

Briefing Notes



Sri Lanka Brief

Briefing note 8/3 – 24 March 2014

Reprisals against Muslim Minister for sharing information with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

In Sri Lanka reprisals against Human Rights Defenders who associated with the United Nations has become a common feature. United Nations Annual Reprisals Report has documented most of those reprisals regularly.

Now the minister for Justice Hon. Rauf Hakeem, the leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) is facing the same fate. SLMC is a constituent partner of the ruling coalition. The SLMC is the largest Muslim political party in Sri Lanka.



Justice Minister and Leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress Rauf Hakeem

In August 2013 during the High Commissioner's visit to Sri Lanka, the SLMC headed by Mr. Rauf Hakeem handed over a report detailing attacks on Muslims in Sri Lanka¹. Now for sharing that information with the United Nations, Mr. Hakeem has become a victim of political as well as hate-speech attacks by the government as well as extremist Buddhist groups. The sequence of attacks reported by the Sri Lanka Media follows.

All these attacks are related to the report submitted by the SLMC to High Commissioner Navi Pillay.

01 March: President asks Justice Minister Hakeem to leave the govt.

The first salvo was fired by the President himself. In the Cabinet meeting held late Feb 2014 President Rajapaksha has shouted at Minister Hakeem over the report and asked him to decide whether he and his party wanted to remain in the Government.² This incident was widely reported in the media and immediately a campaign against the SLMC and Mr. Hakeem was launched.

04 March: Buddhist Party JHU ask President to take action against Rauf Hakeem

¹ See: <http://www.srilankabrief.org/2014/03/report-presented-by-smlmc-to-hc-navi.html>

² See: <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/43852-irate-president-takes-on-slmc.html>

Submitting an anti-Sri Lanka report to the UNHCR stating that Muslims are denied their religious freedoms in Sri Lanka by the SLMC whose leader Rauff Hakeem is the Justice Minister in the government is a most shameless and degrading policy, the release states. The JHU requests the President to take stern action against the SLMC leader for this policy adopted, while being a member of the Cabinet.³

13 March: Minister says Rauf Hakeem is subverting the country

National Freedom Front (NFF) leader Wimal Weerawansa, MP, too, alleged that Minister Hakeem had collaborated with those bent on subverting the country. The NFF leader said that the SLMC leader had obviously contributed to the UNHRC Chief Navi Pillay's damaging report meant to justify international war crimes investigation over accountability issues.⁴

18 March: Minister blames SLMC and Hakeem for committing treacherous act

A close confidante of the President Minister for Youth Affairs Dulles Alahapperuma, told media that *'Minister Hakeem was in fact intimidated by Prabhakaran and had committed his treacherous act against the nation ... and " that there were several agreements signed between the Leader of the SLMC, Minister Rauff Hakeem and the Leader of the LTTE Velupillai Prabhakaran, during the war..'*⁵

Thus Justice Minister has suddenly become a traitor for sharing information with the UN.

13 March: Rauf Hakeem warned of Prabhakaran fate by a Minister

The Minister for public relations, Mervyn Silva warned Minister of Justice and SLMC Leader, Rauff Hakeem, that Prabhakaran's fate awaits anyone resorting to treacherous activities against the country.⁶

18 March: Rauf Hakeem is threatened as 'pariah' by Buddhist extremists

Leader of the militant and extremist Buddhist Brigade Galabodaatte Gnanasara launched a vicious attack on Mr. Hakeem. On camera he said Hakeem is a "pariah" and vowed not to allow him to be active further. He said that the Minister had to apologize to the Sinhala community for sharing information with the UN, or face the consequences – which would include Muslims being denied access to 90% of the Sri Lankan market.⁷

04 March: Buddhist extremists in Sri Lanka and Burma get together

Gnanasara embarked on a "study tour" of Myanmar⁸, reportedly looking to learn lessons on the "non-religious role" monks can play in society and politics. That one of the people he met was controversial leader of the violent 969 movement Ashin Wirathu.⁹

21 March: Ashin Wirathu, anti Muslim monk invited to visit Sri Lanka

Ashin Wirathu Thera, who is notorious for his anti-Islam rhetoric has been invited by the Buddhist Brigade to visit Sri Lanka to discuss strategic plans for Asia wide network.¹⁰

³ See: <http://www.dailynews.lk/local/jhu-alleges-muslim-congress-submitted-anti-sl-report#sthash.YNIsiNp1.dpuf>

⁴ See: http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=99691

⁵ See: <http://www.ceylontoday.lk/51-59097-news-detail-govt-does-not-see-slmc-leaving-as-a-red-light-dulles.html>

⁶ See: <http://www.ceylontoday.lk/51-58576-news-detail-mervyn-warns-hakeemprabhas-fate-awaits-any-traitor.html>

⁷ See: <http://www.therepublicsquare.com/politics/2014/03/19/bbs-we-will-take-sinhala-market-from-muslims/>

⁸ See: <http://oneislandtwonationsblogspotcom.typepad.com/blog/2014/03/bhikku-wirathus-birthday-gift-to-gnanasara-thera.html>

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ See: <http://www.ceylontoday.lk/51-59411-news-detail-bbs-invites-ashin-wirathu-thera-to-visit-sl.html>



Leader of the anti Muslim Buddhist Brigade Ganasara receives a birthday gift form Myanmar anti Muslim violent 969 movement leader Ashin Wirathu (first week of March)

17 March: Buddhist extremists are spun out of control – Rauf Hakeem

SLMC Leader and Justice Minister Rauff Hakeem said that extremist groups like the Bodu Bala Sena, Ravana Balaya and Sinhala Ravaya (*all are extremist Sinhala Buddhist groups*) had spun out of control and they should be kept on a tight leash by the government and the law should apply to all and sundry and containing those extremist groups would help stop attacks on places of religious worship.¹¹

23 March: SLMC condemns some actions of the GoSL

Sri Lanka Muslim Congress Leader Rauf Hakeem said that the SLMC was not only disappointed with some actions taken by the government but also strongly condemned it. Commenting on the appointment of members to the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC), the Justice Minister speaking at a public rally at Negombo on Friday said that despite being the party with the second highest number of seats in the government, SLMC did not have a seat in it.¹²

¹¹ See : http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=99934

¹² See: <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/44848-slmc-disappointed-over-govt-action-hakeem.html>