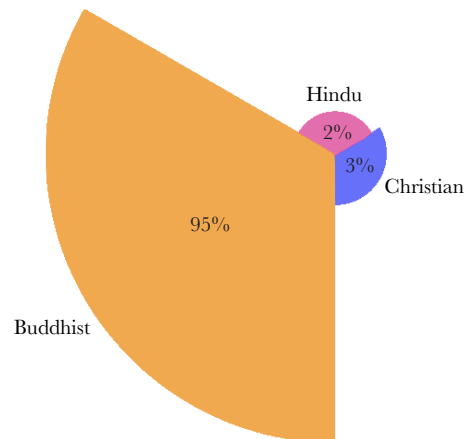
FIGURE 12: INTRA-RELIGIOUS EVENTS (CHRISTIANS)
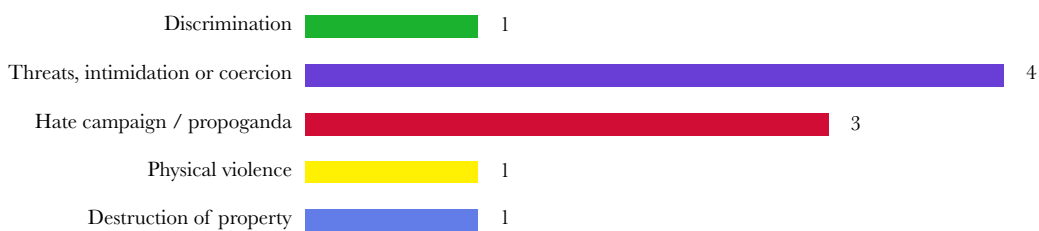
FIGURE 13: POLICE ACTION WHEN BUDDHIST MONKS WERE KEY PERPETRATORS

Actively/tacitly involved	29
Present and inactive	10
Present and intervene	37
Absent/unknown	155
Intervene after event	32

FIGURE 14: NUMBER OF INCIDENTS

Values from 1994 to 2014: 5, 0, 0, 4, 3, 4, 1, 4, 5, 17, 12, 12, 14, 0, 10, 15, 6, 8, 19, 24, 14

1994   2014

N.B. The absence of events in 2007 may result from limitations in data collection (see above)

FIGURE 15: TYPE OF EVENT PERPETRATED BY BUDDHIST MONK-LED MOBS

Discrimination	14
Threats, intimidation or coercion	134
Hate campaign or propaganda	24
Physical violence	47
Destruction of property	48

THE STATE

THE DATA shows an increase in the frequency with which the state acts as a key perpetrator of religious conflict. The graph below highlights the state's rising involvement in actions targeting Christians. Significantly, 92 out of 175 events (over 52%) took place in the last three years of the study, between 2012 and 2014.

