

Post-War Conflict in Sri Lanka: A Study Focusing on Violence against Sri Lankan Muslims and Buddhist Hegemony

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Abstract

Background/ justification

Following the end of the thirty years old civil war in Sri Lanka, there were expectations that the post-war period would usher in peace, development and reconciliation. The last four years have witnessed several positive developments including resettlement of people and rehabilitation of infrastructure. Nonetheless there are range of problems and policy gaps that have hindered the transition from war to sustainable peace. A key post-war challenge is that of violence against religious sites and members of religious communities.

The attack on a mosque in Dambulla by a mob led by extremist Buddhist monks has reignited concern about targeted violence against Muslim religious minorities in Sri Lanka. The first serious riots against Muslim by Buddhists took place in 1915. After 1915, an occurrence of a riot of the same nature as that of 1915 was the violence in 1975 when some Muslims were killed in the Puttalam mosque due to a misconception that the Muslims were an economically privileged group and which fact fired the major motivation for anti-Muslim hatred. More recently, from last year, there has been an unprecedented level of violent attacks, demonstrations and hate speech targeting Sri Lanka's Muslim population. Mainly perpetrated by Buddhist-fascist fundamentalist groups, the events have left the country's second largest minority community - the Muslims feeling afraid and vulnerable which forcing a concerted campaign against them. In addition to attacks on places of religious worship there are calls to boycott Muslim shops and establishments, all of which is increasing tensions, particularly in areas where Muslims and Sinhalese live close to each other. These were virtually programmed by some prominent and

influential personalities in governing circles, besides others who had a vested interest in seeing Sri Lanka imploding amid heightening 'communal tensions.' It noted a 'sharp uptick' in religiously-motivated violence and said the authorities are 'passively and sometimes actively' condoning extremist Buddhist groups, such as the '*Bodu Bala Sena*' or 'Buddhist power force' and the *Hela Urmaya* are the main groups behind these targeting of Muslims.

Objectives of the research work

On this context, this study focuses on the recent incident of violence against Muslims in Sri Lanka. The primary objective of this study is to examine the motive for violence against Muslims as well as impact of the violence. The fundamental questions of this research are the following: why does post-war violence and hate propaganda arise against Muslim in Sri Lanka? In which ways the violence against minorities, particularly Muslims impact on reconciliation process? And why does Buddhist nationalist hegemony arise soon after civil war in Sri Lanka?

Materials and methods

This study is based on an interpretive approach. The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. In addition to primary sources, qualitative interviews were conducted with selected specialist on this particular research area. Secondary sources such as published and unpublished records were also consulted. Finally this study provides appropriate recommendations to improve ethnic relations in Sri Lanka.

Results and Conclusion

History of Sri Lanka is religious and ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka. After end of war against LTTE by government of Sri Lanka, religious tension has been increased in the recent past. The so-called Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist movement, whose aims protect the Sinhala-Buddhist people, emerged after war against LTTE in 2009s targeting the minority. The BBS is very important among the one. Moreover, some other Buddhist extreme group emerged as protectors of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Its so-called all activities like that safeguarding the Buddhism create religious tension among the minorities' communities. The government's reluctance even to take firm action against to perpetrators which would be helpful in restoring the rule of law and security of Sri Lankan minorities has been a big hurdle in the post - conflict situation. Moreover, initiatives taken towards justice, reconciliation and reconstruction risk instead to undermine trust if government are perceived to serve only the Buddhist side and to marginalize those holding legitimate grievances. Moreover international human rights observers should be stationed in Sri Lanka to ensure minorities are protected.

Key Words: Radical Buddhism, Ethnic Conflict of Sri Lanka, Muslim of Sri Lanka, Post War Violence in Sri Lanka, Buddhist Hegemony

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