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SRI LANKA | State of Emergency Following Violence

A 10-day state of emergency has been imposed in Sri Lanka in the wake of communal violence between Buddhist nationalists and the Muslim community in Digana and Teldeniya, in Kandy administrative district. In Ampara, in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province, communal violence on Feb. 27 reportedly resulted in the torching of dozens of houses and business establishments belonging to the Muslim community, with at least four mosques destroyed. There was one death reported. Muslims comprise approximately 10 percent of Sri Lanka's population, while an estimated 70 percent of the population is Buddhist.

Civil society organizations have condemned the communal violence. The National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka said, "It is of utmost importance that extremist elements are not nurtured and given the space to influence and dictate the words and actions of the communities, leading to increased violence, unrest and irreparable damage."

Parallels have been drawn between the unrest in Digana and Teldeniya and the anti-Muslim violence that took place in Aluthgama in 2014, which was one of Sri Lanka's worst outbreaks of communal violence for a number of years.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "CSW welcomes the call for calm by President Maithripala Srisena and urges him to guarantee an independent investigation into the violence. The perpetrators of violence must be brought to justice in order to safeguard religious pluralism in Sri Lanka, and a thorough follow-up on an investigation must include steps to stem further violence."