

PRESS RELEASE

POLICIES OF THE TAMIL NATIONAL PEOPLE'S FRONT

1. This statement is being released with the intension of clarifying the Tamil National People's Front's (TNPF) policies regarding what we consider to be a solution to the Tamil National Question and our position on accountability regarding international human rights law and international humanitarian law violations that were committed against the Tamil people.
2. As regards the solution to the Tamil National Question, the TNPF stands for a policy based on the notion of 'Two-Nations in One Country' – namely that the Sri Lankan State (country) comprises of the numerically larger Sinhala nation and the numerically smaller Tamil nation and other Peoples - a model quite well known to scholars and practitioners of pluri-national/ multi-national constitutional ordering across the world. Examples of a bi-national state (country) include Canada, Belgium and Bosnia-Herzegovina. We reject the notion of a Sri Lankan nation-state (one nation-one country) for the reason that the numerical strength of the Sinhala Buddhist people, being a permanent majority, would make Sri Lanka in practical terms a Sinhala-Buddhist state (country). Accordingly, we insist that the recognition of Tamil Nationhood, its right to self-determination and the recognition of the North-East of the island as its territorial unit – its traditional homeland – in line with the Thimpu Principles of 1985 is quintessential to any solution.
3. We accept that self-determination and nationhood need not be necessarily manifested through the institutional settings of a separate state (country) but that a multi national state (country) can also recognize the plurality of nations and the self-determination of its constituent units. We are hence committed to exploring a political solution within an united state (country) despite the history of failed negotiations between the Tamils and successive Sri Lankan Governments. We have made this very clear in the party manifesto that was release for the purposes of contesting the 17 August 2015 Parliamentary General Elections.
4. The TNPF is of the view that the "Two Nations in One Country" notion can be accommodated within a federal structure. However the TNPF has consistently rejected a devolutionary path to federalism, which we believe is contradictory to the assertion of the right of self-determination. The term devolution concedes the location of state power/ sovereignty with the political entity in control of the state / country (in this context the Sinhala Buddhist Nationalist order) and seeks mere devolution of power not as a matter of right but as a goodwill gesture of the Sinhala-Buddhist Nation. Given bitter experiences of solemn pacts being abrogated unilaterally by the Sinhala leaders and unfulfilled promises, we think that this is the wrong way of approaching the Tamil National Question. Instead we stand for the 'pooling of sovereignty' of the constituent

nations approach to federalism, which will provide the necessary legal safeguards against the thus far experienced unilateralist majoritarian approach of the numerically larger Sinhala Nation. This approach believes that both the Sinhala and Tamil nations are sovereign in their own right and pool their respective sovereignties to create a new social contract producing a multi-national Sri Lankan state (country). This would ensure genuine collective equality amongst the constitutive nations of Sri Lanka.

5. The TNPF categorically rejects the Unitary State structure of the current Sri Lankan constitution and is of the firm position that no arrangement within such a Unitary State structure can form the starting point for any negotiations regarding finding a solution to the Tamil National Question. For these reasons we reject the 13th Amendment and the Provincial council system as providing the basis for a political solution.
6. The TNPF wishes to emphasize that we have in our manifesto made it very clear that our reference to 'Two Nations' does not mean that we cast aside the rightful place of the Muslims and Up Country Tamils in Sri Lanka. We have explicitly noted therein that we believe that the Muslims and Up Country Tamils have the right to self-determination but as to whether they wish to conduct their politics with the consciousness of such is up to them. We have pledged solidarity politics with them towards justice and collective equality for all constituent Peoples in Sri Lanka. We have also explicitly stated in our manifesto that we are willing to work with progressive sections in the Sinhala Nation for genuine reformation and democratization of the Sri Lanka.
7. The TNPF has been quite unequivocal in its demand for accountability and justice for crimes committed during the 30 year long war and before. Given that the Sri Lankan Army is seen as protectors of the Sinhala Buddhist order and the Army and the Police are the primary accused parties regarding the grave crimes, including the crime of Genocide, committed against the Tamil people, we are of the firm view that no internal / domestic mechanism or inquiry can result in genuine prosecutions against the Sri Lankan Army, Police and members of its political class. To hold an internal / domestic accountability process will be tantamount to "victor's justice" and hence we insist on an international criminal justice process as part of a wider programme for accountability, truth seeking and justice.
8. The TNPF has also warned the Tamils consistently about attempts to use the Tamil people's struggle as leverage for geo-political contestations. We have argued that we are not against the national interests of any country, but are opposed to Tamil national interests being sacrificed by any global power for the attainment of merely their goals and interests.

We urge and welcome our detractors to engage us with the issues that we stand for. Despite the electoral setbacks suffered by the TNPF, the party will remain committed to the Tamil Nation's struggle for self-determination, justice and genuine democracy.



Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam
President, Tamil National People's Front

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