

Annual Methodist Conference in Sri Lanka Responds to Situation in Fiji...



Image: CathNews New Zealand

The following statement has been issued Annual Methodist Conference in Sri Lanka in response to the government of Fiji's refusal to allow the Methodist Church of Fiji to hold their Conference this year:

When the Methodist Annual Conference met in August in Rawatawatte we were informed that the Fiji Methodist Conference has not been able to meet since 2009 when the Church was accused of violating the public emergency regulations imposed by the military coup, which had overthrown the government of Fiji in 2006.

For the past three years the Church has been banned by the government from holding its Conference, as well as the annual choir festival of the Church held in conjunction with the Conference. In 2009, nine Church leaders were arrested for allegedly breaching the public emergency regulations, including the Church's President, General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary; however, none have ever been brought to a trial due to repeated delays and postponements in the court system. Further, the Church's weekly radio program was banned and the Church was ordered not to hold a service of induction for its President and General Secretary. Under the provisions of the public emergency regulations, permission had been given in writing for the Church to hold its Conference in 2011. The Church complied with those regulations by limiting the Conference to no more than three days and by submitting the agenda for the Conference to the government in advance. However, when the government learned that the President and General Secretary would continue in Church leadership, they cancelled the Conference as well as all Church meetings, including those at the local church level.

The Methodist Church in Sri Lanka notes with deep concern, the continuous interference of the Fijian Government in the internal affairs of the Methodist Church in Fiji. The Church have been prevented from having their Annual Conference for the last three years and continues to harass the Leadership of the Church. We consider this a direct violation of the accepted International norms of the freedom of practising your religious faith and the freedom of expression. We call upon the Fijian Government immediately ends such harassment and allow the Methodist Church to hold its Conference.

The Annual Methodist Conference calls on the Methodists in Sri Lanka and all our Ecumenical partners to earnestly pray for the Methodist Church in Fiji and its witness, that the government leaders allow the Church to meet and conduct its rightful business, and that a peaceful rule of democracy occur.