
Live Updates: 207 Killed in Sri Lanka Attacks, 7 Arrested

21/04/2019



Several coordinated blasts have rocked the Sri Lankan capital Sunday killing 207 as many celebrated the Easter holiday.

The South Asian country Sri Lanka was shaken with multiple blasts killing more than 200 people on Easter Sunday. Around 450 people are injured in one of the worst attacks in a country still reeling from a 26-year long civil war which ended in 2009. The responsibility of the attacks has not been claimed by any group or individual yet.

The explosions, some of which officials said were suicide bomb attacks, led to an immediate clampdown, with the government declaring a curfew and blocking access to most major social media and messaging sites.

"Altogether, we have information of 207 dead from all hospitals. According to the information as of now, we have 450 injured people admitted to hospitals," police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekera told reporters. At least 27 of the dead were foreigners.

Live Updates:

All times are in ET.

UPDATE 9:15 AM

Police apprehended a van suspected to have been used to transport the bombs, according to a report by a Sri Lankan media.

UPDATE 8:50AM

"I would also like to ask the government to hold a very impartial strong inquiry and find out who is responsible behind this act and also to punish them mercilessly, because only animals can behave like that," Cardinal Malcolm

Ranjith, the archbishop of Colombo, told reporters.

UPDATE 8:35 AM

Local Christian groups have said they faced increasing intimidation from some extremist Buddhist monks in recent years, Reuters reported. Last year, there were clashes between the majority Sinhalese Buddhist community and minority Muslims.

Last year, there were 86 verified incidents of discrimination, threats and violence against Christians, according to the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL), which represents more than 200 churches and other Christian organizations.

This year, the NCEASL recorded 26 such incidents, including one in which Buddhist monks allegedly attempted to disrupt a Sunday worship service, with the last one reported on March 25.

Out of Sri Lanka's total population of around 22 million, 70 percent are Buddhist, 12.6 percent Hindu, 9.7 percent Muslim and 7.6 percent Christian, according to the country's 2012 census.

UPDATE 8:25 AM

Turkish, Dutch, Portuguese, and Chinese citizens were among the dead. Two Turkish, one Dutch and one Portuguese citizen were reported dead by the respective governments. One Chinese citizen also died while four others have been hospitalized.

UPDATE 8:15 AM

Defense Minister Wijewardene said seven suspects linked to the blast were arrested.

Sri Lankan military officials stand guard in front of the St. Anthony's Shrine, Kochchikade church after an explosion in Colombo, Sri Lanka April 21, 2019. | Photo: Reuters

UPDATE 8:10 AM

Defense Minister Ruwan Wijewardene convened an emergency meeting of the National Security Council. Schools have been closed till Wednesday.

Mangala Samaraweera, the country's finance minister said the bombings were "a diabolic attempt to create racial and religious tensions in this country yet again, thereby pulling the country backward..."

UPDATE 8:00 AM

President of the United States Donald Trump tried to show his sympathies with Sri Lankan people but spread the wrong information. Instead of writing that 138 people killed in attacks, he wrote, "138 million people and badly injured 600 more." The tweet has been corrected shortly after being unpublished.

UPDATE 7:50 AM

The Muslim community of Sri Lanka released a press statement condemning the attack.

UPDATE 7:40 AM

Pope Francis denounced the attacks and said he will pray for the victims of the attack.

"I want to express my loving closeness to the Christian community, targeted while they were gathered in prayer, and all the victims of such cruel violence," the Pope said.

UPDATE 7:30 AM

A nationwide curfew was imposed which would last "until further notice" as informed by the government. Social media has also been blocked.

"The government has decided to block all social media platforms in order to prevent incorrect and wrong information being spread. This is only a temporary measure" Udaya R. Seneviratne, secretary to the president said in a statement.

UPDATE 7:20 AM

Many foreign leaders condemned the attack including British Prime Minister Theresa May and leader of Labour Party Jeremy Corbyn.

UPDATE 7:15 AM

There was an eight blast which killed three police officers. The suicide bomber detonated his bomb when police entered a house in a northern suburb of the capital Colombo to conduct a search.

UPDATE 7:10 AM

Cardinal Ranjith, Archbishop of Sri Lanka's capital city Colombo said, "It's a very very sad day for all of us. I wish therefore to express my deepest sorrow and sympathy to all of those innocent families who have lost someone and also to all those who have been injured and rendered destitute."

UPDATE 7:00 AM

Prime Ministers of neighboring countries of Indian and Pakistan condemned the attack.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "There is no place for such barbarism in our region. India stands in solidarity with the people of Sri Lanka."

Imran Khan, Pakistan's Prime Minister wrote on Twitter, "Pakistan stands in complete solidarity with Sri Lanka in their hour of grief."

UPDATE 6:50 AM

Sri Lanka's minister of economic reforms and public distribution, Harsha de Silva wrote about the situation after visiting the Kochchikade church.

UPDATE 6:45 AM

A seventh explosion was also reported. The latest explosion to be reported was at a hotel near the national zoo, which is in an area near the capital Colombo.

"There was an explosion in a hotel in Dehiwela near the zoo," a police official told Reuters adding that there were no further details available.

UPDATE 6:40 AM

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe condemned the attack in a statement.

"On behalf of the Government, I would like to offer my deepest sympathies to the injured persons and the relations of the deceased consequent to the recent attacks occurred this morning," the statement said.

"I condemn these attacks which targeted religious places and some hotels. We all should join hands to protect law and order. I have already instructed the Secretary / Defence, Tri Forces Commanders and the Inspector General of Police to take stringent action to ensure law and order in the country," it said.

UPDATE 6:35 AM:

Geeta Mohan, a senior Indian journalist posted a picture on Twitter saying that attacks took place at "St. Anthony's Church, Kochchikade

St. Sebastian's Church, Katuwapitiya Church in Batticaloa, Kingsbury hotel, Shangri La hotel, Cinnamon Grand Hotel."

UPDATE 6:30 AM

The first six explosions were all reported within a short period of time in the afternoon hours in Sri Lanka just as church services were starting.
