

Tamil Civil Society Memo to the TNA regarding the Eastern Provincial Council Elections

Tamils have consistently made it clear that a unitary constitution and a provincial council system within the confines of a unitary constitution are incapable of fulfilling their political aspirations. In this regard it is notable that Tamil political parties with a Tamil Nationalist dispensation had chosen to boycott the two provincial council elections that took place in our homeland in the past (1989 and 2008). There can be no doubt that a Tamil political party with a Tamil Nationalist dispensation can never run a provincial council autonomously, something that even Tamil parties aligned with the Government could not achieve. The Chief Ministers who ran the provincial councils subsequent to the elections of 1989 and 2008 have confirmed that nothing substantive can be achieved through the provincial council system which is in the firm grip of the Governor and the Central Government.

Participating in an election is acceptable if such participation furthers our political goals. To the contrary if participating in such elections would adversely affect the attainment of our political goals, then alternative strategies should be considered. To think of such alternatives with foresight and vision in the wake of an election being forced upon us is important in pushing forward Tamil Nationalist politics in the right direction within the present context.

That the people want to use elections as a vehicle through which they could express their anger and frustration against the oppression being meted out against them is understandable. On the one hand, while elections might be an opportunity to demonstrate such opposition and anger, on the other hand it is important to also take into account the political costs of taking part in an election. It is the responsibility of all committed to Tamil Nationalist politics, to weigh the above explained phenomenon carefully, to consider the multi-dimensional nature of the challenge and to consider the different alternatives available, in the lead up to deciding on the question of electoral participation. The Tamil people will never allow the bartering away of their political fundamentals for the sake of attaining an immediate political strategic objective – that of preventing a Government backed Tamil political party capturing the provincial council in the Eastern Province. However given the hard reality that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) has decided to contest the Eastern Provincial Council Elections directly, we wish to make the following suggestions as to what to include in their election manifesto for the forthcoming elections:

1. The present unitary constitution and the provincial council system within such confines should be rejected. The 13th amendment cannot be even considered to be a starting point towards achieving a political solution.
2. The North and East are the traditional homelands of the Tamil speaking peoples. Any political solution should recognise a merged North and East as the relevant territorial unit. The confidence of the Muslim people should be sought to make this a reality. It is important that the Muslims and Tamils

realise that working together is essential to safeguard the existence of both communities.

3. A permanent political solution can only be attained by recognising the right to self determination of the Tamil people and by recognising Tamil Nationhood. There is no point in a political process that refuses to acknowledge the above.
4. Despite four months since passing the Geneva resolution injustices and oppression against the Tamil people have not reduced, rather they have increased. The land grab project continuing unabated, Tamil political prisoners continuing to linger in prison, lack of any progress in tracing missing persons, the continuous destruction of the economic and cultural fundamentals of the Tamil nation, the ever increasing role of the military in the daily lives of the Tamil people, the ever increasing interference into the independence of different sectors of life including education, higher education, health, agriculture and fisheries, the conversion of high security zones into permanent high security zones (including the Sampur High Security Zone), a significant number of Tamils continuing to live as displaced people in IDP camps, the continuous neglect of the livelihood of those resettled are examples of these injustices and oppressive practices. Further there is no progress in holding accountable those responsible for the genocide and war crimes committed against the Tamil people. The International Community has to realise that solutions to these problems cannot be found using the LLRC report as a road map. Both the report and the action plan have been designed to hoodwink the International community and to buy further time. The International Community has to realise that such time is being sort to provide space for the Government to complete its project of destroying the existence of the Tamil people.

We believe that by including the above in their election manifesto that there is a possibility that the TNA can lessen the impact of the argument that the Tamil people have accepted the Provincial Council system and a demerged North and East by participating in these elections. It is very important that our rejection of the provincial council system and a demerged North and East is clearly communicated to the International Community.

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