



His Excellency Mr. Imran Khan  
 Prime Minister of Pakistan  
 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Prime Minister, Assalamu Alaikum!

**RE: FORCED CREMATION OF COVID-19 VICTIMS IN SRI LANKA**

We, the undersigned Sri Lankan Muslim organisations in the UK, USA, Europe, Canada and Australia understand that your excellency is due to visit our motherland, Sri Lanka in the near future. Whilst appreciating your plan and wishing the diplomatic visit to be fruitful for the benefit of both nations, we as concerned Sri Lankan citizens living abroad would like to bring the following to your kind attention in hope of gaining your consideration to speak regarding the matter with the authorities in Sri Lanka.

1. We believe you are aware of the current social outcry against the ongoing forced cremation in Sri Lanka regardless of all our combined efforts and disapproval from around the world.
2. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, as per the World Health Organisation’s guidance, Sri Lanka too announced that both burial and cremation of the Covid-19 bodies would be allowed.
3. However, the body of the first victim, who was a Muslim person from Negombo, Sri Lanka was hastily cremated without any explanation.
4. Government of Sri Lanka then issued a gazette on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April making cremation compulsory citing ‘evolving science’.
5. The decision was challenged and more than 10 fundamental rights cases were filed at the supreme court.
6. Although the death rate remained relatively low, since the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August, the number of corona related deaths increased and unfortunately majority of them were (somehow) Muslims.
7. Following continuous social outcry, statements from dignitaries such as Ms Hanaa Singer, UN resident coordinator for Sri Lanka, The WHO, various human rights organisations, expert home grown virologists such as Prof. Tissa Vitharana, Prof. Malik Peiris, and extensive call for reconsideration of ‘compulsory cremation’ in the parliament, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 2020, The Ministry of Health in Sri Lanka appointed an expert panel of virologists, microbiologists and immunologists to provide their expert opinion on the safe disposal of human remains of COVID-19 infected people.

8. The Panel Headed by Prof. Jennifer Perera, handed their recommendation in which the following is included on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 2020.

*While firmly standing by on the previous recommendation and guidelines on exclusive cremation of (Covid-19) dead bodies as the most appropriate method of disposal, which was based on the understanding at the time, the (current) expert committee has revised the recommendations on disposal of bodies to include both cremation and burial, while adhering to the safety precautions.*

9. However, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 2021, Minister of Health, Ms Pavithra Vanniyarachchi announced in the parliament that the government would continue the 'compulsory cremation' policy based on the previous committee's recommendation although there were other attempts including finding a dry land where there is no risk of contaminating ground water, directed by the Prime Minister himself to ease the situation in addition to failed attempt to send Covid-19 Muslim bodies to Maldives for burial.

10. Almost all of the Covid-19 bodies have been cremated and that includes at least one 20-day-old baby and 46-day-old baby and many erroneous detections as per government medical laboratory technician's association. This clearly implies the significance of the ignorance on the part of the authorities, resulting in unnecessary hurt and frustration to the loved ones of those victims.

The forcible cremation of bodies of COVID-19 victims has been causing much pain, anguish, trauma and agitation among the Muslim and Christian communities in the country.

Parliamentarians from both government and the opposition have expressed their disappointment over this, echoing the public outcry. People around the world have tried in every possible way to express their disapproval of forced cremation through organised protests, numerous petitions, letters to authorities and via social media to bring awareness and gain momentum. The International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) also recently condemned Sri Lanka's forced cremation policy. Furthermore, The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) has announced to launch legal action against the Sri Lankan government regarding this policy.

Unfortunately, Sri Lanka stands alone in this for reasons beyond science and has failed to bring about a constructive solution for the cessation of this abhorrent practice of forced cremations. The GoSL continues to pay no heed to any comments or concerns expressed by countries or the objections that have manifested, due to this policy, across the world.


