

Sri Lanka: TGTE Ready For Conditional Talks – Rudra – V. Rudrakumaran

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The Tamil diapora has been widely discussed by the government during its election campaign. One of the concerns raised by the government is an alleged attempt by the pro-LTTE diaspora to divide the country and revive the LTTE. V. Rudrakumaran, the head of the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE), who is among those listed in Sri Lanka for terrorism related activities, admits that the push for an Eelam state has not been abandoned.

Excerpts of the interview:

By Easwaran Rutnam

Q: The Government says diaspora is still attempting to divide Sri Lanka and create Eelam. Is that the goal of TGTE?

A: In 2010, the TGTE promulgated a Constitution by democratically elected representatives from 12 countries. Article 1.1.1. of the Constitution states, "The TGTE, elected democratically by the Tamil Diaspora, shall endeavour to establish an independent and sovereign state of Tamil Eelam." In 1976, due to systematic and pervasive human rights violations on account of Tamil ethnicity and genocidal pogroms, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) passed a resolution calling for an independent and sovereign state of Tamil Eelam. The TULF made use of the 1977 general elections as a referendum for an independent state. The Tamils in the North-Eastern part of Sri Lanka voted overwhelmingly for the establishment of an independent state. Before that, the late Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanakayam, the leader of the Federal Party, used the 1974 bi-election as a referendum for an independent state, and won a landslide victory.

Since then, nothing has happened as far as the Tamils are concerned for them to abandon the call for an independent state, nor have they ever been given a procedure to express their political aspirations fully and freely. On the contrary, the 30-year armed conflict and especially the 2009 Mullivaaikaal war have added more urgency to the call for an independent state. The 2009 Mullivaaikaal deaths, perpetrated against the Tamils by the Sri Lankan Army, constituted almost exclusively by the Sinhalese, has reaffirmed the Tamils' faith that only in an independent state will ensure their very physical existence. We also firmly believe that the independent state of Tamil Eelam and the Sri Lankan State will have cordial and friendly relations.

Q: In the event Maithripala Sirisena wins the election, would TGTE be interested in having talks with him on reconciliation?

A: The present Presidential campaign exposes the naked and entrenched racism in the electoral

process in the island of Sri Lanka. The juxtaposition of the present electoral process against the prior elections clearly demonstrates to the international community that the Tamils are permanently denied effective participation in the political process in Sri Lanka.

We want to have friendly relations with our Sinhala brethren. However, since the Sri Lankan State is deeply entrenched with racism, we do not believe that we can have reconciliation within the existing state. We firmly believe that the two-state solution will foster mutual respect and camaraderie. We believe very firmly that democracy is at its best when it is taken directly to the people. Thus, in our parliamentary sitting, held 7 December, 2014, the TGTE passed a unanimous resolution calling upon the international community to “conduct a referendum among the people living legitimately in the North-Eastern part of the island of Sri Lanka, which constitutes Tamil Eelam, and all people living outside the island of Sri Lanka having an origin in Tamil Eelam, to exercise their freedom to determine their political future, including the option of an independent and sovereign state of Tamil Eelam, to resolve the Tamil National Question.” In this connection, since we are campaigning the international community with respect to our referendum, if the international community asked us, in order to create a conducive environment, we would say we are willing to talk to the winner, whether that be Mr. Maithripala Sirisena or President Mahinda Rajapaksa, with the engagement of the international community.

Q: You said in a speech recently that the TGTE is focused on achieving its goals through democratic means. Is the international community ready to recognize your struggle?

A: No State can reject the rationality of our claim. States do not act solely on justice, morality and legality. State actions are heavily influenced by their national interests. International powers, as well as regional powers, still believe that Sri Lanka remaining as a single entity will further their national interest. However, Sri Lanka's recent actions will dispel this illusion very soon. When that happens, we are confident that state actors will recognize our position. I must also say that the international civil society is increasingly subscribing to our position.

Q: Over one year since the TNA won the Northern elections, they seem to have done very little for the people. Who is to blame?

A: As the late Mr Amirthalingam stated in 1989 that the 13th Amendment would never contribute to addressing the Tamil National Question, the Sri Lankan Supreme Court has also stated that the Provincial Councils not only do not have police power or the land power, but they also lacked the power to appoint their own secretaries. This clearly shows again that there cannot be a meaningful sharing of power within the existing Sri Lankan State structure.

Q: Would the TGTE work with other groups like the Global Tamil Forum (GTF) to address Tamil issues?

A: We have been working with all of the Tamil Diaspora Organizations, especially on the question of an international investigation on Sri Lanka. Not only the TGTE, but also the International Council of Eelam Tamils and the British Tamil Forum have been explicit in calling for an independent state as a just resolution to the Tamil National Question. All the organizations, including the GTF, are committed to protect and promote the human rights of the Tamil people. The right to choose a government, as well as the right to choose the political unit in which an individual wants to live, are at core fundamental human rights.

Thus we believe that all of the Tamil organizations can subscribe to this idea, and have consensus on the need to hold a referendum as a baseline for settling the Tamil National Question.

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