

## **A year later, Sri Lanka Catholic church 'forgives' Easter suicide bombers**

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On April 21, 2019, the attackers carried out bomb blasts at three churches and three luxury hotels on Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka, killing 259 persons and injuring at least 500.

***People react as silence is observed as a tribute to victims after a string of suicide bomb attacks on churches and luxury hotels across the island on Easter Sunday, during a memorial service in Colombo, Sri Lanka April 23, 2019. (Source: Reuters)***

Almost a year after the Easter Sunday bombings rocked Sri Lanka, the island nation's Roman Catholic Church has said it had forgiven the suicide bombers that killed 259 persons and injured at least 500.

“We offered love to the enemies who tried to destroy us. We forgave them,” Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith told an Easter mass, which was broadcast from a TV studio in view of the coronavirus pandemic.

Cardinal Ranjith added that instead of retaliating, the nation's Catholic minority had contemplated Jesus' message of hope and reduced tensions.

***People carry a casket during a mass for victims, two days after a string of suicide bomb attacks on churches and luxury hotels across the island on Easter Sunday, in Negombo, Sri Lanka April 23, 2019. (Source: Reuters)***

On April 21, 2019, the attackers carried out bomb blasts at three churches and three luxury hotels on Easter Sunday. The terror attack was co-ordinated by a local affiliate of the Islamic State, the National Thowheeth Jamaat, which claimed that the killings were in retaliation to the gunning down of 51 persons during Friday prayers in two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Last year, Cardinal Ranjith had called for the government at the time to step down over its alleged failure to probe an “international conspiracy” behind the attacks.

That government, of president Maithripala Sirisena, lost November's elections, with former president Mahinda Rajapaksa's younger brother Gotabaya taking the reins.

- With AFP inputs