



CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES
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THE URGENT NEED FOR FRESH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT

5 June 2015, Colombo, Sri Lanka: It is now more than a month after the 23rd of April 2015, promised as the date for the dissolution of Parliament in the 100-day programme of the National Democratic Front presidential election manifesto. It is becoming increasingly clear that the momentum generated by the historic January 2015 presidential election is being exhausted, and that the minority government appointed for the sole purpose of executing the 100-day reform programme is drifting aimlessly.

After the enactment of the Nineteenth Amendment, the reform process itself has become mired in an ambiguous and perplexing morass of competing political self-interests. The current balance of power in the institutions of the state is incongruous and unsustainable, with a President elected in 2015 to undertake thoroughgoing constitutional reforms, on the one hand, and a Parliament elected in 2010 under entirely different circumstances, on the other.

In this context, the need for a Twentieth Amendment embodying electoral reforms before the dissolution of Parliament, arose as a necessary quid pro quo in exchange for the support of the UPFA parliamentary majority for the Nineteenth Amendment. Given the lack of a coherent position on the part of the UPFA on electoral reforms, it is now even clearer than before that this demand was entirely tactical. Moreover, there has been absolutely no transparency or public consultation in the preparation of the Twentieth Amendment and if current proposals serve to undermine the principle of proportional representation, that would constitute regression not progress from the current system.

We value President Sirisena's courage in coming forward as the common opposition candidate in what was a challenging political environment under the previous regime, and applaud his demonstrable commitment to successfully enacting reforms to the executive presidency, even if they have not gone far enough. What is most important to remember about the democratic mandate of the last presidential election, however, is that the people of Sri Lanka voted for fundamental reforms to strengthen and consolidate democracy as much or more than they voted for the winning candidate. This mandate requires not only substantive reforms but also a transformation in the way government and governance is conducted. It cannot be squandered because of political indecisiveness or expediency, repeating the mistakes of the past where Sri Lanka's enormous potential has been retarded time and again due to the absence of leadership and political maturity.

In this context, there is a rising perception of crisis and instability, which cannot be allowed to take root. The economy cannot afford this lack of political direction for much longer, and as importantly, the hope and aspiration created by the change of government in January demands both clarity in promises being kept and further progress in reforms, especially with regard to devolution and power-sharing. The time is ripe therefore for fresh parliamentary elections which would allow the people of Sri Lanka to have their say on reforms already enacted and to mandate the direction of the government for the next five years.

We therefore call upon the President to dissolve Parliament immediately, in keeping with his mandate of January 2015.

Signed

Organisations

Association of War Affected Women (AWAW)
Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD)
Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA)
Centre for Women and Development, Jaffna
Families of the Disappeared
Home for Human Rights (HHR)
Inform Human Rights Documentation Centre
International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES)
Janawaboda Kendraya
Lawyers Collective
Lawyers for Democracy
Mannar Women's Development Federation
National Peace Council (NPC)
Rights Now Collective for Democracy
Right to Life Human Rights Centre
Women's Action Network
Women and Media Collective

Individuals

Mrs. Rohini Adikari
Mr. Hilmy Ahamed
Mr. Niran Ankitell
Ms Lacika Chathurani
Mrs. Sandra Cooray
Mrs. Matilda Costa
Mrs. Danushka Damayanthie
Ms Marisa de Silva
Ms. Visaka Dharmadasa
Ms. Hasanah Cegu Isadeen
Mr. Britto Fernando
Mrs. D.Rosemary Fernando

Mrs. A.Krishanthi Fernando
Dr. Nimalka Fernando
Mrs. Padma Fernando
Mr. Ruki Fernando
Mr. Luwie N. Ganeshathasan
Mr. Sudarshana Gunawardana
Mr. Lionel Guruge
Mr. Sanjana Hattotuwa
Dr Mrs. Kumudini Kalubovila
Mrs. Sumana Kodikara
Dr. Sepali Kottegoda
Ms. Mahaluxmy Kurushanthan
Mrs. Sriyani Mallika
Mrs. Mariya Madalena
Mrs. Lalitha Madurawala
Mrs. K. D. Malkanthie
Mrs. M. A. P. Malkanthie
Mrs. Rita Maxima
Mrs. Nishanthie
Mrs. Therese Perera
Mrs. K. Violet Perera
Mrs. Rita Perera
Mrs. Sulari Perera
Dr. Jehan Perera
Mrs. R. M. Punchimanike
Mrs. K. Pushpa
Mr. K.S. Ratnevale
Ms Kumudini Samuel
Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu
Ms Shreen Abdul Saroor
Mr. Raja Senanayake
Mrs.Samurdika Shivanthi
Ms. Vanie Simon
Ms. Saroja Sivachandran
Mr. J.C. Weliamuna
Dr. Asanga Welikala
Mr. Lal Wijenayake
Mrs.Swarna Wijenayaka
Ms Sriyani Wijesundera
Ms Sherrine Xavier