



PEOPLES COUNCIL FOR PEACE AND GOODWILL

சமாதானத்திற்கும் நல்லெண்ணத்திற்குமான மக்கள் குழு

Bishops House,
Jaffna,
Sri Lanka.

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யாழ்ப்பாணம்,
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T.P. 021 2222322

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S. Paramanathan
T.P. 021 2222322

Treasurer:
N. Sivaratnam
T.P. 021 2223985

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Current Situation in the North

Unity is essential for development. The UNHCR Geneva resolution on 22.03.2012 has resolved to expedite the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission Report (LLRC). Sri Lanka is also a member of the United Nations Organization and a joint effort to expedite the shortcomings with a clear agenda should not be misconstrued as an action against our country. It is only a way forward to work towards **Truth and Reconciliation**. Peace process and Reconciliation will destabilize if we have hidden agendas. Hopefully with the lessons learnt we have to march forward with the **Politics of Accommodation**. The war is over but not the conflict transformation.

2. Resettlement and Livelihood

The lessons learnt after the cessation of war during the last nearly three years, need review to rearrange the resettlement and development agenda on a priority basis to meet the aspirations of the aggrieved for reconciliation. Priority should be resettlement of the IDPs in their own places to reactivate their own profession and for them to be self-reliant.

3. High Security Zone

On ground of security, High Security Zones have been established. The traditionally owned private land including the agricultural land and state land are barricaded and fortified with permanent buildings for the army and the Navy. Continuous army rule is embedded and frustrate the minds of the people. The worst affected are the residents of Valigamam North who are continuing to live in welfare camps, with friends, relatives and in rented houses without the basic needs for more than 30 years. Out of the 45 GSN divisions 28 are within the High Security Zone and nearly ^{31,524} 26,281 people are affected. This area is termed as the '**Golden Soil**'. Sixty percent of the populations are farmers and thirty five percent are fishermen.

4. Payment of Compensation

The Government should deal justly, fairly and promptly with damage claims and an understanding that damaged property within the high security zone will be repaired or compensation paid to enable the owner to undertake reconstruction and to reimburse the rents paid by the IDPs for the rented houses. It is appropriate to refer to the recommendations made by eminent knowledgeable members of the Presidential Truth Commission on Ethnic Violence regarding the payment of compensation in their 2003 report. This report is available at the National Archives. Extract under paragraph 288 (8) and is appended for easy reference.

The Government must pay full compensation to the victims (or their dependents) on the basis of the Commission's recommendations by publicly recognizing the trauma and sufferings the victims had to endure and as a warning to the perpetrators that economic destruction will be fully compensated; and strongly recommend that the Government include legal interest on the determined compensation as from 1983 till payment in full".

Presently the quantum of compensation paid is negligible and under an archaic policy decision taken by the Government in 1997. After nearly a quarter century, the cost of living and construction of buildings have increased by more than five hundred percent. This is very unreasonable and a denial of equality of treatment. It is also contrary to **principles 29 and 30** enunciated in the UN Guiding Principles on internal displacement, which emphasize **full payment** of compensation.

5. Language and Religion

- I. Language and Religion are two nodal points that propagate the culture of any ethnic community.
- II. The 1956 Sinhala only policy laid the foundation for the growth of national disharmony, misunderstanding and eventually led to protracted civil war for more than a diamond year.
- III. The use of Sinhala denominations currently used in Banks and Government officers need conspicuous Tamil equivalents to understand the correct meaning of the words, without diluting the Tamil Language. The Tamil younger generation will construe these words as Tamil words.
- IV. Tamil speaking people are very much concerned with the erection of Buddha statues at every nook and corner in the North East region giving the impression to the foreign visitors that majority in these areas are Buddhist. In reality, Hindus

are in majority followed by Christians and Muslims. With passage of time, a move in this direction **can pave the way for a religious war.**

We should not mix politics with religion.

6. Law and Order

- I. With the cessation of war in 2009, there was a ray of hope for a stable peace. But the divisive political culture and political motivation between the Government and the two main political extremist parties have kept the Sri Lankan problem from being solved.
- II. The guardians of the law should maintain their own mandate of independence to ensure equality of justice among the multi-ethnic communities. They should not succumb to the political dictates and subdue communities who are less in numerical strength under the cover of Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

7. Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation (LLRC)

There are reservations about the limited mandate and the composition of the Commission. However, the effective implementation of its salient recommendation is an utmost priority.

8. Human Rights are our Sacred Rights

The result of divisive politics culminated in the civil war and ethnic violence with the torture of Tamils, demolition and burning of their properties, commercial and industrial enterprise in 1983. Internationally this phenomenon is termed as 'Black July 1983'. The tail end of the 2009 civil war has exposed human rights violations killing several thousands of innocent civilians.

With the cessation of war, the Government has not taken steps to release the names of persons in detentions camps and prisons to identify the dead and the living. The mental agony of the aggrieved persons cannot be expressed in words.

In the absence of a chief occupant of house, young women headed families and children are undergoing severe hardships for their daily sustenance. There is a great Psychological impact as majority of them are suffering without the basic needs viz. shelter, drinking water and sanitary facilities. Children are mal-nourished.

9. Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The freedom of movement and the freedom of speech are curtailed under the above obnoxious law. It provides the whip hand for the security forces to go unscathed against unscrupulous acts. With the cessation of war, steps should be taken to rescind this law to stabilize democracy and to promote reconciliation.

10. Education

Education is the permanent wealth of a country. Jaffna is a shining example to promote education. Out of 495 schools, 65 schools are not functioning.

The Palaly Teachers Training College should be relocated in its original place as it has a long history behind it.

11. Democracy

We are facing the rocky road towards democracy and reconciliation. Democracy and Human Rights give us the framework in which we can solve our problem. Presently we see a struggle and domination. We have to act with great calm and intelligence in the midst of severe conflict and mistrust. The need of the hour is accommodation, which is more than a compromise. To accommodate is to acknowledge the perspectives and deeply held views of others and respect for basic principles. It has a far-reaching change to avoid animosity and to build reconciliation.

12. Peace and Stability

The need of the hour is a permanent political solution and politics of accommodation. We have to avoid a hidden agenda and build up trust and confidence. The policy of live and let live can be receptive to march towards a stable peace.



Mr. S. Paramanathan
Joint Secretary

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