



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

**23 April 2019**

### **Terrorist bombing attacks in Sri Lanka**

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the elected peak representative body representing the Australian Jewish community has expressed its horror and outrage at the devastating series of terrorist bombing attacks in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday against three Catholic churches and three hotels frequented by western tourists, which left at least 290 people dead and more than 500 injured.

Easter is the most important of Christian holidays, a time when churches are attended by large numbers of worshippers. There can be little doubt that Christians were a primary target.

The scale of the attacks, and their close sequencing, indicates both the malevolence of those responsible and their high level of planning, organisation and co-ordination.

Although the Sri Lankan government has now attributed responsibility for the attacks to a little-known Islamist extremist group, National Thowheeth Jama'ath, it is entirely possible that other Islamist terrorist organisations were involved in the atrocity.

The bombings are the latest and the worst of a growing, and under-reported, number of attacks against Christians and other religious communities in various parts of Asia, fuelled by a toxic mixture of nativist nationalism, religious extremism and social media rumour-mongering.

It is especially tragic for the people of Sri Lanka, who for the last 10 years have worked hard to put behind them the hatreds and destruction of the civil war which ravaged the country between 1983 and 2009.

We extend our deepest sympathies to the families of the innocent civilians who were killed by the terrorists. We wish them and those who were wounded strength in this time of tragedy. May they recover fully and speedily in both body and spirit.

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