











DOES THE GTF PLAY THE FIDDLE WHILE TAMILS AND THEIR HOMELAND ARE BURNING?

Global Tamil Forum (GTF) meeting the Sri Lankan Sangha for Better Sri Lanka (senior Buddhist monks from different Nikayas) has made shock waves to those organisations, which have been rigorously working towards establishing a permanent political solution to meet with the aspirations of Tamil people that they have been progressively losing for the past 75 years after Sri Lanka became independent from the British rule.

Since independence, Buddhist clergies' dominance in the political history, has been the predominant cause for repealing every pact signed between the Tamil and Sinhalese political leaders for reaching a solution to Tamil peoples' fundamental issues.

The historical cycles of violence and genocide inflicted against Tamil people in the island have concrete evidence that the Sri Lankan state, regardless of who came to power to prove that the Sinhala state's aim is to make the country a mono-ethnic, mono-lingual, and mono-religious Sinhala-Buddhist country. The unprecedented declaration of the Buddhist clergies accepting the existence of a plural society at the meeting with the GTF has generated scepticism and dismay among the Tamil people whether this meeting was political motivated to deceive Tamil people and the international community. To add to fuel to Tamil peoples' concern the whole process of this 'declaration' had been kept secretive without any consultation process. It is paramount that any declaration such as 'Himalayan Declaration' should have been consulted with the victims and brought to the public domain prior to the meeting. This did not occur.

The GTF on the other hand started a similar process in 2015 with the then President Maithiripala Sirisena when Ranil Wickremasinghe was the Prime Minister and that failed miserably as expected. It took over 5 years for GTF to realise the entire process was an illusion conveniently crafted by the Sri Lankan government led by Maithiripala and Ranil Wickremasinghe aiming to drag the UNHRC process and manage the increasing call to restructure the state to ensure nonrecurrence of past violence.

The failed policies of all consecutive Sri Lankan governments in the post-independence period led to repeating cycles of violence, death and destruction of properties, corruption at the highest level, impunity, economic regression, wastage of funds to continue the militarisation, debt trap, high degree of power centralisation, international isolation and default. Thus, without addressing the root causes of Tamil peoples' issues in depth, treating them superficially as a trivial matter is not going to resolve Tamil peoples' yearning aspirations constitutionally. The constitutional changes are not going to occur without gaining the majority parliamentary support, which is an operation of "getting blood out of stone" in Sinhala-Buddhist exclusionists dominated Sri Lankan parliament. Provoking racial slurs among Sinhala public has been the oxygen of Sinhala parliamentarians to win their seats to the parliament.

Knowing Ranil Wickremasinghe's past of manipulating matters to his advantage, GTF's meeting will provide Ranil an opportunity to hoodwink the international community to sweep Tamils' outcries under the carpet in the guise of success in talking with Tamil diaspora organisations and to promote support for the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) model for the resolution internally.

Several Tamil diaspora organisations have been actively working in founding a permanent political solution since the end of civil war in 2009 for Tamil people to live in peace and harmony with equal rights in the country. These organisations are also laboriously spending their time, money, and efforts to establish accountability for the war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed on the Tamil people.

The rigorous UNHRC Resolutions 46/1 and 51/1 along with the Sri Lanka Accountability Project (SLAP) and continued persuasion of implementing "Magnitsky" Act and / or Global Human Rights Sanctions Act against the perpetrators by the member states are being continuously carried out those genuine Tamil diaspora organisations.

The consequences of the GTF's action are going to have significant impact in the international community's true perception of the plight, the Tamil people are undergoing for the past 75 years since Sri Lanka became independent. They are,

- Jeopardise the Sri Lanka Accountability Project (SLAP) that is being carried out by the OHCHR.
- Any process leading to an international criminal prosecution mechanism will be replaced entirely by an internal process such as the toothless Truth and Reconciliation mechanism proposed by the President Ranil Wickremasinghe.
- The efforts are made to get the world leaders, like India, USA, UK and Europe, to directly intervene to establish a sustainable political solution for the Tamil people to live in peace and harmony addressing their legitimate aspirations in the island. Based on abrogation of several pacts in the past, Tamil people have lost hope in any of the internal process to find a meaningful political solution.
- Consequently, the GTF's effort will be futile and will sabotage the efforts the genuine Tamil organisations have been painstakingly formulating for the past 15 years.
- The publicity made by the Sri Lankan government and the media about the GTF meeting with the Buddhist clergies is going to send a wrong message to the international community that Tamil people are going to see a dawn to their long-standing sufferings. This will play as a tool to Ranil Wickremasinghe government to convince the international community to take a non-intervention policy in Sri Lanka leaving Tamils solely at the mercy of Sinhala Buddhist exclusionists.

At this moment, it is pertinent to flag out whether the GTF represents the Tamil diaspora in any form or shape. Since GTF formed as an umbrella organisation in August 2009 in France, all except one of the 14 Tamil organisations have withdrawn their membership from the GTF. Thus, it is wrong to portray or construe as GTF representing the collective decisions of majority diaspora organisations of the Tamil people. The diverse but strong Tamil diaspora is united in protecting the Tamil people in the island and finding justice and a lasting political solution with the necessary intervention of the international community, GTF's action is weakening that synergy and allowing the Sri Lankan state to divide Tamil diaspora and hoodwink the international community.

The realistic way-forward is all Tamil organisations should engage the stake-holders and the international community and initiate a time-bounded consultation process for establishing a permanent solution for Tamil people for peaceful coexistence, stability and prosperity in the island of Sri Lanka.

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