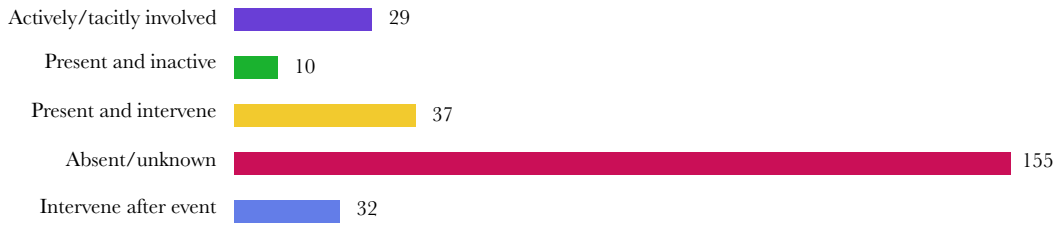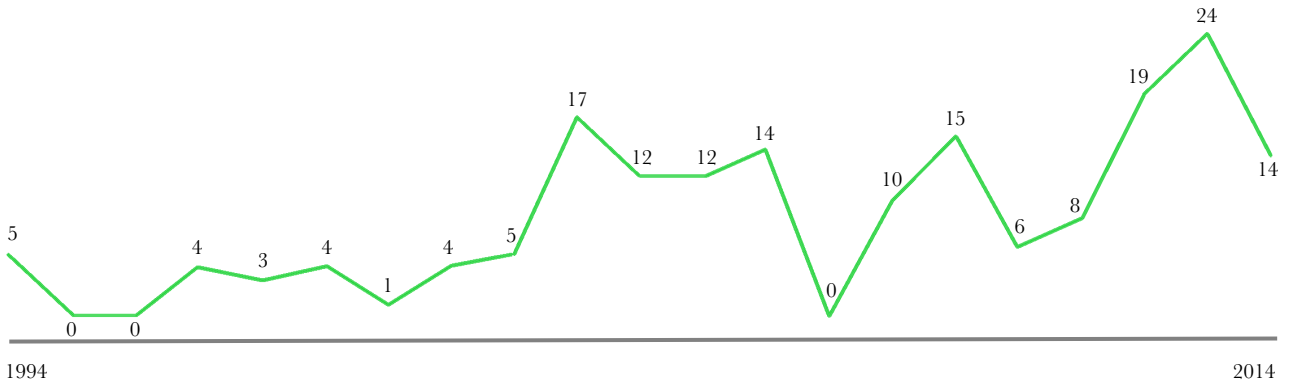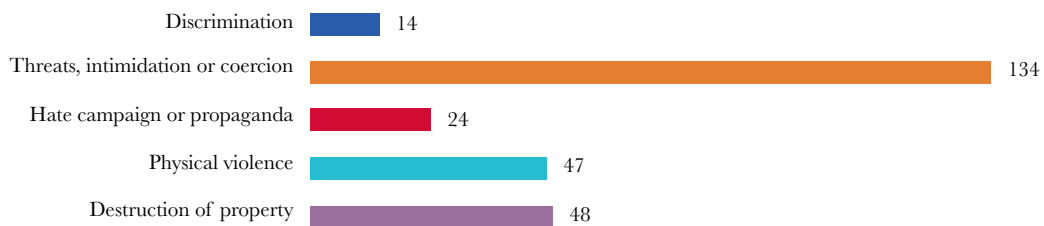State actors were usually the police but often included local magistrates, divisional secretariats or Grama Niladharis.

Of these incidents, the main type of event (see Figure 17) that the state was responsible for was Discriminatory Practice or Action (75%). These incidents typically involved blaming Christians for the violence or threats they experienced, or even shutting down churches they deemed 'illegal'. This latter phenomenon arose after 2008, which will be described in greater detail below.

The state rarely actively took part in physical violence but for example, in 2012, when a Buddhist monk assaulted a villager outside a police station, for speaking in defence of a pastor, the police arrested the injured man whilst no action was taken against the perpetrator. However, a more extreme example of the police perpetrating physical violence took place in June 2010. When the pastor of a church in Rajagiriya, Colombo spoke out against the ongoing demolition of his church, the police assaulted him in public.

Police and Government Response

Government and police officials are considered 'Actively/Tacitly Involved' if they play a role either directly participating or supporting the perpetration of the events. They are 'Present and Inactive' if the police/ government officials are present and allow the religious persecution to continue without intervention. To be 'Present and Intervene' is to intervene in the defence of the primary targets during the event. If the police/ government are called in or approached after the event and if some follow-up action is taken that is ostensibly non-discriminatory, the response is recorded as 'Intervene After Event'.

However, police and government action in response to the events that took place between 1994 and 2014 are mostly unknown. This is due to the fact that many of the incidents take place outside the presence of public officials. Out of the events for which there is a police/ government response recorded, the figures demonstrate a concerning level of state indifference or even antipathy to protecting minority religious freedoms.

In 81 instances police officers are not present during the event but intervene in some form after the event.[14] Of the 240 events in which the Police (see Figure 18) were present the record is mixed with a majority of cases suggesting a failure on the part of police officials to act as impartial arbiters. The police were 'Actively/Tacitly Involved' in 128 out of the 240 events or 53% and were 'Present and Inactive' in 38 (16%). The Police only intervened in 74 or 31% of the events during which a police presence was recorded.

Other government officials such as administrative bureaucrats would often not be present at such events except as active perpetrators or tacit supporters (See Figure 18). 86% of the events in which their action is recorded the officials are 'Actively/Tacitly involved'. It is only in 11% of these recorded events that they are 'Present and Intervene' in aid of the primary target/s. These government officials were usually from the Divisional Secretariat or were magistrates of the law. These officials came to play an increasingly active role in the post-2008 period as described in the section below.

