



# தமிழீழ விடுதலைப் புலிகள் **Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam**

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LTTE Headquarters  
Kilinochchi  
Tamil Eelam  
21.04.2003

Dear Prime Minister,

In accordance with the decision of our leadership I am advised to bring to your urgent attention the deep displeasure and dismay felt by our organisation on some critical issues relating to the on-going peace process.

You are well aware that the Ceasefire Agreement that has been in force for more than one year and the six rounds of peace negotiations between the principal parties has been successful, irrespective of the occurrence of some violent incidents that endangered the peace process. The stability of the ceasefire and the progress of the peace talks, you will certainly appreciate, are the positive outcome of the sincere and firm determination of the parties to seek a permanent resolution to the ethnic conflict through peaceful means. The cordial inter-relationship, frank and open discussions and the able and wise guidance of the facilitators fostered trust and confidence between the negotiators and helped to advance the talks on substantial levels. The negotiating teams were able to form important sub-committees on the basis of equal and joint partnership. During the early negotiating sessions it was agreed that the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE should work together and approach the international community in partnership. The Oslo Donor Conference held on 25 November 2002 turned out to be an ideal forum for such joint endeavour.

The LTTE has acted sincerely and in good faith extending its full co-operation to the government of Sri Lanka to seek international assistance to restore normalcy and to rehabilitate the war affected people of the northeast. The LTTE to date has joined hands with the government and participated in the preparation of joint appeals and programmes. In spite of our goodwill and trust, your government has opted to marginalize our organisation in approaching the international community for economic assistance. We refer to the exclusion of the LTTE from the crucial international donor conference held in Washington on 14 April 2004 in preparation for the major donor conference to be held in Japan in June. We view the exclusion of the LTTE, the principle partner to peace and the authentic representatives of the Tamil people from discussions on critical matters affecting the economic and social welfare of the Tamil nation, as a grave breach of good faith. Your government, as well as our facilitator Norway, are fully aware of the fact that the United States has legal constraints to invite representatives of a proscribed organisation to their



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country. In these circumstances an appropriate venue could have been selected to facilitate the LTTE to participate in this important preparatory aid conference. But the failure on the part of your government to do so gives cause for suspicion that this omission was deliberate. The exclusion of the LTTE from this conference has severely eroded the confidence of our people in the peace process.

As you are aware, considerable optimism and hopes were raised among the people when your government, shortly after assuming power, entered into a ceasefire agreement with our organisation, bringing to an end twenty years of savage and bloody conflict. Expectations were further raised when both sides began direct negotiations with Norwegian facilitation. In particular, there was a justifiable expectation that the peace process would address the urgent and immediate existential problems facing the people of the north and east, particularly the million people who are internally displaced by the conflict and are languishing in welfare centres and refugee camps.

As such, the Ceasefire Agreement included crucial conditions of restoring normalcy which required the vacation, by occupying Sri Lankan troops, of Tamil homes, schools, places of worship and public buildings. Despite the agreed timeframe for this evacuation of troops, which has since passed, there has been no change in the ground situation. We have repeatedly raised the issue of continuing suffering of our people at every round of talks with your government. Your negotiators' repeated assurances that the resettlement of the displaced people would be expedited have proven futile. The negotiations have been successful in so far as significant progress has been made in key areas, such as the agreement to explore federalism on the basis of the right to self-determination of our people. But this progress has not been matched by any improvement in the continuing hardships being faced by our people as a result of your government's refusal to implement the normalisation aspects of the Ceasefire Agreement and subsequent agreements reached at the talks. As a result, considerable disillusionment has set in amongst the Tamil people, and in particular the displaced, who have lost all hope the peace process will alleviate their immense suffering.

Though there is peace due to the silencing of the guns, normalcy has not returned to Tamil areas. Tens of thousands of government troops continue to occupy our towns, cities and residential areas suffocating the freedom of mobility of our people. Such a massive military occupation of Tamil lands, particularly in Jaffna – a densely populated district – during peace times denying the right of our displaced people to return to their homes, is unfair and unjust.

