

Thank you Mr/Mm President.

Jubilee Campaign together with Christian Solidarity Worldwide expresses grave concern that the period since the end of the war in Sri Lanka has been marked by state-sponsored Sinhala Buddhist triumphalism, the weakening of democratic institutions and rule of law, the constriction of civil and political rights, abductions and forcible disappearances, and a widespread climate of fear among human rights defenders and journalists. Moreover there has been a deterioration with regard to the right to freedom of religion or belief.

The 2012 attack on a mosque in Dambulla by a mob led by extremist Buddhist monks has reignited concern about targeted violence against religious minorities in Sri Lanka. Incidents of violence against Christian churches, after declining in number for nearly ten years, are once again rising. Recent rhetoric and attacks by the Bodu Bala Sena, which is acting aggressively and with apparent impunity, give rise to fresh concerns.

There are increasing restrictions on peaceful and legitimate religious activities. The construction of religious buildings and conduct of religious activities are subject to non-legislative circulars from 2008 and 2011, issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. They grant discretionary authority to local officials to determine on an arbitrary basis the legitimacy of religious activities, and are implemented in a manner which is discriminatory against evangelical churches. An increasing number of churches are being closed down by local officials.

Finally we are concerned by cases of schools refusing admission to Christian children on the grounds of religion, or being compelled to engage in Buddhist acts of worship in schools.

Mr/Mm President. We urge Sri Lanka to issue a standing invitation to all Special Procedures mandates, including to accept all outstanding visit requests. Sri Lanka must put an end to all abductions and forcible disappearances. Finally, Sri Lanka should ensure that the process of promoting national reconciliation takes into account the need to protect Sri Lanka's ethnic and religious pluralism, and put an end to rising violence against religious minorities.

Thank you.