

## **The Tamil National Alliance – Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi**

### **Parliamentary Election – 2015**

#### **Manifesto**

At the time of independence from colonial rule in 1948, Ceylon was foisted with a unitary type constitution with simple majoritarian rule. In 1949 a sizeable number of Tamils of recent Indian origin were disenfranchised. State aided colonization of the preponderantly Tamil Speaking territory, particularly the Eastern Province, with the majority community intensified. The Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (ITAK) was formed as a consequence in December 1949. In this background in April 1951 the ITAK articulated its claim that the Tamil People in Ceylon were a Nation distinct from that of the Sinhalese by every test of nationhood and were therefore entitled to the right to self-determination. As a necessary corollary to the exercise of this right, we demanded a federal arrangement in the North and the East, where the Tamil Speaking Peoples are a predominant majority. In 1956 Sinhala was made the only official language of the country, again by the use of the parliamentary majority that was available to the majority community. Various peaceful agitations were organized between this time and the late 1970s to win back the right to self-determination that was lost first through foreign conquests and later due to a system of government that reinforced majoritarian hegemony not accepted by the Tamil People. Agreements were also entered into between two Prime Ministers, S W R D Bandaranaike and Dudley Senanayake, and S J V Chelvanayakam, the leader of the Tamil People in 1957 and 1965 respectively, relating primarily to the alienation of state land in the North-East, to ensure the linguistic and cultural identity of the North-East. Both were unilaterally abrogated by the governments of the day. In 1961 the ITAK conducted a massive satyagraha campaign involving thousands of Tamil speaking Peoples in the North and the East, peacefully engaged in prayer resulting in the entrances to the Government Agents' offices (Kachcheris) in the North-East being peacefully obstructed and government administration in the North and East being completely paralysed.

In 1970 a Constituent Assembly was formed to enact an autochthonous constitution. ITAK also participated in this exercise and urged the inclusion of provisions to share powers of governance with the Tamil Speaking Peoples in the North-East on the basis of shared sovereignty within a united country in keeping with their democratic verdicts. Those proposals were defeated by majority votes and the members of the ITAK left the Constituent Assembly. Similarly the Tamil People did not grant their consent to the enactment of the 1978 Constitution. Thus the first and second Republican constitutions having entrenched a

Unitary State, continued with Sinhala as the only official language and gave Buddhism the foremost place. These constitutions were enacted without the consent of the Tamil People.

Systematic State-sponsored colonization was carried out since independence in 1948 in order to change the demographic pattern of the North-East, which are the areas of historical habitation of the Tamil Speaking Peoples. This has continued with full vigour in the North and the East after the end of the war in 2009. The government retains an oppressive army presence in the Northern Province and has engaged in acquiring large tracts of land for 'military purposes'.

In addition to the acts of discrimination, including standardization which affected the tertiary education of the Tamil youth and occasioned discrimination in employment in the state sector, organized violence was periodically unleashed against the Tamil People in the country in 1956, 1958, 1961, 1977, 1981 and 1983. No protection was provided by the State to the Tamil victims. On these occasions, affected Tamil People from other parts of the country were transported by the State by land, sea and air to the North and East recognizing these two provinces to be their homeland.

### **POWER SHARING ARRANGEMENTS**

Soon after the anti-Tamil pogrom in 1983, attempts were made to solve the Tamil national question by means of an alternate political arrangement in which greater autonomy would be granted to the Tamil Speaking Peoples. An arrangement was introduced in 1987 consequent to the Indo-Lanka Accord. These changes paved the way for the setting up of Provincial Councils with minimal powers, and promises were made at the highest levels that it will be improved upon. Several such attempts resulted in the 1993 Mangala Munasinghe Select Committee Proposals during President Ranasinghe Premadasa's term, the Government's proposals for constitutional reform of 1995, 1997 and 2000 under President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and the APRC multi-ethnic expert committee majority report in December 2006 under President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

While no progress was being made on the political front to solve the burning national issue, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) continued its armed struggle. Successive governments entered into negotiations with the LTTE and in February 2002 the LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka signed a Ceasefire Agreement and later in December 2002 agreed on a set of principles called the Oslo Communiqué, which stated

“[T]o explore a solution founded on the principle of internal self determination in areas of historical habitation of the Tamil-speaking Peoples, based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka.”

