

Lankan Catholics hold first Sunday mass since Easter attacks

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Authorities did not allow any vehicles into the compound of the churches and worshippers were asked to bring only minimum baggage. Security forces are conducting round the clock security operations since the attack in the crackdown on radical Muslims with links to the bombings.

A Sri Lankan government soldier frisks devotees entering a Catholic church to attend Sunday Mass in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Sunday, May 12, 2019.

Colombo: Sri Lanka's Catholic Church held its first Sunday mass amid tight security, three weeks after devastating suicide attacks on three churches and luxury hotels that killed over 250 people on the Easter Sunday. Regular services were cancelled across all churches after the deadly suicide attacks claimed by the Islamic State.

However, the Archbishop of Colombo Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith conducted private Sunday services in the past two weeks, which were broadcast live on national television.

Cardinal Ranjith announced Thursday that mass would be held in his diocese from Sunday.

A Sri Lankan Catholic couple prays at a church as they attend Sunday Mass in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Sunday, May 12, 2019. (AP Photo)

It was just this morning (Sunday) that churches resumed their normal Sunday services since the attack, residents said.

Security has been beefed up across Sri Lanka after the April 21 attacks on three churches, two of them Catholic, and three luxury hotels.

Authorities did not allow any vehicles into the compound of the churches and worshippers were asked to bring only minimum baggage.

The security forces are conducting round the clock security operations since the attack in the crackdown on radical Muslims with links to the bombings.

Three main churches which were conducting Easter Sunday mass were attacked by suicide bombers.

Armed guards have been stationed outside hotels, churches, Buddhist temples and mosques across the country since the attacks.

A Sri Lankan army soldier secures the premises of a Catholic church during Sunday Mass in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Sunday, May 12, 2019.

On April 30, Cardinal Ranjith said that public mass in Sri Lanka would resume from May 5 and no bags will be allowed inside as part of the tight security measures.

However, Sri Lanka's Catholic church announced on May 2 that it has cancelled all Sunday mass in churches across the island nation until further notice after warning of more possible attacks.

Nine suicide bombers, including a woman, carried out a series of devastating blasts that tore through three churches and three luxury hotels, killing 258 people and injuring over 500 others on the Easter Sunday.

The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, but the government has blamed local Islamist extremist group, the National Thawheed Jama'ath (NTJ), for the bombings.

Sri Lanka's police say they have either killed or arrested all those responsible for the bombings but that the threat of global terrorism persists.

President Maithripala Sirisena has vowed to eliminate the militants and restore normality in the country.

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