

A Public Appeal By **Artistes, Intellectuals & Social Activists**

It is our considered view that our country at present is facing a serious crisis of many dimensions. The crisis should not be allowed to continue, if we want our country to progress.

Hidden beneath the superficial development being carried out by the government through its various infrastructure projects, which are funded by costly foreign loans, is the reality of the erosion of the economic well being of the people. The government is also facing a fiscal crisis, although it is concealed from the public. It is with great difficulty that the government is handling even the day-to-day fiscal management.

The inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations are also at the point of breaking up. Even five years after the military defeat of the LTTE, the Tamil people of the North and East have not received anything matching their legitimate entitlements as equal citizens of our country. Instead, they have fallen from the frying pan to fire, compelling them to live in a militarized society where they have been robbed of their freedom and human dignity. Meanwhile, an anti-Muslim campaign has been active for quite some time. The recent tragedy of Aluthgama is only a horrendous consequence of this racist hate campaign.

Meanwhile, public services such as free health and free education are in a state of utter chaos. With the collapse of the rule of law, Sri Lanka has become a land of crimes and impunity. Furthermore, the worsening of Human Rights record is unprecedented. Country's constitution and the system of governance are no better.

This continuing and widespread chaos in the country is a direct result of the aberrations in our system of governance and society. The violent conflicts and bloodbaths produced by these aberrations have only further intensified them.

As citizens who are committed to the common good of our people and to a better tomorrow for the country, we make the following appeal to the government, its constituent political parties and the opposition parties: Please dedicate yourselves for a new democratic constitution and a system of governance by abolishing the executive presidential system with its unbridled powers in order to create space for re-building our system of governance while bringing to an end the prevailing corrupt, chaotic and arbitrary practices. That is the only way to restore public confidence and legitimacy on the governing process.

We also urge that the new constitution and the system of governance should embody the following principles:

- | Equal rights and equal opportunities to all ethnic and religious communities.
- | Securing of fundamental rights to all citizens, including the Right To Information.
- | Ensuring there is no space for corruption, inefficiency, and oppressive, authoritarian rule.
- | Severe punishment for the abuse of power.
- | Centralised political power to be devolved based on the concept of devolution of power between Centre and periphery.
- | Protection of the Rule of Law.
- | People's sovereignty for the people.

We believe that by working towards a new constitution and a new system of governance built on the above core principles, Sri Lanka can regain the trust and respect of her own citizens as well as the world community.

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