Intolerant Regulations

In light of the Circular released by the Ministry of Buddha Sasana in 2008 and Religious Affairs[15] bringing restrictions on registering 'new places of worship', the following graph shows an analysis of the instances in which a state institution or public servant deemed a place of worship illegal/unauthorised or cited the need for clarification on registration/legality.

The circular is not referred to extensively in the years immediately following its introduction but later becomes routinely wielded by government officials when placing restrictions on freedom of worship. Over time it sees more widespread use across the country by state officials. In 2013 and 2014 alone, 39 churches were forced to suspend activities or shut down for not having the 'proper authorisation to conduct worship services'. The circular has been used as justification for far reaching restrictions on freedom of worship and has not yet been challenged as unconstitutional under Article 10 which protects freedom of religion in the constitution and article 14 (1)(e) which protects freedom of worship and manifestation of religion.[16]

For example, in August 2014, the pastor of the Way of the Truth Church in Moratuwa, Colombo District was summoned to the area police station. The pastor and his spouse were instructed by police officers to discontinue prayer meetings held at their premises with immediate effect, or register with the Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs Ministry in the event they wished to continue. The police officers warned the pastor that if he did not follow their advice, a case would be filed against him.

A more extreme case of discrimination took place in October 2014. The pastor of the Assembly of God Church in Kadawatha, Gampaha was instructed by the OIC to obtain approval from the Divisional Secretary in order to continue with religious worship activities. The OIC went on to state that he would find it difficult to protect the pastor from ongoing protests against his ministry if approval was not obtained.

