

**CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS**  
**04<sup>th</sup> February, 2015**

We, the undersigned conveners on behalf of civil society organizations and individuals who have focused on human rights protection through the dark and dangerous days of the Rajapaksa regime, welcome the victory of Mr. Maithripala Sirisena in the 08<sup>th</sup> January 2015 Presidential Election and the formation of a new government. We look forward to a positive and constructive association with the new government to ensure an end to the culture of impunity which defined the Rajapaksa regime's record on human rights, and to a new era of robust human rights protection in Sri Lanka with due respect for the rule of law, accountability and the national and international obligations the Government of Sri Lanka is bound by.

The new government is committed to a 100 -day programme of governance reform, which is essential to bridge the democratic governance deficit so grossly expanded by the Rajapaksa regime over 09 years. We hope and trust and pledge to ensure that in the 100 days and beyond, the fundamental tenet of democratic governance – that human rights protection is integral to it – guides, shapes and informs the changes this government is committed to introducing.

In this context we strongly urge the government to ensure that:

Suspicion and mistrust of civil society organizations and of human rights defenders in particular, is firmly set aside and the rightful place of civil society in democratic governance and public policy deliberation is recognized.

The culture of impunity is reversed and that as a matter of immediate urgency, the list of detainees is released and likewise, those languishing in detention for years without evidence against them.

A transitional justice process is initiated with civil society involvement and victims placed at the centre of the process. Furthermore, that expertise and involvement of the United Nations (UN) human rights and other relevant international bodies in the design and implementation of an accountability process in which perpetrators responsible for human rights related crimes are brought to justice, is sought. This must be in line with international human rights standards and best practices. The findings and recommendations of the relevant processes undertaken with Sri Lankan participation such as the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission, as well as UN processes including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Investigation on Sri Lanka, must be taken into account when such a process is designed and implemented.

Anti- terror legislation is brought in line with international standards and obligations.

The reports of all preceding Presidential Commissions on human rights violations are made public and the mandate of the current Commission of Inquiry on Missing Persons extended for a period of 03 months in which it will prepare and release a report on its findings so far. The mandate of the Advisory Council should be terminated with full disclosure as to its terms of reference, remuneration of members and report.

Prosecutions are initiated in the documented egregious cases of human rights abuse such as the Action Contre la Faim (ACF) 17 and Trincomalee 05 cases.

The above are submitted in the spirit of cooperation and in the firm belief that human rights defenders and the Government of Sri Lanka fervently share a common goal of strengthening human rights protection in our country as the basis for its unity, peace and prosperity.

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