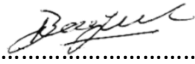


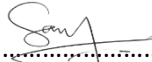


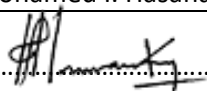
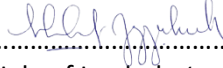



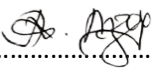


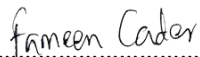
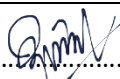

We demand justice and respect from the GoSL to allow us our burial rites and complete our religious rituals on the deceased family members.




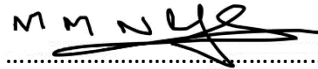

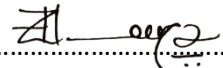



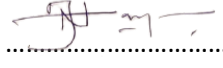
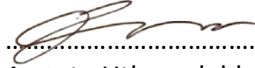



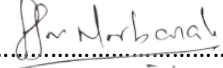
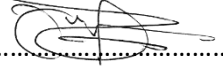
Throughout your political career, Mr Prime Minister, in your ideology you have stood up against the oppression of Muslims around the globe. In October 2020, you spoke out about the growing extremism and violence against Islam, across the world, urging Facebook's CEO Mark Zuckerberg to ban Islamophobic content on its platform. These go to show your emphasis for equality and fairness, and you being one of the 100 Most Influential People in present world, we would like you to use your fortitude to persuade the GoSL to reinstate the burial rights of the minorities, regardless of their cause of death.

We request you, His excellency Mr. Imran Khan, The Prime Minister of Pakistan, to appeal to the GoSL on behalf of the minorities in the country to give an attentive ear to the plea of the Muslim and Christian communities to ensure that their dignity and religious rights are not infringed upon and urgently reconsider allowing burial as per WHO guidelines.

Thanking you

Sri Lankan Muslim Organisations.

<b>Al Furqan Islamic Da'wah Association</b> 33 Rowsley Street, Leicester, LE5 5JN, UK	 ..... Inthisar Mohamed (President)
<b>Association of Sri Lankan Muslims – Reading</b> 2 Cholmeley Terrace, Reading, RG1 3NL, UK	 ..... Baazir Rahman (President)
<b>Austra-Lanka Muslim Association Inc.</b> P.O.Box 5128, Chullora, NSW 2190, Australia	 ..... Ubaidur Rahman M. (President)
<b>Al Bayan Arabic Foundation</b> 23, Larch Street, Leicester, LE5 0ES, UK	 ..... Sheikh Mohamed Ismail
<b>Akurana United Foundation</b> 288 A, Hale Lane, Edgware HA8 8NP, UK	 ..... Samzamy N. Muhammad (President)
<b>British Sri Lankan Muslim Community Watford</b> 3H Foxhill, Watford, WD24 6SX, UK	 ..... Nakshan Mohamed (President)
<b>Canada-Lanka Volunteer Association</b> Unit 4, 1891 Kennedy Road, Scarborough M1P 2L9, Canada	 ..... Mohamed I. Hasanar (Secretary)
<b>Colombo Community UK</b> Tomlin Road, Leicester, LE4 9DW, UK	 ..... K.M. Imran (President)
<b>Colombo Muslim Association UK</b> 462B, Alexandra Avenue, Harrow, HA2 9TL, UK	 ..... Hakeef Izzahuk (President)
<b>European Islamic Media Forum</b> Grabenstasse 9, 8952 Schlieren, Switzerland	 ..... M.Z. Hafeef Mohamed (President)
<b>Islah Trust, UK</b> Northfields Neighbourhood Centre, Brighton Road, LE5 0HD, UK	 ..... Mohammed Rifai Jiffry (President)
<b>Jaffna Muslim Association UK</b> 80 Park Crescent, Harrow, HA3 6ET	 ..... MM. Gias (Treasurer)
<b>Jaffna Muslim Community - International</b> 28, Rue Guy Moquet, 75017 Paris, France	 ..... Nazeer A. Careem (Ast. Secretary)
<b>Mawanella Association of Britain</b> 29 Tanfield Lane, Broughton, MK10 9NH, UK	 ..... Ilham Thassim (Secretary)
<b>Melbourne Human Rights Forum</b> Secretary.humanrightsforum@gmail.com	 ..... A.J. Shahim (Chief Coordinator)
<b>Puttalam Community Support UK</b> 194. Acre Lane, London SW2 5UL, UK	 ..... Fameen Cader (President)
<b>Sri Lankan Association – Marbella Spain</b> Calle Quevedo 6-516, Marbella 29660, Spain	 ..... Rizmi Latheef (President)
<b>Sri Lankan Diaspora UK</b> 40 Plashet way, London E6 1AE, UK	 ..... Afham J Ismail (chairman)