FIGURE 16: STATE AS A KEY PERPETRATOR

1994   2014

FIGURE 17: TYPE OF EVENT

Physical violence 5%

Destruction of property 3%

Hate campaign or propaganda 6%

Threats, intimdation or coercion 11%

Discriminatory practice or action 75%

FIGURE 18: STATE ACTION

Government officials' action		Police action
80	Actively/tacitly involved	128
0	Present and inactive	38
11	Present and intervene	74
2	Intervene after event	81
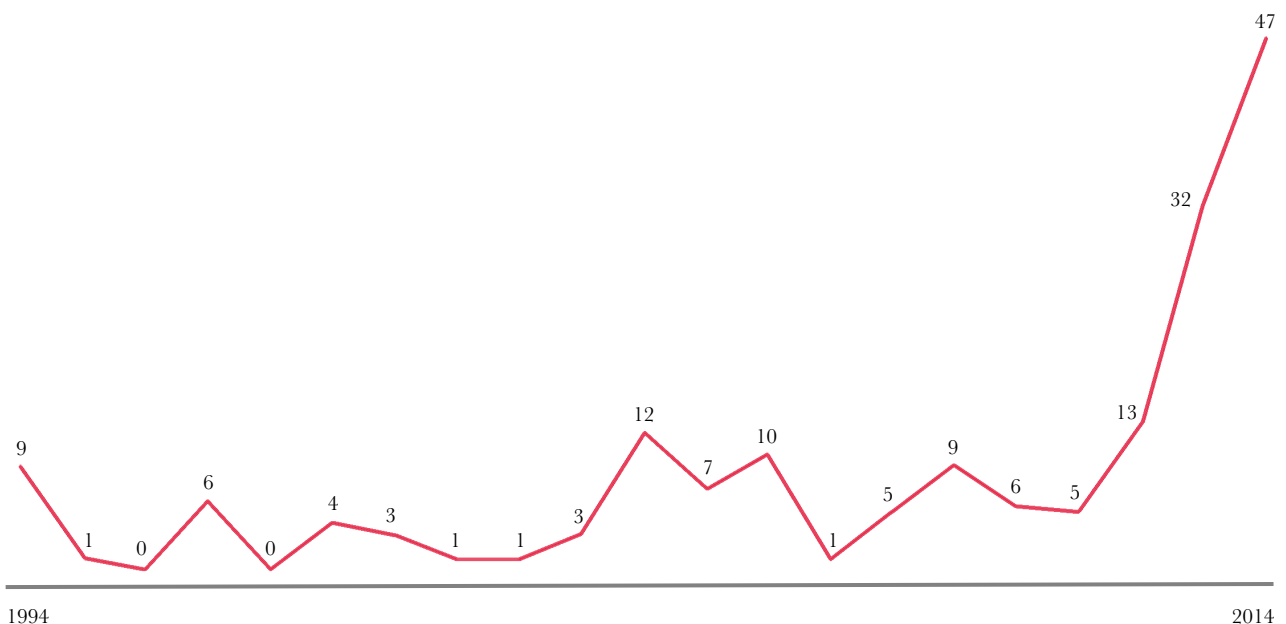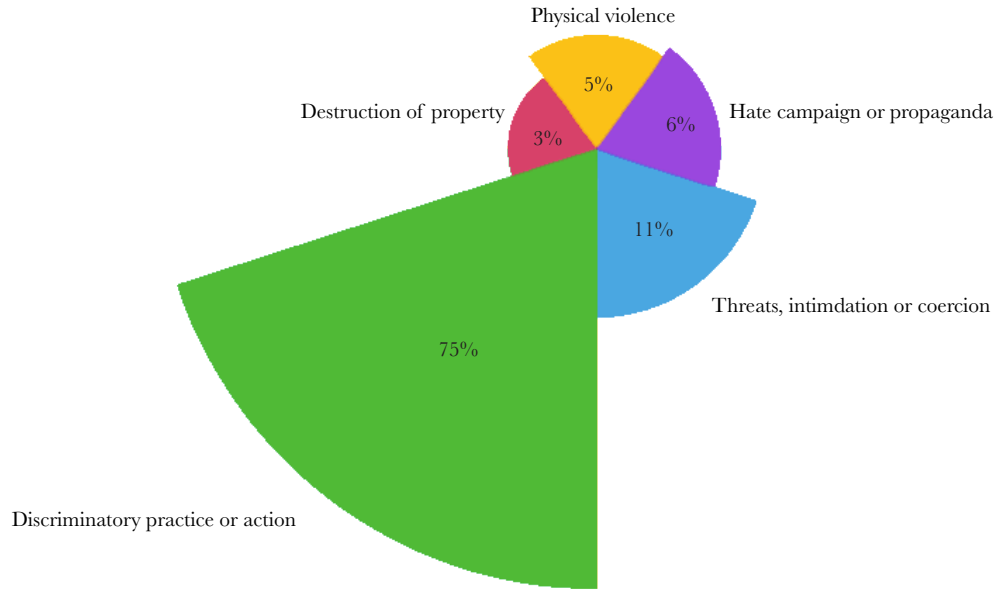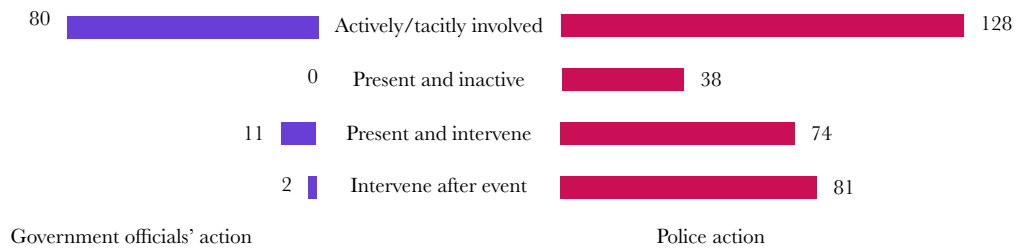
FIGURE 19: LEGALITY OF PLACE OF WORSHIP

