

PRESS RELEASE
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A Forwarded Press Release from the Council of Priests in Colombo by the AHRC.

SRI LANKA: Council of Priests statement on crime and disappearances

COLOMBO: The Council of Priests of the Archdiocese of Colombo alarmed over the growing crime rate in the country. A meeting September 18, under the auspices of the Archbishop and the Auxiliary Bishop, considered with great alarm the growing rate of crime in the country which included killings, abductions, disappearances and other forms of violence.

The Council observed that these incidents were taking place in the North, East and other parts of the island with serious detriment to sacred human life, the peaceful co-existence between the various ethnic communities and the day-to-day living of the people, statement issued under the signature of Colombo Archbishops Rt. Rev. Dr. Oswald Gomis, the statement said that the council of priests had noted that this did not augur well for the future as it clearly indicated a serious breakdown of the law and order situation that could well usher in an era repetitive.

The members of the Council also recorded with deep regret the disappearance of their brother priest - Rev. Fr. Thiruchelvam Jim Brown and his missionary companion and expressed their profound disappointment at the lack of any information so far in this regard.

The Bishop of Jaffna Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Savundranayagam has written to the President Mahinda Rajapaksa in this regard and the President, according to the reports that appeared in the press has promised to set up an independent commission to inquire into this matter engaging the services of outside experts.

While sharing the grief and anxiety of the Bishop of Jaffna, their brother priests in the diocese of Jaffna and the family members of the disappeared, the Council of Priests urged the President to take quick action to finalise this inquiry and make its findings available to the public.

It is the considered opinion of the Council that unless this fast deteriorating condition is checked by strict enforcement of the law without fear or favour, and the guilty be punished irrespective of any consideration of their position or status, the situation is bound to deteriorate further and drive the country into a state of anarchy.

The members of the Council reiterated their prayerful union with the members of the Jaffna clergy in their moment of anxiety and grief.