



## U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Hearing

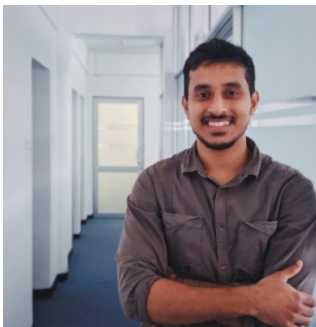
### Challenges to Religious Freedom in Sri Lanka



**Hejaaz Hizbullah** is a human rights lawyer based in Sri Lanka. He is a minority rights advocate in the face of rising intolerance against religious and ethnic minorities in the country. He is also a lecturer on Muslim Law at Sri Lanka Law College. He was among the lawyers who challenged the dissolution of the Parliament in 2018 in the Sri Lankan Supreme Court. He has come under frequent attacks by the government due to his legitimate human rights work on the protection of minority rights.



**Madura Rasaratnam** is an associate professor of Comparative Politics at City, University of London. Her research examines ethnic and nationalist conflict with a regional focus on South Asia. She is also the interim Executive Director of PEARL. She has been a board member of PEARL since 2020 and took over as interim Executive Director in March 2024.



**Mike Gabriel** is the Head of Religious Freedom for the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka. For the past 13 years, Mike has spearheaded interventions in religious freedom in Sri Lanka, notably contributing to the MinorMatters Campaign and the Museum of Religious Freedom, which received the Intercultural Innovation Award from the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the BMW Group in 2019. Mike has also been actively involved in advocacy, research, and training initiatives on religious freedom and social cohesion, alongside efforts to foster religious coexistence and counter violent extremism in Sri Lanka. Mike holds a Master's Degree in Human Rights from the University of Colombo.



**Shreen Abdul Saroor** is a co-founder of Mannar Women's Development Federation (MWDF) and Women's Action Network (WAN), a collective of 7 women's groups, that have been working on advocacy on women's rights and documentation with a focus in north and east of Sri Lanka. Challenges faced by Shreen in her own experience of being forcibly evicted and displaced along with all the members of her community from the north by the LTTE in 1990 laid the foundation for her Women's Rights activism. In 2008 Shreen was awarded the Voices of Courage award by the International Rescue Committee's Women and Refugees' Commission for her international and regional work on highlighting the plight of the internally displaced women and in 2011 Shreen was awarded the 5th 'International Bremen Peace Award' under the category of public engagement for peace and justice. Shreen has been working with women who have faced sexual violence and families that are looking for their missing family members and arrested & detained under Prevention of Terrorism Act, especially on documentation, litigation while challenging the draconian law through Women's Action Network that she founded with her colleagues in 2010. The network works in 9 districts predominantly covering war affected areas and her work has been promoting women engagement in law reforms (Muslim personal law and repeal of PTA and article 16 of the constitution that protects unequal laws and practices), the transitional justice and political processes. For these affected women led struggles, she was given the Franco-German human rights and rule of law award in 2017 and the UN N-Peace Award. She is currently an Ashoka Fellow. In relation to FoRB, she has published a collection of essays that look at Anti Muslims Rhetoric in Post War Sri Lanka and a research paper on Gendered Dimensions of Freedom of Religion or Belief (Waging War on Women's Bodies). She writes to mainstream media on women and their justice struggle and minority rights violations.



**Alan Keenan** is Crisis Group's Senior Consultant on Sri Lanka. Based in London, he coordinates and contributes to the organization's research, publications and advocacy on Sri Lanka. Alan has lived and worked in Sri Lanka for extended periods since first visiting in February 2000. He has a PhD in political theory and has taught at various US colleges and universities before joining Crisis Group in 2006.