Requesting clarification		Deemed illegal/unauthorised
12	2014	25
6	2013	14
2	2012	9
0	2011	2
2	2010	1
0	2009	1
0	2008	1
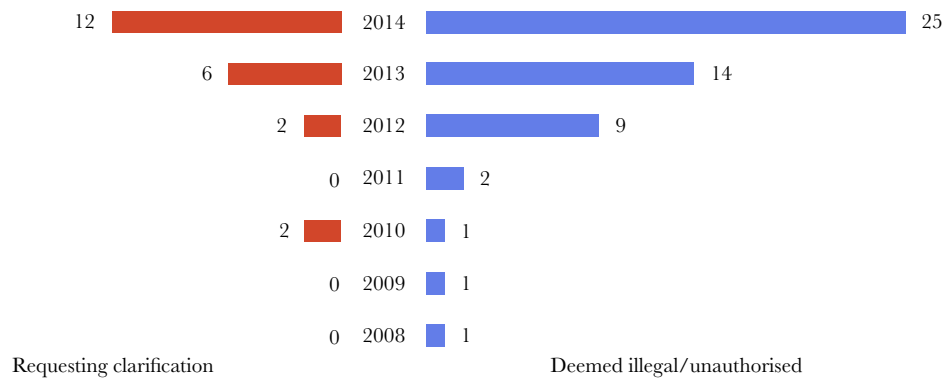
CONCLUSION

THE RESTRICTION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM in Sri Lanka comes in many forms- from discrimination, threats and hate campaigns, to physical violence and the destruction of property. Smaller Christian denominations- which are less organised than, for example Catholicism, appear extremely vulnerable in the findings of this study. Out of a total of 972 events, there were 437 violent events targeting Christians.

As this report showcases, the Christian population of Sri Lanka has long been suffering repression at the hands of other religions despite the absence of the issue in public debate.

Both the position of the state and the political climate has proven to exacerbate religious tensions at a local level. The two major spikes in violence, in 2004 and in 2013 were largely correlated to the political context. In 2004, the JHU made its political stand to make Buddhism the state religion and to halt the 'unethical conversions' taking place. In 2013, the state's accommodation of extremist nationalist organisations such as the BBS and the SR would have emboldened grassroot level and unaffiliated actors, thereby affecting the extent of brutality and repression faced by Christians.

Moreover, the role the state played in the perpetration of religious discrimination is damning, particularly in the post-war era. The police were found to be Actively/ Tacitly Involved in around 53% of the events for which their response to an event is reported, and other government officials were Actively/Tacitly Involved in 86% of the events. Furthermore, government officials were seen to utilise the 2008 Circular on places of worship to increasing effect with every year since its inception, having deemed 53 churches illegal and ordered them to shut down, and requested clarification on legality for a further 22 churches.

Lastly, in contrast to the discrimination faced by Muslims, the extent of localised violence and the police response in the experience of the Christians is notable. Similarly, whilst the BBS first launched an extensive 'anti-Halal' hate campaign to prepare the stage for the Aluthgama attacks, hate speech against Christians has been limited. The fact that these smaller denominations of Christians are less well organised and represented has resulted in attacks being more direct. This clearly suggests that these minority denominations represent a more vulnerable group than most minority religions in Sri Lanka. It also suggests that the events are more accurately viewed as restrictions on religious freedom and religious violence against minority religious groups than tensions or competition between religious groups.

METHODOLOGY

RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE, INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION – methodology for data classification and analysis. Provided below are definitions for the terms used and the procedures followed in data classification developed by Verité Research.

Event and Event ID

Each individual event was given a unique ID based on date and followed a standard format.

An event is a single data point. Therefore a series of related events or multiple events taking place at the same location at different times were classified as separate events.

Type of Incident

Broad definitions for the categories are listed below. A report that did not broadly fit any of the 5 categories was not classified as an Event. A single event may have more than one type of incident.

- *Property damage or destruction* – unlawful forced entry, vandalism or any other form of attack on the property of an individual, institution or group.

- *Physical violence* – violence against person/s of any form including but not limited to forcible restraint, assault, rape, abduction and murder.

- *Hate campaign or propaganda* – includes any printed material, meeting, rally or media campaign which has express messages attacking or inciting feelings against a religion, religious practices, religious symbolism, places of worship, religious community or followers of a religion based on their religious affiliation.

- *Threats, Intimidation or Coercion* – includes any verbal threats, phone calls, or direct encounters which do not result in violent acts against persons or property but where there is a threat of force or a forcing of person/s to perform any action against their will

- *Discriminatory Action or Practice* – Any form of discrimination on religious grounds; including but not limited to denying or limiting services, deny or limiting access through differential treatment in particular instances or a sustained policy/practice of differential treatment

Key Perpetrators

Perpetrators were classified from the given list for primary actor category as identified by NCEASL reports. A single event may have more than one category of perpetrator.

