

Press Release

**The Women's Section in the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir Launch an International Campaign: "Muslims in Sri Lanka Suffer Anguish in Life and Death!"**

The Women's Section in the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir announce the launch of an international campaign to raise global awareness of the gross injustices and abuse facing Muslims in Sri Lanka, and to demand that the Sri Lankan government end its disgraceful policy of mandatory cremation of Muslim Covid-19 victims in the country. Since April of this year, dozens of Muslims who have tested positive with the Coronavirus upon death have been cremated in violation of their Islamic beliefs which oblige the burial of the dead. In fact, several of the Muslims who were cremated had not been tested for COVID or had even tested negative. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, a 20-day old Muslim baby who tested positive for the virus upon death, was cremated without the parents' consent. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, Sri Lanka's Supreme Court threw out 12 petitions brought by Muslim and Christian families and civil society challenging the cremation policy, refusing to even listen to their cases, and giving no reason for its refusal to hold a hearing on the issue, reflecting how powerless the oppressed are under secular democratic systems to overturn injustices against them. The communal-minded, Buddhist nationalistic regime in Sri Lanka issued the COVID policy, knowing that Muslims view cremation as a desecration of the human body. They also ignored advice from renown international virology and epidemiology experts, as well as the World Health Organisation who stated that COVID-19 victims could be buried safely without any danger to public health. Therefore, it is blatantly clear that this is an Islamophobic policy implemented out of spite against the Muslim population, aimed at hurting their deepest sensitivities. Indeed, the Sri Lankan government is exploiting this pandemic to garner further support for its rule from Buddhist nationalistic anti-Muslim elements of the society, as well as to further its own anti-Islam agenda in the country.

Muslims in Sri Lanka have faced discrimination, demonisation and violence for many years due to the rise of extremist Buddhist nationalism in the country, including groups such as Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) (Buddhist Strength Force) and hard-line Buddhist monks who draw inspiration from their counterparts in Myanmar who persecuted the Rohingya Muslims. In fact, an anti-Islamic pact has already been established between the BBS and the anti-Muslim "969 Movement" in Myanmar which was responsible for stoking the violence against the Rohingya Muslims. Both organisations pledged to form an alliance to rally other Buddhist groups against Muslims and Islam in the region. In recent years, Muslims have suffered all forms of abuse: Muslim women wearing Hijab have been harassed and told to remove their Islamic dress when entering certain shops, government buildings, schools, and even when seeking hospital treatment; a Niqab ban was enforced on the community; there have been calls for Muslim businesses to be boycotted; Halal labelling of products was withdrawn; there have been hundreds of arbitrary arrests of Muslims and discriminatory searches of Muslim homes for Islamic material; and there have been dozens of terrifying mob attacks on mosques and Muslim houses and shops. Now, alongside all this, Muslims are suffering the anguish of not being able to even perform the final religious rites on their loved ones and to die with dignity.

As expected, the governments of the world, including the regimes of the Muslim lands have failed to come to the aid of the Muslims of Sri Lanka, in line with their customary abandonment of oppressed Muslims globally. However, we the Ummah of Islam will never abandon our Muslim brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka. We in Hizb ut Tahrir will raise a global voice in support of them and against the grave injustices that they are suffering. And, we will work with all our efforts to re-establish their guardian, shield and protector: the System of Allah (swt) - the Khilafah (Caliphate) based upon the method of the Prophethood, which will provide sanctuary to the oppressed and stand as a guard over the rights and Deen of the Muslims regardless of where they live. We call all those who stand for justice to support this important campaign. Allah (swt) says: ﴿وَإِن اسْتَنْصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ﴾ **"And if they seek help of you for the religion, then you must help."** [al-Anfaal: 72]

The campaign can be followed at: <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info/en/index.php/hizbuttahrir/20600.html>

and the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/womenscmoht/>

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