<b>Sri Lankan Muslim Foundation Crawley</b> <i>Goffs Park House, Crawley, RH11 8PB, UK</i>	 ..... Razmy N. Mohamed ( <i>Chairman</i> )
<b>Sri Lankan Islamic Jamath Germany</b> <i>Rheinische str 8044137, Germany</i>	 ..... Abdul S. Nizamdeen ( <i>Treasurer</i> )
<b>Sri Lanka Liverpool Association of Muslims</b> <i>70, Lime grove, Toxteth, Liverpool L8 0SL, UK</i>	 ..... Zaheer Ziyard ( <i>Secretary</i> )
<b>Sri Lankan Muslim Welfare Association Crawley</b> <i>St Leonard's Church Hall, Martyrs Avenue, RH11 7RX, UK</i>	 ..... M. M. Niyas ( <i>Vice Chairman</i> )
<b>Sri Lankan Muslim Community Italy</b> <i>V. LE Isonzo, No 10, Milano 20135, Italy</i>	 ..... T.Z.M. Riyaz ( <i>Secretary</i> )
<b>Sri Lankan Muslim Diaspora initiative (SLMDI – UK)</b> <i>14 Loveletts, Crawley, RH11 8EG, UK</i>	 ..... Zareena Muzammil LLB ( <i>Hons</i> ) ( <i>Secretary</i> )
<b>Sri Lankan Moors Society – UK</b> <i>42 Ealing Road, Wembley, Middlesex, HA0 4TL</i>	 ..... Irfan Iqbal ( <i>General Secretary</i> )
<b>Sri Lankan Muslim Foundation – Leicester</b> <i>39 Edgehill Road, Leicester, LE4 9EA</i>	 ..... Murzi Abdul Careem ( <i>President</i> )
<b>Sri Lankan Muslim Lives Matter</b> <i>8 Dorsten Place, Crawley, RH11 8YH</i>	 ..... M.T.M. Muzammil LLB ( <i>Secretary</i> )
<b>Sri Lanka Muslim Progressive Front</b> <i>5, Stourhead Gate, Westcroft, Milton Keynes MK44 BJ, UK</i>	 ..... Noordeen M Farzan ( <i>President</i> )
<b>TASMINA Inc. USA</b> <i>P.O. Box 8464, Piscataway NJ 08855-8464, USA</i>	 ..... Arssatu Uthumalebbe ( <i>President</i> )
<b>Tees Lanka Islamic Society – Middlesbrough</b> <i>151A, Victory Road, Middlesbrough, TS1 3HR, UK</i>	 ..... Ahamed Fardin ( <i>President</i> )
<b>The Sweden Sri Lankan Muslim Community</b> <i>Alhagsvagen 76, 14559, Norsborg, Sweden</i>	 ..... S.M. Najimudeen ( <i>President</i> )
<b>The 2020 Movement for Social Justice</b> <i>11 Baslow Road, Leicester, LE5 5HE</i>	 ..... K. Mohideen ( <i>Secretary</i> )
<b>United Sri Lankan Muslim Community of Canada</b> <i>300 – 2855 Markham Road, Scarborough M1X 0C3, Canada</i>	 ..... Seyed Mubarak ( <i>President</i> )
<b>UK Madawala Welfare Society (UKMBWS)</b> <i>11 Lewins Way, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 5JQ, UK</i>	 ..... Aneez Mohamed ( <i>President</i> )