

Hundreds Assemble At Masjid-e-Ali For Sri Lankan Bombing Vigil

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Water is poured from a pot into a cup in a symbolic gesture to share good during an April 22 vigil for the Sri Lankan bombing victims.

Nearly 200 people gathered at the Masjid-e-Ali mosque on Cedar Grove Lane April 22 for a vigil to remember the victims of the Easter Sunday bombings in Sri Lanka.

The wave of suicide bombings, in churches and hotels, left about 290 people dead and hundreds more wounded. Multiple suspects were arrested, and the attacks were blamed on a little-known Islamist terror group.

Among those speaking during the vigil was Amrith Rohan Perera, Sri Lanka's United Nations ambassador.

Also among those speaking were Mayor Phil Kramer, state Assemblyman Joe Daniels (D-17), Somerset County Freeholder Director – and former township mayor – Brian Levine, Pastor George Montanari from Middlebush Reformed Church and Rabbi Eli Garfinkel from Temple Beth El.

Statements from U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone, Gov. Phil Murphy and Rep. Tom Malinowski were also read during the evening.

The event was organized by the Franklin Township Interfaith Council. Its president, Alex Kharazi, said he was spurred to organize the vigil after receiving a call about it from Mayor Kramer.

Ambassador Perera called the bombings “an attack on all humanity” and “the most heinous attack on our values.”

Perera praised the response of the world community, from calls of support by world leaders to the donation of needed blood for victims.

“I am grateful to the Interfaith Council for taking the initiative and undertaking the work of respecting the other,” he said.

“You are us, we are you, this is our tragedy, this is not just your tragedy,” Kramer said, addressing the Sri Lankan community. “We are one, and we are together.”

“This is the time to pull together and have faith in each other throughout the world,” he said. “This is the time to say the many will not be dictated to by the very, very few, and this is the time to reject hate and stand up for the other.”

Danielsen called terrorism “the virus of humanity.”

“It’s simply a mixture of hate and cowardice, you can’t fix that,” he said. “But we can look at ourselves, first, here in Franklin Township ... this is a community that accepts and loves and invites and embraces each other. There’s no cure for love, and that’s a good thing.”

Referring to the scenes of the bombings, Montanari said, “Hotels and churches, places of physical rest and places of spiritual rest. Tourists and worshipers. Those who are seeking recreation and re-creation.”

“A holy morning, a holy weekend, a season of holy days, contrasted with a most unholy event,” he said. “Those who are the victims of this were seeking nothing more than the restoration of their souls. The violence that was perpetrated upon them was committed by those whose souls are fractured and missing pieces.”

A member of the Sri Lankan community, Wijie Kottahechchi of the NJ Buddhist Vihara on Route 27, thanked the council and those in attendance for the vigil.

“The whole world has condemned this attack,” he said. “It is our hope that one day we will have to stop coming like this.”

Following his comments, Kottahechchi was joined at the podium by several of the Vihara’s monks who performed a water-pouring ceremony. In the ceremony, water is poured from a pot into a cup, which symbolizes the sharing of good, while the monks chant.

The Franklin Reporter & Advocate live streamed the event:

Vigil for victims of Sri Lankan bombings at Masjid-e-Ali mosque.

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