



**Tamil National Alliance**  
**தமிழ்த் தேசியக் கூட்டமைப்பு**



**உலகத் தமிழர் பேரவை**  
**Global Tamil Forum**

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## **PRESS STATEMENT**

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### **Chief Minister Stalin is heralding a new era of pride and optimism among global Tamils**

It has not even been a year since Hon. M. K. Stalin became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, yet the mark that the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) leader has made in his state and among Tamils worldwide is unmistakable.

Whether it was ably handling the second wave of the pandemic, or the progressive social justice agenda that includes economically uplifting the underprivileged while removing caste and gender barriers in many aspects of lives, or the bold vision of making Tamil Nadu 'a one-trillion economy' by 2030 – Chief Minister Stalin has become the envy of many leaders across India.

With the theme of '*let Tamil bind us together*', Chief Minister Stalin has taken many meaningful steps towards promoting the commonalities and cohesiveness of the global Tamil community, arguably more so than any other Tamil leader in recent history. Appointing a dedicated Minister, viz., Hon. K. S. Masthan, whose portfolio includes Welfare and Rehabilitation of Non-Resident Tamils; declaring January 12 as the World Tamil Diaspora Day with Chief Minister Stalin inaugurating the event; taking steps to institute Tamil studies in international universities, including through donations towards the establishment of Tamil Chairs at Harvard University and the University of Toronto - are just a few examples.

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA), the predominant and authentic representatives of the North-East origin Tamil people in Sri Lanka, and the Global Tamil Forum (GTF), an organisation which strives for the interests of the Ilankai Thamizhar through its engagement initiatives in many countries, hold Chief Minister Stalin in high esteem for his inspiring leadership of the global Tamil community.

From the perspective of Tamils from Sri Lanka including those living in Sri Lanka and in the Diaspora – the approach adopted by the present Tamil Nadu government is commendable. They are grateful for the invitations extended to the Member of Parliament from the TNA, M. A. Sumanthiran, and the President of the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC), Sivan Ilanko for the inaugural World Tamil Diaspora Day event last month. The participation and felicitation by the Tamil Nadu Minister Hon. K. S. Masthan at the annual Thai Pongal Celebrations conducted by the CTC on January 29, 2022 is equally pleasing.

Chief Minister Stalin's announcement last August regarding Ilankai Thamizhar refugee camps, stating the following was a welcome gesture of notable significance. "*They are not orphans; we are there for them and hereafter they will be called Ilankai Tamil rehabilitation camps*" This announcement was backed up with a generous allotment of Rs. 317 crores for their welfare schemes, with a promise to improve their living

standards further. We also note with gratitude Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's strong public statements, in his capacity as opposition leader, exerting pressure on India to support the UNHRC resolution on Sri Lanka during the March 2021 session.

Chief Minister Stalin's supportive approach towards the Tamil struggle in Sri Lanka is consistent with the long tradition of Dravidian political leaders of Tamil Nadu, particularly his illustrious father, late Hon. Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi. Tamil people in Sri Lanka and their political leaders looked upon the leaders of Tamil Nadu for guidance, support and inspiration. Their support – directly, as well as through the Government of India – has always been a great source of comfort for the Tamil people living in Sri Lanka.

We remember with gratitude, the leadership shown by the late Hon. M. Karunanidhi – the initiatives to protect lives, property, and political rights of the Tamil people following the 1983 anti-Tamil riots; the late Chief Minister using his influence to prod different Indian Prime Ministers to find a political solution to address the Tamils' quest for equality, justice, peace, dignity, and devolution of power; and DMK MPs' consistently voicing for the Ilankai Thamizhar in the Lok Sabha over decades. We are also conscious that the DMK support for the Tamil cause continued despite many challenges it faced in the Indian Union, including the dismissal of the DMK government in 1991 relating to the Tamil peoples' problems in Sri Lanka.

We are acutely conscious of the difficulties and degrading treatments encountered by the leaders of the mainstream Dravidian Movements in Tamil Nadu, many of such regrettable actions originating from unrealistic and hardline positions adopted by some from both sides of the Palk Strait. However, the overwhelming majority of the Tamils of Sri Lankan origin have always been appreciative and grateful for the support provided by the leaders of Tamil Nadu, and also recognise their limitations in shaping every event of the past. Such understanding is growing in strength and will help solidify the bonds and mutual respect enjoyed by the people and the leaders of both communities.

Tamils in Sri Lanka are, once again, at a critical point. Twelve years after the end of the war, their economic prospects are dismal. The progress on war related accountability is marginal at best. Tamils face many existential challenges - to protect their land and to preserve their identity in the Northern and Eastern Provinces against rampant militarization and state sponsored initiatives aimed at altering regional demography. It is feared a new constitution under preparation could further weaken the status of the Tamil people, especially by abolishing or weakening the Provincial Councils – the only constitutional power devolution arrangement Tamil people achieved with direct Indian involvement.

It is in such a dire situation that we are looking for guidance and support from India and Tamil Nadu.

Tamil people in Sri Lanka aspire for a degree of self-rule in the areas of their historic habitation (the North-East) and believe this empowerment is fundamental for their equal citizenship in Sri Lanka and to protect their unique identity in the island – a position that always resonated with Tamil Nadu and Indian thinking and policy positions.

India has significant leverage over Sri Lanka and has repeatedly called upon Sri Lanka to address the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil people for equality, justice, peace, dignity, and meaningful political devolution. India has emphasized on many occasions, including during the March 2021 UNHRC sessions, about its two-pillar policy of supporting Sri Lanka's unity and territorial integrity, and its commitment to Tamils' aspirations, and that these were not mutually exclusive choices.

Tamil Nadu has always been critical in setting Indian policies towards Sri Lanka, and it is in this context that a path setting and pragmatic approach adopted by Chief Minister Stalin will give us enormous comfort. A continued focus on this issue at this critical time is crucial for the long-term peace and prosperity of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. It is also intrinsically linked with the interests of Tamils on both sides of the Palk Strait, and the greater India.

The TNA and the GTF, as organisations that have always adopted a sensible, pragmatic, and consensus building approach to settle the Tamil national question in Sri Lanka, look forward to establishing direct engagements with the Tamil Nadu government and to further strengthen the engagement with the Government of India.

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Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is the predominant political party representing the Tamils from Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka

Global Tamil Forum (GTF) is an influential Tamil diaspora organisation - established in 2009 following the end of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka. GTF is absolutely committed to a non-violent agenda and it seeks lasting peace in Sri Lanka, based on justice, reconciliation and a negotiated political settlement.

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