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Sinhala leaders' duplicity of war and peace has left Tamils with no choice but political independence

LTTE leader in his annual Heroes' Day statement on 27 November 2006

The leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Vellupillai Pirapaharan, in his annual Heroes' Day statement, expressed extreme frustration at the unchanging attitude of successive Sinhala regimes towards resolving the burning Tamil national question and, in particular, at the deceitful handling of the current peace efforts by three successive Sinhala regimes.

“Both our liberation movement and our people never preferred war to a peaceful resolution. We have always preferred a peaceful approach to win the political rights of our people. We have never hesitated to follow the peaceful path to win our political rights. That is why we held peace talks, beginning in Thimpu right through to Geneva, on several occasions, at various times, and in many countries,” he said.

The LTTE leader went on to say that President Mahinda Rajapakse has rejected his final call in his Heroes' Day statement last year to find a resolution to the Tamil National question with urgency. He said that President Rajapakse had instead intensified the war on the one hand and whilst on the other hand talking about finding a peaceful resolution. The LTTE leader said that this dual war and peace approach is fundamentally flawed. “It is not possible to find a resolution by marginalizing and destroying the freedom movement with which talks must be held to find the resolution. This is political absurdity on the part of the Sinhala leaders.” Due to this strategy of the Rajapakse regime, the CFA has become defunct, he said.

The LTTE leader said that the present regime, which is denying food and medicine to the people to the extent of starving them, cannot be expected to show compassion and give the Tamil people their political rights. He said that the Sinhala nation, eternally trapped in the mythical ideology of the Mahavamsa, has failed to think afresh and has left the Tamils with only one option, political independence and statehood for the people of Tamil Eelam.

The full text of the official translation of his speech follows:



“We are at a cross roads in our freedom struggle. Our journey has been long and arduous, and crowded with difficult phases. We are facing challenges and unexpected turns that no other freedom movement had to face. Unprecedented in history, we are dealing with war and peace talks at the same time.

Six years have passed since we dedicated ourselves to find a solution to the ethnic conflict through peace talks. In this long time span, has a solution been found to the burning Tamil national question? Was there any visible change in the mindset of the Sinhala leadership that continues to inflict unrelenting cruelty on the Tamil people? Were any of the justifiable requests of the Tamils been fulfilled? Were our people able to find relief from the daily harassment and misery at the hands of the occupying military? Were the daily basic problems of our people resolved? None of these has happened. Instead, death and destruction were heaped on the Tamils who hoped that they would receive justice.

While the countries that preached peace maintain silence without conscience, a great tragedy is unfolding in the Tamil homeland. The Sinhala government has imprisoned the Tamils in their own land after closing its main supply routes. Having removed their freedom by restricting their movement and constrained their lives, it is inflicting great suffering on them. It has split the Tamil homeland, set up military camps, bound it with barbed wire, and has converted it into a site of collective torture.

The Sinhala government has unleashed a two pronged war, military and economic, on our people. Our people are subjected to unprecedented assaults. Arrests, imprisonment, and torture, rape and sexual harassment, murders, disappearance, shelling, aerial bombing, and military offensives are continuing unchecked. At the same time our people are subjected to an inhuman economic embargo on essential items including food and medicine.

Even after the ceasefire, negotiations and the five years of patiently keeping peace, the dividends of peace have not reached our people. Instead our people are faced with unbearable burdens in their daily lives. Thousands of our people have been forced out of their homes and are languishing with disease and hunger in refugee camps. No one should expect that this Sinhala government which is denying food and medicine to our people to the extent of starving them would show compassion and give them their political rights.

The monumental growth in knowledge and the resulting global outlook is taking humanity into a new era. Ideas, views and philosophies are changing in tandem with this growth in knowledge and this is resulting in changes in society. Yet, within the Sinhala



nation, there is little change in its ideas and philosophies. The Sinhala nation is refusing to broaden its thinking and take a new approach. The Sinhala nation remains misled by the mythical ideology of the Mahavamsa and remains trapped in the chauvinistic sentiments thus created. Unable to free itself from this mindset, it has adopted Sinhala Buddhist chauvinistic notions as its dominant national philosophy. This notion is spread in its schools, universities and even its media. The domination of this Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism is preventing its students, intellectuals, and writers from stepping out of and thinking free from its domination. This, unfortunately, is preventing the Sinhala nation from undertaking a genuine attempt at resolving the Tamil national question in a civilized manner.

Both our liberation movement and our people never preferred war to a peaceful resolution. We have always preferred a peaceful approach to win the political rights of our people. We have never hesitated to follow the peaceful path to win our political rights. That is why we have tried to hold peace talks beginning in Thimpu right through to Geneva on several occasions, at various times, and in many countries. The current peace efforts, with Norwegian facilitation and with the blessings of the international community, taking place in the capitals of various countries are unique.

