

Remarks by Charge d' Affaires at the Interfaith Service of Prayer and Remembrance For the People of Sri Lanka

Good Evening, Ayobowan, Vanakkam and Assalamualaikum

The Right Reverend Mariann Edgar Budde, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, The Very Reverend Randolph Marshall Hollerith, Dean of Washington National Cathedral, Reverend Priests, Venerable Monks, Representatives of Religious Faiths, members of Congress, United States Government representatives, Ambassadors and members of the Diplomatic Corps, friends of Sri Lankan community, Distinguish Guests, and well wishers,

On behalf of the Government and people of Sri Lanka, let me convey my sincere appreciation and gratitude to all of you for joining the interfaith service of prayer and remembrance this evening, braving inclement weather. Indeed, your presence is a source of strength and expression of friendship and solidarity with people of Sri Lanka.

It is exactly two weeks to this day, we witnessed a wave of horrendous terrorist attacks on catholic churches and hotels in Sri Lanka targeting innocent people on the 21st April 2019. Easter Sunday which otherwise would have been a day of peace, joy and family reunion, turned in to a day of grief, mourning and loss. This single deadliest attack since 9/11 took the lives of over 250, (among them were 5 US nationals), including 42 foreigners and injuring around 500. This day will remain a dark day for hundreds and thousands of fellow Sri Lankans and people around the world who lost their loved ones under very tragic circumstances..

Last Wednesday, I shared my grief with the devastated parents and family of the 11 - year old, Kieren de Soyza, who are yet come to terms with the loss of their only child and son. Similarly, there are so many others who have endured horrific trauma and untold sufferings owing to this senseless and cold – blooded massacre. We are a nation in shock, grief and mourning and still reeling from this unprecedented carnage. As we grieve and remember those who have left us, our thoughts and prayers are with their families and the injured. May their souls rest in eternal peace and the blessings be upon their loved ones.

Over the years, the world has evolved in to an interdependent globalised entity, where calamity in one corner of the world could influence and impact the order and destiny of the entire world at large, owing to certain disturbing and mind boggling trends. Needless to say, a nation, irrespective of its size, location, influence, wealth and power, can no longer afford to live in isolation. The world must come together and

speak with one voice against violence, terrorism and extremism that only leads to destruction, deprivation, degradation and demonization of human beings.

All major religions and faiths advocate their followers to embrace one another and practice love and kindness towards fellow human beings. Let's us reach out to those in grief and that pain in our hearts can be soothed only if we embrace in our arms those, who suffered in these attacks.

In closing, let me on behalf of the Embassy of Sri Lanka and Sri Lankan community, convey my sincere appreciation to all of you for being present at this interfaith service of prayers in remembrance of victims of the Easter Sunday attacks. Let me, also convey my gratitude to the Government and people of the United States and the like minded countries and people, for the outpouring of sympathy and support extended to Sri Lanka and its people at this difficult time.

Finally, I would like to convey my heartfelt thanks to the Right Reverend Mariann Edgar Budde, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, The Very Reverend Randolph Marshall Hollerith, Dean of Washington National Cathedral and all staff of the Washington National Cathedral for organizing this interfaith memorial service for people of Sri Lanka and for the warm welcome and excellent arrangements.

May the blessings of the Noble Triple Gem be with you all.

Ayubowan, Vanakkam and Assalamualaikum

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Charge d' Affaires / Embassy of Sri Lanka

05th May 2019