

Christian Aid Worker Loses 4 Family Members in Terrorists' Blasts

The Easter Sunday attacks on eight churches and hotels that killed nearly 300 people in Sri Lanka were aimed at large gatherings of people across the nation and intended to intimidate and sow fear, says the founder of a multi-faceted mission movement to the Southeast region.

One of GFA's Bridge of Hope social workers lost four family members in the bombings: her cousin, cousin's husband and their two kids. Most recently, local officials defused a bomb near another GFA church.

"It's clear that churches were targeted because the terrorists knew more people would be gathered there on Easter Sunday to worship," said Dr. K.P. Yohannan, founder and director of Gospel for Asia (GFA). "The hotels were attacked because they knew foreigners were gathering there, and they would be able to kill the maximum number of people at once. Their goal was to inflict as much pain as possible in order to incite fear in the hearts of everyone around on the holiest day on the Christian calendar."

The first three blasts occurred about 8:45 a.m. during Easter Mass at three churches in various locations.

The Sri Lankan government has identified National Thowheeth Jama'ath—a small Islamist terrorist organization—as the group behind the assault, according to news reports. Two dozen members were arrested after the bombings and authorities continue to find bombs and explosives throughout the capital city of Colombo including locations near GFA churches. Declaring a state of emergency, government officials implemented a second night of a dusk-to-dawn curfew in Colombo, according to *The New York Times* and GFA field

reports.

Even though churches led by GFA-supported pastors are safe and were not specifically targeted by the terrorists who planned and orchestrated the mass bombings, ministry-supported workers on the field are doing all they can to be part of the healing and restoring of these communities, Yohannan said. GFA's ministry has served for many years in Sri Lanka through national workers that distribute aid in the name of Christ.

The GFA founder last visited Sri Lanka in the fall of 2017 to help deliver dry ration kits containing essential food and other supplies to families still suffering from floods and landslides that occurred three months earlier. A year after GFA-supported workers distributed schoolbags to children who lost school items in a previous flooding, Yohannan's visit symbolized the ongoing mission to Sri Lanka maintained by GFA. The organization also distributed aid after a region-wide tsunami battered Southeast Asia in 2004, and after heavy flooding in 2010 and 2011.

In addition to providing relief supplies, the organization maintains ongoing work in Sri Lanka. GFA-supported Bridges of Hope centers are having a significant impact on children whose families have been devastated by 26 years of civil war. One center in the northern part of the country is home to 120 children who have lost one or both parents to war. GFA also supports women's fellowships where women learn about God's Word, pray and reach out to their community in a variety of ways. GFA also supports radio broadcasts and other ministries in Sri Lanka.

Such ministry is vital in this nation of 21 million, located in the Indian Ocean just off the southeast tip of India.

"I ask for your prayers and support, that the people of Sri Lanka may find strength in God's grace as they move forward," Yohannan said. "Please join us in praying that during these

pain-filled days ahead, our brothers and sisters on the field would be the healing hands of Jesus to a broken and hurting people.” To join GFA’s prayer effort for Sri Lanka, the public is invited to visit: