



International Federation of Tamils

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Sri Lanka back to Square one

The results of the recent Presidential election in Sri Lanka should serve as an eye-opener to the International Community (IC) to see for itself, the actual conditions prevailing in the island and formulate a suitable and pragmatic policy re-structure, in order to install permanent peace and promote development in the turbulent island and the South Asia region.

The new President, Mahinda Rajapakse, has vouched to resuscitate the SWRD Bandaranayake era in which the fangs of nationalist extremism took its roots. In his inaugural address, he has rejected the Cease-Fire Agreement (CFA) signed between the earlier government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and rejected the P-TOMS and the Federal set-up, all forged under the sponsorship of the IC. Even during his election campaign days, Rajapakse, urged by nationalist extremists and religious chauvinists who had signed pacts with him, had been upholding these in his manifesto.

On the other hand, from the platform of the main opposition candidate, Ranil Wickremasinghe, his stalwarts took pride in his cunning to set up paramilitary groups to go on vindictive rampage during his term in office, creating commotion in the North-East, much against the spirit and stipulations of the CFA and exposing the duplicity of the candidate.

All in all, this was a revelation of a situation in which the main candidates in the Presidential race revealed their anti-Tamil sentiments and untrustworthiness to resolve the national crisis.

The International Community, the sponsor to the ceasefire and the ensuing peace talks remained a silent accomplice to the proposal from the election platforms to undo all that was built-up after the ceasefire. No attempt was made by the IC to warn the government and the Sinhala polity against fostering extreme nationalistic tendencies or to educate the Sinhala nation in pluralism, democracy and peaceful co-existence. On the contrary, the IC remained inactive during the three and a half years following CFA and dormant during the election campaigning period. Much to the delight of the Sinhala chauvinists, the IC provided them with a vicarious encouragement by EU's introduction of travel strictures on LTTE travel to European Community countries.

The resolve of the Tamils in every previous Presidential or Parliamentary election in the island since independence had been to defeat the worst nationalist extremist in the race. But, in the last Presidential election, the resolve was to expose one. By its

peaceful demonstration of abstinence from voting, the Tamil nation removed its buffer against the rushing on-flow of extremist nationalism of the Sinhalese, thus exposing to the world the futility of a unitary state and co-existence existence in an environment of inherent hate. The Tamil nation's resolve to refrain from voting sprang from:

- *The International Community's refusal to take into consideration the duplicity of the Sri Lankan polity in implementing the ceasefire agreement at the end of the three decades of armed conflict;

- * The denial by the occupying Sri Lankan armed forces to return to the displaced Tamils their ancestral homes and farming fields and traditional fishing territorial waters;

- * The refusal to implement the P-TOMS proposal suggested by the International Community to ameliorate the exasperated condition of the Tsunami victims; and

- * Maintaining heavy military presence in the traditional Tamil homeland. For example, 40,000 state troops are stationed in Jaffna peninsula alone, approximately apportioning an armed soldier to monitor ten unarmed civilian Tamils.

In order to alert the International Community to their resolve, the Tamil civilian society held Tamil Resurgence Conventions in all major towns of the North-East, with over 90% of the Tamils attending to reiterate their demand for the recognition of their traditional homeland, their right to self-determination and their nationhood. From every platform they pleaded with the LTTE to take up their cause and lead them to attain their aspiration. The Tamil Student Movement, provoked by the complete disregard from the International Community and the international media to the plea from the Tamil civil society called out for an expression of peaceful protest by not exercising their right to vote.

The report of the European Election Monitoring Commission is a revelation of the IC's failure to make a proper assessment of the ground-reality. The IC failed to take the Tamil Resurgence Conventions and the rallying call of the Tamil Students seriously. This is a stand forced on the Tamil nation after more than fifty years of peaceful democratic bargaining, thirty years of armed conflict, three and a half years of CFA and a betrayal of trust they had in the IC. At the end of heavy loss of lives, pogroms, internal displacement, enforced exodus to the Vanni, disintegration of families and flight to foreign lands, the Tamils at home as well as abroad have prevailed on the LTTE to take up their cause to attain recognition of their self-determination, nationhood and traditional homeland. The Commission's puerile attempt to blame the LTTE for the absence of Tamil vote, is indeed a failure to read the will of a resolute nation, by the Commission.

The Sinhala nation has expressed its resolve by its vote in the Presidential election to - Uphold Sinhala Language only and Unitary State only in Sri Lanka.

The Tamil nation has expressed its resolve with its decision by abstaining from voting in the Presidential election to - Respect the decision of the Sinhala people to have their will in the Sinhala nation; and to uphold Tamil people's decision to demand for recognition of their right to self-determination; nationhood and traditional homeland.