



தமிழீழ விடுதலைப் புலிகள் Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

LTTE Headquarters
Killinochchi
Tamil Eelam
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'TAMIL TIGERS WILL LAUNCH FREEDOM STRUGGLE IF PEACE TALKS ARE FURTHER DELAYED' - LTTE LEADER

The leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Mr Velupillai Pirapaharan, in his annual statement marking Heroes' Day, cautioned the Sri Lanka government that his organisation would be compelled to launch the freedom struggle of the Tamil nation if peace talks were further delayed and the suffering of his people continued.

In an urgent appeal the LTTE leader called upon the Government of Sri Lanka to resume the peace talks, without conditions, on the basis of the Interim Self-Governing Authority as proposed by his organisation.

'If the government rejects our urgent appeal, adopts delaying tactics perpetuating the suffering of our people, we have no alternative other than to advance the freedom struggle of our nation,' Mr Pirapaharan declared.

The Tamil Tiger leader severely censored Sinhala political organisations for their lack of a clear, coherent policy or proper insight into the fundamental issues underlying the Tamil national question. While pointing out that 'there is division, discord, confusion and contradiction within the Sinhala political leadership on the Tamil issue,' Mr Pirapaharan urged the Sinhala political parties in the south to openly declare their official position on the core issues of the Tamils.

The LTTE leader further asserted that the Tamil people could not continue to live in a political vacuum without an interim solution or a permanent settlement. 'The Sinhala nation neither assimilates and integrates our people to live in co-existence nor does it allow our people to

secede and lead a separate existence. We cannot continue to live in the darkness of political uncertainty, without freedom, without emancipation, without any prospects for the future,' he declared.

The following is the official translation of Mr Pirapaharan's statement:

'Today we are faced with a critical and complex situation, unprecedented in the history of our liberation struggle. We are living in a political void, without war, without a stable peace, without the conditions of normalcy, without an interim or permanent solution to the ethnic conflict. Our liberation struggle will be seriously undermined if this political vacuum continues indefinitely.

'Three years have lapsed since we entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Government of Sri Lanka, after three decades of protracted armed struggle. You are fully aware that during this period of ceasefire we have been making every endeavour, with sincerity and commitment, to seek a negotiated settlement to the Tamil national question through peaceful means. In various capitals of foreign nations, with Norway as facilitators, we engaged in peace talks with the government. The six sessions of negotiations held over the duration of six months, turned out to be futile and meaningless. Sub-committees that were set up for the de-escalation of the conflict, for the restoration of normalcy, for the rehabilitation and resettlement of the displaced and for the reconstruction of the war damaged infrastructure, became non-functional. In the meantime, the Sri Lanka government, having excluded our liberation organization, participated in the donor conference held in Washington, thereby undermining our status as equal partners in the peace process. It was in these objective conditions that our organization decided to express our displeasure and disappointment by temporarily suspending the talks. Our intention was not to terminate the talks and put an end to the peace process. During the period of suspension we urged the government of Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe to formulate and submit a draft proposal for an interim administrative structure. We emphasized that the envisaged interim administrative mechanism should be invested with adequate authority to deal with the rehabilitation of the war affected people and to reconstruct the war devastated Tamil nation.

'We were not satisfied with the three successive draft proposals on an interim set-up submitted by Ranil's government. The draft frameworks lacked adequate administrative authority and they were unacceptable to us. Ultimately, we decided to formulate our own set of proposals. We

discussed with our people at different levels and consulted political experts, legal specialists and constitutional scholars in the Tamil Diapsora and finalized our proposals for an Interim Self-Governing Authority. This is an original and pragmatic framework embodying necessary structures and mechanisms to address the urgent existential problems of our people. The proposed framework is invested with substantial authority to effectively and expeditiously undertake all tasks of resettlement, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development in the Tamil homeland. We submitted this proposal to establish an Interim Self-Governing Authority to Ranil

Wickremesinghe's government on the 1 November last year and also released it to the media for public debate.

'Some international governments welcomed our proposal, because it was the first time the Liberation Tigers had clearly and explicitly spelt out their political ideas in writing. Ranil Wickremesinghe's government did not reject our proposal for an Interim Self-Governing Authority to deal with the rehabilitation of the war affected people and to reconstruct the war devastated Tamil nation. His government viewed our proposals as different from their drafts, yet it agreed to resume peace talks on that basis, whereas the Sri Lankan Freedom Party outrightly condemned our interim administrative framework as the foundation for a separate Tamil state. As the leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and as the President, Chandrika Kumaratunga went a step further by taking punitive action that plunged the southern polity into a crisis. Ranil Wickremesinghe's regime was suddenly and seriously destabilised when President Kumaratunga took over three key Ministries, including Defence. Eventually, following the dissolution of Parliament by the President, Ranil's government collapsed.