This peace journey began on 31st October 2000, when the then Norwegian special envoy Eric Solheim visited Vanni and met us. This peace journey is taking place in a unique period, under unique historical conditions, in a unique format and on a unique path. It is moving on two fronts, peace talks, on one hand, and a war of occupation by the Sinhala government, on the other.

During the six years when we kept peace, we were sincere in our efforts. Indeed, we initiated the peace efforts. We created a strong foundation for peace efforts by unilaterally declaring a ceasefire. We refrained from putting conditions or time limits for peace talks. We did not undertake these efforts from a position of weakness. We had recaptured the Vanni mainland and the Iyakkachchi-Elephant Pass military complex. We had beaten back the 'Operation Fire' of the Sinhala military. We carried out great military feats in the history of our struggle. It was from this position of strength that we undertook this peace effort.

The situation was just the opposite in the south. The south had faced defeat after defeat and was losing its will to face war. Its military had lost its backbone. The economy was very shaky. It was only under such conditions that the Sinhala nation agreed for peace talks. In this five years since the peace efforts began, three governments have come to power, that of Wickremasinghe, Bandaranayake and Rajapakse. Each time the



government changed, the dove of peace moved from one cage to another but it was never able to fly freely. Stabbed many times, the dove is now struggling for its life.

We held talks with the Wickremasinghe government for six months after signing the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) with him. Like all previous Sinhala regimes, the Wickremasinghe regime dragged time without implementing the clauses in the CFA and the agreements reached at the talks. Its military failed to move out of people's homes, schools and hospitals and instead declared these vast areas of land as military security zones and permanently prevented the people from returning to their land. The sub-committee for De-escalation and Normalization became dysfunctional. The sub-committee created to solve immediate humanitarian needs of the people also become defunct due to planned sabotage by the government.

The Wickremasinghe government that refused to solve the humanitarian problems facing our people, secretly worked to marginalize our movement on the world stage. Even before setting up a working administrative structure in the Tamil homeland, it conducted donor conferences to obtain aid for the south. By failing to facilitate our participation in the donor conference held in Washington, it marginalized and humiliated our movement. As a result we were forced to stay away from the Tokyo conference. The Wickremasinghe regime did not stop with this. It plotted to trap our freedom movement in an 'international safety net' and destroy us.

When we put forward the proposal for an Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA), startling changes occurred in the southern politics. The Kumaratunge government took over the reins of power. While refusing to hold talks on the basis of our proposal, her government, using the paramilitary phenomenon, intensified the shadow war against us. The paramilitary factor turned the Tamil homeland into a violent blood stained theatre. Intellectuals, political leaders, journalists, LTTE members, supporters and civilians were all murdered. We were forced to halt the political work, carried out according to the CFA clauses by our members in Sri Lankan military occupied areas of the Tamil homeland. As a result, our people were left alone in the cruel grip of the occupying military. Finally the Kumaratunge regime failed to implement even the Joint Mechanism (PTOMS) agreement signed by her regime for tsunami rehabilitation. The Supreme Court, unable to step outside the Sinhala chauvinistic notions, rejected this purely humanitarian focused agreement citing the unitary constitution.

It was at this time that the Sinhala nation elected Rajapakse as its new President. Like the Sinhala leaders of the past, he too is putting his hopes in a military solution. He rejected our final call in our last year's Heroes' Day statement, to find a resolution to the Tamil National question with urgency. Instead, he intensified the war, on the one hand, with the



view to destroy our movement and, on the other hand, he is talking about finding a peaceful resolution. This dual war and peace approach is fundamentally flawed. It is not possible to find a resolution by marginalizing and destroying the freedom movement with which talks must be held to find the resolution. This is political absurdity on the part of the Sinhala leaders.

The Rajapakse regime hopes to decide the fate of the Tamil nation using its military power. It wants to occupy the Tamil land and then force an unacceptable solution on the Tamils. Due to this strategy of the Rajapakse regime, the CFA has become defunct. The Rajapakse regime, by openly advocating attacks on our positions, has effectively buried the CFA. The Rajapakse regime's attacks have expanded from land to sea and air. It has given a free hand to the paramilitary groups to kill at will. It has occupied Mavilaru and Sampur blatantly breaking the terms of the CFA. The Sinhala military misjudged our strategic withdrawal from Mavilaru and Sampur. It used heavy firepower and launched large scale offensives to bring Tamil lands under its control. Tamil land was soaked in blood. It is at this time we decided to give a shock to the Sinhala regime. Our forces conducted a massive counter-offensive on the Sinhala forces that attempted to move from Kilali and Muhamalai. The military sustained heavy losses and was forced to abandon its offensive temporarily. This, however, did not persuade the Sinhala regime to give up its military plans. It continues on its military path.