Your government, in international forums, continues to place poverty as the common phenomenon affecting the entire country. The Poverty Reduction Strategy forms the essence of the document 'Regaining Sri Lanka' which defines the macro-



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economic policy of your government. Though poverty and poverty alleviation constitute the centrality of the new economic vision of your government as exemplified in 'Regaining Sri Lanka' the document fails to examine the causality of the phenomenon of poverty, the effects of ethnic war and the unique conditions of devastation prevailing in the northeast.

In our view, the conditions of reality prevailing in Tamil areas are qualitatively different from southern Sri Lanka. The Tamils faced the brunt of the brutal war. Twenty years of intense and incessant war has caused irreparable destruction to the infrastructure in the northeast. This colossal destruction augmented by continued displacement of the people and their inability to pursue their livelihoods due to military restrictions and activities have caused untold misery and extreme poverty among the people of the northeast. Continued displacement has also depleted all forms of savings of these people disabling them from regaining their lives on their own. The war-affected people need immediate help to regain their dignity. They need restoration of essential services to re-establish their lives. Reconstruction of infrastructures such as roads, hospitals, schools and houses are essential for them to return to normal life.

The poverty that is prevailing in southern Sri Lanka is a self-inflicted phenomenon, caused by the disastrous policies of the past governments (both the UNP and the SLFP) in dealing with the Tamil national conflict. In its fanatical drive to prosecute an unjust war against the Tamil people, the Sinhala state wasted all national wealth to a futile cause. The massive borrowings to sustain an absurd policy of 'war for peace' by the former government caused huge international indebtedness. The economic situation of the south has been further worsened by the mismanagement of state funds, bad governance and institutional corruption. Therefore, the conditions prevailing in the south are distinctly different from the northeast where the scale and magnitude of the infra-structural destruction is monumental and the poverty is acute. Ignoring this distinctive reality, your government posits poverty as a common phenomenon across the country and attempts to seek a solution with a common approach. This approach grossly under states the severity of the problems faced by the people in the northeast.

The government's 'Regaining Sri Lanka' document completely lacks any form of identified goals for the northeast. Statistics presented for substantiating the policy totally ignore the northeast and solely concentrate on southern Sri Lanka. However, this has been promoted as the national strategy to the international community to seek aid. It is evident from this that the government lacks any comprehensive strategy for serious development of the northeast. The Poverty Reduction Strategy fails to address the poverty of the northeast as distinct from the rest. In seeking international assistance your government disingenuously speaks of reconstruction being needed in all areas, thereby masking the total destruction of the



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infrastructure of the northeast which has resulted from the militarist policies of the past three decades.

As we pointed out above, the exclusion of the LTTE from critical aid conference in Washington, the non-implementation of the terms and conditions enunciated in the truce document, the continuous suffering and hardship experienced by hundreds of thousands of internally displaced Tamils, the aggressive Sinhala military occupation of Tamil cities and civilian settlements, the distortion and marginalisation of the extreme conditions of poverty and deprivation of the Tamils of the northeast in the macro-economic policies and strategies of the government have seriously undermined the confidence of the Tamil people and the LTTE leadership in the negotiating process. Under these circumstances the LTTE leadership has decided to suspend its participation in the negotiations for the time being. We will not be attending the donor conference in Japan in June. While we regret that we were compelled to make this painful decision, we wish to reiterate our commitment to seek a negotiated political solution to the ethnic question. We also urge the Government of Sri Lanka to restore confidence in the peace process amongst the Tamil people by fully implementing, without further delay, the normalisation aspects of the Ceasefire Agreement and permit the immediate resettlement of the internally displaced people of the northeast. We also request the government to re-evaluate its economic development strategy to reconstruct the Tamil nation destroyed by war.