## **MILITARY ONSLAUGHT AND ITS AFTERMATH**

However, the ceasefire did not last and hostilities broke out between the government forces and the LTTE with the military confrontation coming to an end on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2009. The 30 year old hostilities and war has ravaged the Tamil speaking North-East and left the Tamil People destitute. Over One Million Tamils have fled to other countries for safety and another half a million Tamils were displaced within the country. Over One Hundred and Fifty Thousand Tamils have been killed over the years of the conflict and credible estimates point to over seventy thousand civilians having been killed in the last stages of the military onslaught. Many more have been maimed and grievously injured and suffer from traumatic disorders. In addition over 500,000 Tamil people were rendered homeless. Most were interned in detention camps against all civilized and international norms. The right of resettlement of these people in their original places, though promised to the international community and to the United Nations, have not been honoured.

## **TAMIL PEOPLE AND THE PRESENT CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

We, the Tamil People of Sri Lanka are a distinct People in terms of relevant International Conventions and Covenants. We as a People want to continue to live in our country in peaceful co-existence with others, with dignity and self-respect, with freedom and liberty and without fear, as equal citizens free from majoritarian hegemony.

We as a People are thus concerned about our historical habitats, our Collective Rights that accrue to us as a People and as a Nation and our entitlement to exercise our right to determine our destiny to ensure self-government in the Tamil Speaking North-East of the country within a united and undivided Sri Lanka.

The present constitutional arrangements in this regard have proved to be inadequate and unsatisfactory. They favour the majority and impose majoritarian hegemony on the Tamil People. Democracy in a plural society cannot function effectively without a constitutional framework that provides for equity, equality, justice, peace and security. It is in this context that we face the forthcoming Parliamentary Election.

The TNA firmly believes that sovereignty lies with the People and not with the State. It is not the government in Colombo that holds the right to govern the Tamil People, but the People themselves. In this regard the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka is flawed in that power is concentrated at the Centre and its Agent, the Governor. Our political philosophy is rooted in a fundamental democratic challenge to the authoritarian state. We made a significant contribution towards the achievement of these objectives on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2015 in the whole country. Our political programme is therefore rooted in the needs and aspirations of all people including the Tamil Speaking Peoples for justice and equality.

## **OUR STAND ON A POLITICAL SOLUTION**

The principles and specific constitutional provisions that the TNA considers to be paramount to the resolution of the national question relate mainly to the sharing of the powers of governance through a shared sovereignty amongst the Peoples who inhabit this island. The following salient features of power sharing are fundamental to achieving genuine reconciliation, lasting peace and development for all the Peoples of Sri Lanka:

- The Tamils are a distinct People with their own culture, civilization, language and heritage and from time immemorial have inhabited this island together with the Sinhalese People and others
- The contiguous preponderantly Tamil Speaking Northern and Eastern provinces is the historical habitation of the Tamil People and the Tamil Speaking Peoples
- The Tamil People are entitled to the right to self-determination in keeping with United Nations International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both of which Sri Lanka has accepted and acceded to
- Power sharing arrangements must continue to be established as it existed earlier in a unit of a merged Northern and Eastern Provinces based on a Federal structure. The Tamil speaking Muslim historical inhabitants shall be entitled to be beneficiaries of all power-sharing arrangements in the North-East. This will no way inflict any disability on any People.
- Devolution of power on the basis of shared sovereignty shall be over land, law and order, enforcement of the law so as to ensure the safety and security of the Tamil People, socio-economic development including inter-alia health, education, higher and vocational education, agriculture, fisheries, industries, livestock development, cultural affairs, mustering of resources, both domestic and foreign and fiscal powers.
- Direct foreign investment in the North-East should be facilitated resulting in new industries and employment opportunities being created for youth
- Avenues for tertiary education should also be set-up so that those who cannot enter universities can pursue higher education in relevant fields

All that has been stated above shall be enacted and implemented within the framework of a united and undivided Sri Lanka.

## **OUR STAND ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND RECONCILIATION**

Accountability and reconciliation are fundamental to genuine and permanent peace in Sri Lanka. We seek fulfilment of the resolutions adopted at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in March 2012, March 2013, and March 2014 and the Report of the international investigation mandated by the March 2014 resolution to be released in September 2015. We are strongly committed to the ascertainment of the truth which must be made public and known to all the peoples of this country, the Sinhalese, the Tamils, the Muslims and others. Truth, justice, reparation and the guarantee of non-recurrence are fundamental to the national question being comprehensively addressed so as to ensure permanent and genuine reconciliation between the different peoples on the basis of justice and equality.