'The ethnic contradiction between the Sinhala and Tamil nations became acute as a consequence of the general elections held at the beginning of the year. The elections paved the way for the hegemonic dominance of Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinistic forces in the southern political arena. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), an anti-Tamil political party steeped in a muddled ideology of racism, religious fanaticism and orthodox communism, won a substantial number of seats and became the third largest Sinhala political organisation. President Chandrika has embraced this racist political party as the most important ally and partner in her coalition government. This government is constituted by an unholy alliance of incompatible parties articulating antagonistic and mutually contradictory views and policies on the Tamil national question.

'While the verdict of the general election helped to reinforce Sinhala-Buddhist hegemonism in the Sinhala south, Tamil nationalism arose as a unified collective force in the northeastern Tamil homeland. The political ideals of our liberation organisation received the overwhelming support of the Tamil people. Our organisation received the popular endorsement as the sole representative of our people. Our proposals to establish an Interim Self-Governing Authority received a mandate from our people. The Tamil National Alliance gained a sweeping victory by winning twenty-two seats, thereby becoming the political voice and the democratic force representing our liberation organisation. As never before, this general election has polarized the Sinhala and Tamil ethnic formations into two distinct nations, as two separate peoples with divergent and mutually incompatible ideologies, consciousness and political goals.

'Though there was a change of government in southern Sri Lanka and chauvinistic forces were able to gain political power, we continued to observe

ceasefire and wanted to promote the peace process. We informed the Freedom Alliance government of Chandrika Kumaratunga, through the Norwegian facilitators, that we were prepared to resume peace talks based on our proposal to set-up an Interim Self-Governing Authority. It was at that time confusion and policy differences emerged within the ruling coalition.

‘Politically, the most powerful partner in the Alliance, the JVP, vehemently opposed granting political rights or devolution of power to the Tamil people. It has severely criticised the Norwegian government, which plays the role of facilitator. It has also outrightly rejected our proposal for an Interim Self-Governing Authority. The JVP has warned that it would break away from the ruling coalition if peace talks resumed on the basis of our proposal. The extremist, hard-line attitude of the JVP towards peace and ethnic reconciliation has become a major challenge to Chandrika Kumaratunga.

‘The government of Kumaratunga is facing a multi-dimensional crisis. On one side, the international community is exerting pressure on the government to resolve the ethnic conflict through peaceful means. On the other, the donor countries continue to insist that granting of the pledged aid package is conditional upon progress in the peace talks. Furthermore, the economy of the country is sliding into an abyss. With these multiple problems, the government is compelled to engage the LTTE in peace negotiations. But the internal contradictions and the fundamental policy differences in the ruling alliance have become a stumbling block to the resumption of peace negotiations. There is no clear, coherent policy

orientation, or a consensus approach within the political parties of the coalition government. Since she has aligned herself with political parties drenched in anti-Tamil racism, militarism and Sinhala-Buddhist hegemonism, the President cannot advance the peace process based on a coherent, consistent strategy and policy. This is the authentic political reality prevailing in southern Sri Lanka. This political reality of the lack of consensus is skilfully covered up and concealed to the international community.

‘We submitted our proposals for an interim administration at the final stage of our negotiations with Ranil Wickremesinghe’s government. The leadership of the United National Party continues to insist that peace talks can be resumed based on our set of proposals, but the Kumaratunga government is imposing a condition for the resumption of talks. The government says that any form of interim administration should be an integral part of a permanent settlement. While we are demanding an interim administrative set-up, the Kumaratunga government is insisting on talks for a permanent settlement to the ethnic conflict.

‘There are important reasons as to why we are insisting on the formation of an interim administrative set-up as early as possible. As a consequence of a

brutal and protracted war our people are facing urgent existential needs and immense humanitarian problems. Hundreds of thousands of displaced Tamils continue to languish in refugee camps in appalling conditions. In the meantime, the donor governments have pledged a massive aid package for the relief and rehabilitation of the war affected people. Therefore, it is of critical necessity that an interim administrative mechanism should be instituted with adequate powers to undertake the task of providing relief and rehabilitation to the suffering Tamil population and to reconstruct the war devastated Tamil homeland.