- *Political/Social Movement or Politicians* refers to all groups that identify themselves by a name or political figures.

- When the affiliations of perpetrators are unclear or unstated the category *Unidentified Individual or Group* was used.

- The category *Institution or Public Servant* was only used when the institution or person in question had a legal affiliation to a government body (e.g. state run school, government administrator).

- *Religious Institution or Clergy* refers to a member of a religious order, a place of worship or a religious institution (e.g. religious education institute, welfare institution affiliated to a religion).

- *Commercial Interest Group or Private Sector Firm* refers to a private sector firm, business association or any other entity involved in any form of commercial activity or acts as a space for promoting commercial activity.

Perpetrators' religious affiliation

This category was used if the group or individual either self-identifies or has an unambiguously identifiable religious affiliation; otherwise classified as "unknown".

Perpetrators' ethnic affiliation

This category was used if the group or individual either self-identifies or has an unambiguously identifiable ethnic affiliation; otherwise classified as "unknown".

Primary Target Group

The section refers to the main target in the recorded

event. The six choice categories represent the broader classifications of potential targets and more than one may be entered for a given event.

The Primary Targets are classified as:

- *Individual/s* – could include an individual or a group of individuals. Eg: one Christian worker or the Church congregation

- *Local community* – could include, for example, all the Christian households in the village or a particular sect of Christians being targeted

- *Place of worship* – could be a church or the location/house where prayer meetings are held

- *Business* – could be a Christian-owned enterprise

- *Wider community* – could be used particularly in events when many or all categories may be targeted en masse or Christians targeted at the nationwide level

- *Institutions, clergy, officials or public figures* – could be a pastor, or a Christian organisation or other Christian public figure

Police Action at Event

Actively/Tacitly Involved – if the police play a role whether actively or tacitly in the perpetration of the events

Present and Inactive – if the police are present and allow the religious persecution to continue without intervention

Present and Intervene – if the police are present and intervene in the defence of the primary targets

Absent/Unknown – if there is no mention of police action at event or if the action is not discernible in event report

Intervene After the Event – if the police are called in or approached after the event and if some follow-up action is taken

Government Official Action at Event

A government official could be any employee of the state excluding the Police e.g. an official from the Divisional Secretariat, *Grama Sevaka* etc.

Actively/Tacitly Involved – if a government official plays a role whether actively or tacitly in the perpetration of the events against Christians

Present and Inactive – if a government official is present and allows the religious persecution to continue without intervening

Present and Intervene – if a government official is present and intervenes in the defence of the primary targets

Absent/Unknown – if there is no mention of a government official's actions at event or if the action is not discernible in event report

Intervene After the Event – if a government official is called in or approached after the event and if some follow-up action is taken

Legality of Place of Worship

The question of the legality of a place of worship was classified for all events occurring after the Ministry for Buddha Sasana passed a Circular in 2008 calling for the registration of such places.

Clarification cited – if the legality of the place of worship is questioned and if asked to show proof of authorisation

Deemed illegal/unauthorised – a place of worship was deemed illegal if a public official e.g. a policeman claimed that the pastor could not continue his worship services at a church or prayer meeting without the necessary documentation from the Ministry of Buddha Sasana.

DATE COLLECTION & VERIFICATION PROCESS

The Religious Liberty Commission (RLC) of the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL) receives first-hand information, directly from those witnessing or affected by religious intolerance. The RLC manages a hotline for victims, witnesses or other affected to report incidents of persecution. Furthermore, the RLC maintains a regional-level religious liberty task force that includes members with formal training on documentation. Data provided by these members are verified, corroborated and edited before being compiled into reports.

The NCEASL also oversees six regional and two satellite offices which carry out monitoring and site visits to report and verify incidents of religious intolerance on behalf of the RLC. The regional data collectors complete a standardized form detailing all relevant information when submitting reports to the RLC. These forms are then forwarded to the RLC and are incorporated into the final report if the process is satisfied. The RLC then conducts its own verification process through site visits and direct communication with the victims prior to documentation.

The RLC receives reports from regional pastors' fellowships on incidents of persecution. In instances where site visits cannot be undertaken, the RLC works through regional pastor's fellowships in the relevant areas to verify reported incidents.

