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May 3, 2018

Mr. Maithripala Sirisena
President
The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Mr. President,


I have been a longtime supporter of a strong U.S.-Sri Lanka relationship, and I will continue to work to strengthen the bonds between our two countries. I appreciate our open, honest, and transparent bilateral relationship, as Sri Lanka transitions from nearly three decades of civil war. In that spirit, I write to express my concerns about the escalating tensions between the Sinhalese Buddhist community and Muslim minority groups in Sri Lanka.

I am particularly concerned with the recent communal clashes in the Kandy district, which resulted in a twelve-day state of emergency in March. The riots in Kandy were the latest in a recent series of violent episodes in Sri Lanka.

Without robust protections and justice for every individual in Sri Lanka, regardless of religion, I worry that tensions will fester and divisions will grow. I recognize the steps the Sri Lankan government has taken to address this unrest. I urge the Sri Lankan government to continue to investigate thoroughly these incidents and bring the perpetrators to justice. I also ask that the Sri Lankan government review the conduct of the authorities responsible for overseeing security in areas where violence has occurred and hold accountable those who do not fairly administer justice. Finally, I urge the Sri Lankan government to take swift action to prevent such attacks from occurring in the future and to enforce the rule of law in a non-discriminatory manner.

I have very fond memories of my years in Sri Lanka during the time my father served as the American ambassador there. I was also proud to serve as a Co-Chair of the Sri Lanka Caucus during my tenure in the House of Representatives. I look forward to working together in the pursuit of our shared goal of a democratic, stable, and prosperous Sri Lanka.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

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