## **MATTERS OF IMMEDIATE CONCERN FOR THE TAMIL PEOPLE**

In addition to continuing to pursue a just and lasting political solution to the national ethnic question, we will actively engage in addressing the immediate and current concerns of our People. The specific matters are as follows:

- There must be meaningful de-militarization resulting in the return to the pre-war situation as it existed in 1983 before the commencement of hostilities by the removal of armed forces, military apparatuses and High Security/Restricted Zones from the Northern and Eastern Provinces. This is imperative in the prevailing calm and peaceful environment
- Tamil People who have been displaced in the North and the East due to the conflict must be speedily resettled in their original places; housing provided and livelihoods restored in a manner that respects their dignity

After the defeat of the former regime in January 2015 and due to the persistent and indefatigable efforts of the TNA over the past several years and since January 2015, decisions have been taken by the new regime for the return of the lands to and the resettlement of the displaced Tamil People in Valikamam in the North and Sampur in the East which are being currently implemented. Action will be expeditiously pursued to fulfil these objectives. 1,000 acres of farm land has also been released in Keppapulavu in Mullaithivu.

- Since 6 years have elapsed after the conclusion of the war, all political and other prisoners held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) in relation to war-related activities must be released. The TNA has been pressing for their release and for the abrogation of the PTA and will continue to strenuously pursue this objective.

- There must be finality reached by the truth being ascertained with regard to thousands of missing persons who were largely bread-winners of their families and adequate multi-faceted relief provided to the said families so as to enable them to overcome their agony and recommence lives.
- Tamils who fled the country must be permitted to return to their homes and a conducive atmosphere created for their return. In particular, expeditious steps must be taken for the return of over 100,000 refugees in South India.
- A comprehensive programme for the development of the North and the East including the creation of employment opportunities for the youth will be undertaken with the active support of the Sri Lankan State, the Tamil Diaspora and the International Community. It was not possible to implement such a programme during the term of the former regime due to its negative attitude and since January 2015 the country has not had a strong and stable government. The TNA would actively promote the accomplishment of such a programme when a new government is established.
- The TNA will initiate a programme to rehabilitate all minor tanks in the North-East so as to increase the water resources for our agricultural needs and will also take serious steps, with necessary expert help to solve the drinking water problem in the North.
- A comprehensive development programme will be undertaken in the North-East, including upgrading the Palali airport as an international airport, and developing sea ports and fisheries harbours.
- Relevant expertise and technologies will be obtained so as to modernise the utilization of our palmyrah resources.
- We will find solutions for the challenges faced by our fishermen in freely pursuing their vocation and make every effort to improve their livelihood.

#### **WAR WIDOWS, ORPHANS, ELDERS AND DISABLED**

The war has left behind almost 90,000 widows in the North-East. There is a need for a clear policy to build their capacity and uplift their lives. These widows have become economically and socially vulnerable. Adequate steps must be taken to swiftly and effectively create livelihood programmes and other necessary measures to alleviate their present condition. The needs of children, elders and disabled also need to be addressed.

#### **REHABILITATION OF EX-MILITANTS**

The rehabilitation of ex-militants must be comprehensive ensuring the acquisition of necessary skills and the creation of employment opportunities to enable them to recommence lives with dignity. Programmes that have been implemented thus far have been

inadequate and the ex-militants have not been able to earn their livelihood or recommence their lives with dignity. An early programme of action is needed to address this issue.

### **THE BREAKDOWN OF TRADITIONAL SOCIAL STRUCTURES**

The current structure of government which excludes meaningful Tamil participation in effective governance and substituting therefor the military in the North-East, post-war, has resulted in the increase of gender based violence, abuse of alcohol and drugs and the general breakdown of traditional social structures. The only way in which this can be remedied is through powers of governance being effectively exercised by democratically elected representatives of the people.

### **THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

The Tamil People have always worked with commitment towards a reasonable and acceptable resolution of the national ethnic question through domestic processes. It is the Sri Lankan state which has spurned these opportunities and sought to suppress the Tamil People through repeated anti-Tamil pogroms. It was such conduct on the part of the Sri Lankan state that internationalized the national question and compelled the Sri Lankan state to accept an international role. Tamil militancy, which also was an inevitable consequence, has now ended.

The former regime endeavoured to undo even the minimum progress achieved through international involvement. The TNA is firmly of the view that international auspices is inevitable to achieve permanent peace through genuine reconciliation thereby enabling all Peoples living in Sri Lanka to live as equal citizens.

### **CONCLUSION**

The TNA calls upon the voters in the electoral districts of Jaffna, Vanni, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara to unitedly and overwhelmingly exercise their franchise in favour of the TNA, contesting under the name of the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi and the “House” symbol and thereby democratically endorse, to the fullest degree, policies of the TNA enunciated here in regard to vital issues of fundamental concern to the Tamil and Tamil speaking Peoples as set out in this Manifesto.

***This Manifesto is issued by the TNA comprising of ITAK, TELO, EPRLF and PLOTE.***