In the event a report is submitted by a third party, the incident is always verified in collaboration with the affected victims prior to documentation.

Data collectors at the RLC adhere to a specific format when recording incidents and compiling incident reports. A full description of each incident is provided in each report, detailing the parties involved (perpetrator, victim, the involvement of police and state officials etc.), the nature of the event, the description of the event, timeframe, location (including the name of the town/village and the appropriate district), perpetrators' religious affiliation and the conduct of law enforcement authorities in relation to the incident.

Data sources

- Reports from victims and witnesses of persecution (reported via the hotline)
- Reports from the NCEASL RLC regional-level religious liberty task force
- Reports from NCEASL regional and satellite offices
- Reports from regional pastors' fellowships
- Online reports submitted via NCEASL's crisis map on religious liberty violations[17] and NCEASL website[18]

Guidelines for data collection

Timeframe

The corresponding day, month and year to the event will be provided. If multiple incidents occur on the same day they are acknowledged in separate paragraphs.

Location

The name of the church involved, the area and the district are included. If the same church experiences multiple attacks on subsequent days (e.g. 12th, 13th, 14th), the details of the incidents will be recorded under the same church name and under the relevant dates. Particular mention is given to whether an incident takes place on a church or private premises.

Nature of the incident

Every incident is documented under a separate title; for instance, "Violent attack against church", "State officials require registration of place of worship", etc.

Description of the incident

A description of the events that transpired during the incident is recorded in detail, including police complaint numbers.

Conduct of law enforcement authorities in relation to the incident

Details of police action, inaction or tacit approval granted to perpetrators, wherein, the police played an active role or acted as instigators.

Perpetrators

Primary perpetrators identified through these incident reports are documented, for example – police, government officials or institutions, villagers, extremist religious groups, religious institutions and clergy, mobs led by clergy, political or social movements and other religious groups etc. Conduct of law enforcement authorities and government officials in relation to such incidents are documented in detail.

Perpetrators' religious affiliation

If a group or individual who either self-identifies or has an unambiguously identifiable religious affiliation, it is mentioned in the report (e.g. Buddhist monks, Buddhist villagers or Hindu villagers).

Categorisation of incidents*

- *Intimidation*
- *Hate speech*
- *Physical attacks*
- *Threats*
- *Discrimination*
- *Demonstrations*
- *Church attacks*
- *Church closures*
- *Desecration*
- *Fabricated evidence*
- *Arson*
- *Vandalism*

*The aforementioned categories are subject to change depending on the nature of reported incidents.

END NOTES

[1] For a full description of data analysis and data collection methodologies, please see sections 9 and 10.

[2] Matthews, Bruce, 'Christian Evangelical Conversions and the Politics of Sri Lanka' (Pacific Affairs: Volume 80, No. 3 – Fall 2007), p 456

[3] Ibid, p 455

[4] Ibid, p 470

[5] Neil de Votta and Jason Stone, "Jathika Hela Urumaya and Ethno-Religious Politics in Sri Lanka" (2008), p 37

[6] Ibid, p 37

[7] Ibid, p 41

[8] Ibid, p 43

[9] Ibid, p 43

[10] For a detailed discussion see the case study on *Jeevana Alokaya* Church, Weeraketiya

[11] Data from the Secretariat for Muslims, analysis by Verité Research

[12] Statistics.gov.lk, (2013). Census of Population and Housing - 2012. [online] Available at: http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2012Visualization/htdocs/index.php?usecase=indicator&action=Map&indId=10&Legend=3 [Accessed 1 Sep. 2015].

[13] Data from the Secretariat for Muslims, analysis by Verité Research

[14] The substantive value of the intervention is not judged or investigated in this study. Even the most limited actions such as recording statements were classified as 'interventions after the event'.

[15] Circular on Construction of New Places of Worship, 16.10.2008, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Moral Upliftment

[16] Article 10, Article 14 (1) (e), Sri Lanka Constitution, 1978 as amended

[17] NCEASL crisis map on religious liberty violations against Christians, see: slchurchat-tacks.crowdmap.com

[18] NCEASL website, see: www.nceasl.org

NCEASL

NATIONAL CHRISTIAN EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE OF SRI LANKA