

**Speech in Christchurch Cathedral by Chief Imam
Shaykh Dr Umar Al-Qadri**

My brothers and sisters in humanity,

I greet you with the Islamic greeting of Peace, Assalamu Alaikum,

Peace be with you all.

Last week, on Easter Sunday, a day of peace and celebration was turned into one of violence and terror by the perpetrators of the Sri Lanka terror attacks.

These horrific attacks took place on a holy day which is equivalent to the “Eid” in the Islamic calendar. More 250 innocent people were killed in these attacks and hundreds wounded.

As Muslims, we strongly condemn these cowardly attacks against peaceful worshippers, and in this difficult time, we stand in solidarity with the victims of these attacks and with our Christian brothers and sisters everywhere.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the deceased and with the wounded.

Brothers and Sisters,

An attack on any place of worship is an attack on all places of worship.
An attack on any faith community is an attack on all faith communities.
These attacks were not only attacks on Christians but these attacks were attacks on all of us.

Last month, on the 15th of March, during the Friday prayer there were two consequent terrorist attacks in Mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. In these attacks 50 innocent people were killed in their place of worship on their holy day.

Yesterday Jewish faithful were attacked in a Californian Synagogue during the celebration of Passover. One worshipper was killed and three injured. A similar attack took place in a Synagogue 6 months ago in Pittsburgh in which 11 innocent people were killed.

The terrorists behind the Easter Sunday attacks in Sri Lanka claimed to have acted in the name of Islam. How dare they claim to have acted in the name of Islam. These terrorists trampled upon the fundamental teachings of Islam. These terrorists are guilty of committing the biggest blasphemy.

The status of places of worship- whatever their religion- is protected in Islam and defending them is a religious obligation on all Muslims.

God says : “Were it not for God’s causing some people to drive back others, destruction would have befallen the monasteries, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which God’s name is mentioned abundantly.”

(Qur’an 22:40)

The monsters behind the attacks on innocent human beings are not real Muslims. They do not represent Islam. In fact these monsters do not represent any faith or any community. They only represent extremism and terrorism.

The same applies to those extremists that kill worshippers in the Mosque and in the Synagogue. They also do not represent any faith nor any community. They only represent extremism and terrorism. These two evils are enemies of all humanity. Those behind the attacks are enemies of humanity.

These reprehensible acts are driven by hatred and aim to create fear and division in communities. As religious communities we must protect each other, and stay united in a time where such violence is meant to divide and create fear, only to increase hatred and intolerance.

We must stand united in solidarity and show that these extremists will never succeed in dividing us. We must also remember that the true essence of all religions is based on our common human values of dialogue, mercy, and peace."

The Muslims of Sri Lanka have responded after the attacks by the following message to extremists that aimed to divide the faithful communities:

“If you attack their Churches, we will open our Mosques for them to Pray!”

And this is my message also. To the terrorists that aim to divide us and spread hatred amongst our communities. Your evil efforts will only bring our faith communities together and the message of Peace and Unity will prevail.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Christchurch Cathedral for giving me this opportunity to address you on this Holy Day.

May Gods Peace and Blessings be upon all of us, Amen.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh !