

North-East Bishops' Council
May 18 – Day of Tamil Genocide

Press statement
16/5/2022

The month of May brings contradictory emotions in the island as Tamils remember their dead and Sinhalese celebrate their victory. As Buddha stated, “Three things cannot be long hidden, the Sun, the Moon and the Truth”. The economic-political crisis in Sri Lanka today brought to our awareness that violence cannot be the solution, and addressing the root cause of the problem is inevitable.

People of the North-East commemorate May 18, as the Day of Tamil Genocide. As part of the devastated Tamil nation, we deeply feel one with the many that have suffered loss of their dear ones, limbs, properties and land, and multiple displacement. Sharing Mullivaikal kanji, organising religious services and commemorations are part of remembering this day with lot of sentiments.

The genocidal process over the decades reached its climax in Mullivaikal; the right to remember the dead should be respected and acknowledged as fundamental to peace building and reconciliation, and in the past remembrance of the dead was squashed using repressive measures by the armed forces.

One the other hand whole country has been going through a political and financial crisis. Peaceful protest is vital to democracy and is not a crime. The leaders should be as Pope Francis said, “Shepherds with the smell of the sheep”, for whom, listening to the voice of the people and their demands is mandatory. Listening to the cry of the people, and their demands, should be taken as a collective representation to address the issues raised rather than using repressive measures to silence the voice. ‘Only the truth sets us free’. Sri Lanka a multi religion, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic nation, in its historiography has accommodated the culture of violence and impunity as a norm, which has been proved in the recent attack on the peaceful protesters.

We the members of the Bishops’ Council of the North-East and other religious leaders from the North-East vehemently condemn the state orchestrated violence unleashed on the peaceful protesters and are deeply concerned about the unprecedented humanitarian crisis unfolding in Sri Lanka.

The collective cry for a structural change should accommodate the political demands and aspirations of the Tamils. The distinct differences of the communities in Sri Lanka is to be appreciated in place of constructing ‘the other’ as the threat to the existence of the majority.

Acknowledging the truth is the first step, while committing to address the root cause of the problem in order to move forward is primary, for the economic-political crisis cannot be treated in isolation. We need to acknowledge the fundamental connection between the political structure and the economic realities of the present.

We, therefore, appeal to all who love and respect humanity to honour on May 18 the memory of those killed in the genocide perpetrated by the State and its military machinery.

Yours sincerely,

+ *C. Emmanuel*

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