‘Though we have entered into a ceasefire agreement and observed peace for three years and participated in the peace talks for six months, our people have not yet received any peace dividends. The intolerable burden of the day-to-day life problems is suffocating our people. Our people are desperately anticipating relief and resolutions to their urgent existential problems. For these reasons we want the immediate resumption of peace talks, based on our proposal, so that an interim administrative authority can be established as early as possible to address the grievances of our people. If some elements of our proposals are deemed problematic

or controversial, these issues can be resolved through discussions at the negotiating table. Once the interim administrative authority is institutionalised and becomes functional we are prepared to engage in negotiations for a permanent settlement to the ethnic problem. That is our position. Our position is reasonable. We are advocating this position in relation to the actuality of the concrete conditions prevailing in the Tamil homeland. Nevertheless, President Kumaratunga is inviting us for talks on a permanent solution, advancing a position that even an interim administrative set-up should be worked out within the contours of a final settlement. We can point out different reasons as to why she gives primacy to talks on a permanent solution. One reason could be her strategy to satisfy extremist racist elements, particularly to placate the JVP, who are deadly opposed to our proposal for an interim administration. The second reason could be to impress upon the international community that she is genuinely committed to resolving the Tamil national question. The third reason could be to prolong the peace negotiations indefinitely by opting to talk on a most intractable and complex issue. We can come up with several other reasons. Whatever the real reason, we can clearly and confidently say one thing; it is apparent from the inconsistent and contradictory statements made by President Kumaratunga that her government is not going to offer the Tamil people either an interim administration or a permanent solution.

‘I do not wish to elaborate here the bitter historical experience of political negotiations we have engaged in with the Sinhala political leadership for more than fifty years to resolve the ethnic problem of the Tamil people. This is a political truth deeply buried in the collective psyche of the Tamil

nation. Over a long period of time, we had talks on linguistic rights, on equal rights, on regional autonomy, on federal self-rule and entered into pacts and agreements, which were later torn apart and abrogated. Our liberation organisation is not prepared to walk the path of treachery and deception once again.

‘The Sinhala political organizations and their leadership, which are deeply buried in the mud of Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism, will never be able to comprehend the political aspirations of the people of Tamil Eelam. None of the major Sinhala political parties are prepared to recognize the fundamentals underlying the Tamil national question. None of the Sinhala political organizations is prepared to accept the northeastern region as the historical homeland of the Tamil-speaking people, that the Tamils constitute themselves as a distinct nationality and that they are entitled to the right to self-determination, including the right to secede.

The southern political movements do not have the maturity and magnanimity or the political sagacity to understand and accept the fundamentals of the Tamil national question, nor do they possess a consensus or a collective vision on the Tamil issue. What we can observe in the southern political spectrum is division, disunity and mutually divergent, contradictory notions and policies. We are surprised to note that President Kumaratunga is showing concern and interest in resolving the ethnic conflict when political parties aligned to her coalition government are advocating incoherent and irrational policies and articulating brazen forms of racism. We wish to make an open request to all the political parties constituting the governing Freedom Alliance, as well as to the opposition United National Party, to declare publicly their official policy on the fundamentals of the Tamil national question, particularly on the core demands of the Tamil's concerning homeland, nationality and the right to self-determination.

‘It will be meaningful to talk about a permanent settlement if the Sinhala political organisations have a clear, coherent policy, a proper insight and a consensus approach towards the Tamil national question. If not, there is no meaning in engaging in talks about a permanent solution. There is division, discord, confusion and contradiction within the Sinhala political leadership on the Tamil issue. Having realized the truth that the Sinhala political leadership will not be able to offer a reasonable permanent solution to our people, we submitted an interim solution. We expressed our desire to resume negotiations, based on our proposals for an interim mechanism, to provide relief to our people's urgent existential needs. But the government of Kumaratunga is deliberately impeding the peace efforts by insisting that talks should be about a permanent settlement. Having covered up the serious policy differences and internal contradictions behind the curtain of a loose political alliance, President Kumaratunga is accusing the Tamil Tigers of intransigence. We are confident that the international community will soon be able to see the real face of Chandrika, who is acting with a deceptive mask of peace.

'We cannot continue to be entrapped in a political vacuum without an interim solution or a permanent settlement, without a stable peace and without peace of mind. The Sinhala nation neither assimilates and integrates our people to live in co-existence nor does it allow our people to secede and lead a separate existence. We cannot continue to live in the darkness of political uncertainty, without freedom, without emancipation, without any prospects for the future. There are borderlines to patience and expectations. We have now reached the borderline. At this critical

moment we wish to make an urgent appeal to the Sri Lanka government. We urge the government to resume the peace negotiations without conditions, based on our proposal for an Interim Self-Governing Authority. If the Government of Sri Lanka rejects our urgent appeal and adopts delaying tactics, perpetuating the suffering of our people, we have no alternative other than to advance the freedom struggle of our nation. We call upon the concerned international governments to understand our predicament and prevail upon the Sri Lanka government to resume peace talks based on our fair and reasonable stand.'