The Rajapakse regime, while conducting genocide of the Tamils, is portraying our movement which is waging a struggle to save the Tamils from this genocide as a terrorist organization. It has launched a malicious propaganda campaign to defame our movement. Ignoring the unanimous opposition of our people and the objection of the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission (SLMM), the European Union and Canada have yielded to diplomatic pressure from the Sri Lankan government and listed our movement as a terrorist organization. They isolated us as undesirables.

This hasty decision, arrived at without considering the prevailing context, has created serious repercussions. It has gravely disturbed the parity of status and balance of power we held with the Sinhala regime. It encouraged the hard line stance of the Sinhala regime. It weakened the SLMM and facilitated the war plans of the Sinhala regime. Some countries that proclaim to be helping the peace efforts, have not only failed to condemn the genocidal attacks on our people but are also giving military and financial aid to the Sinhala regime to support its war plans. These are external factors that are encouraging the Rajapakse regime to carry on with its brutal military offensives in the Tamil land with absolute impunity.



The Rajapakse regime is not giving due importance to the peace talks because it has confidence in its military approach. The two Geneva talks were unproductive because of its lack of interest in the peace front. At the first Geneva talks, we placed evidence of military-paramilitary cooperation in the form of documents, statistics and incident reports. Unable to reject the solid evidence, the Sri Lankan government agreed to implement the CFA clause by removing the paramilitary groups from the Tamil homeland. After this first Geneva talks, there was only one change. State and paramilitary terror in the Tamil homeland escalated.

The second Geneva talks were also a failure. At these talks, we gave priority to the humanitarian issues facing our people and requested that the A9 road be opened and the SLMM be given freedom to function. The Sri Lankan government, putting military advantage ahead of humanitarian concerns, rejected both requests.

The Sinhala government that failed to show mercy to the people affected by a natural disaster is never going to budge on a humanitarian crisis that it planned and created. How could the peace talks move forward when the peace delegation is made up of people who proclaim that they will wage war and hold peace talks at the same time? How can trust be built? How can peace be arrived at like this?

To improve his posturing as a peace dove, President Rajapakse staged a deceptive 'All Party Conference'. The Sinhala leaders have practiced this infamous political tradition of initiating commissions of inquiry, parliamentary select committees, all party conferences, or round tables to procrastinate whenever it is unable to face up to a situation and wants to drag time until attention is diverted. This is exactly what he is doing now. Rejecting our call to speedily find a resolution to the Tamil national question, he is hiding behind the All Party Conference. For the last ten months, the all party committee is looking for the Tamil question, like searching for a black cat in a dark room.

Once the All Party Conference lost its deceptive power, President Rajapakse has taken up his next card, the MoU between the two major parties. These two major parties that effectively have hegemonic control over the south are both essentially chauvinistic parties. Both these parties are born of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism and compete with each other to carry out genocide of the Tamils. This MoU is a temporary opportunistic move by Rajapakse regime to avoid the multiple problems of international pressure to find a peaceful solution, the declining economic situation, and the opposition of his political partner, Janatha Vimukthi Perumuna (JVP). There is no sincere motive in this MoU agreement. These two parties will never put forward a just solution to the Tamil issue. Despite this, the Rajapakse regime continues to show interest in keeping the all party conference alive simply to deceive the world.



My beloved people,

A long time has elapsed since we embarked on this journey for peace with Norway's facilitation. We have tried our best to take forward this peace effort. We have practiced patience. We gave innumerable opportunities for finding peaceful resolution. We postponed our plan to advance our freedom struggle twice to give even more chances to the peace efforts, once when the tsunami disaster struck and again when President Rajapakse was elected.

It is now crystal clear that the Sinhala leaders will never put forward a just resolution to the Tamil national question. Therefore, we are not prepared to place our trust in the impossible and walk along the same old futile path.

The uncompromising stance of Sinhala chauvinism has left us with no other option but an independent state for the people of Tamil Eelam. We therefore ask the international community and the countries of the world that respect justice to recognize our freedom struggle. At this historic time when the Tamils are recommencing their journey on the path of freedom, we seek the unwavering support and assistance of the world Tamil community. We express our gratitude to the Tamil Nadu people and leaders for voicing their support and ask them to continue their efforts to help us in our freedom struggle. We express our gratitude to the Tamil Diaspora, our displaced brethren living all around the world, for their contribution to our struggle and ask them to maintain their unwavering participation and support.”