

Tamils must decide their Political Destiny through a Referendum: TGTE will Accept their Verdict – Rudrakumaran.

Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam's (TGTE) Prime Minister Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran's interview with Ceylon Today.

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Tamils must decide their political destiny through a Referendum - TGTE will accept their verdict: Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam's (TGTE) Prime Minister Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran's interview with Ceylon Today.

QUESTION & ANSWER:

1) QUESTION: In light of the present political situation in the country, including the ongoing constitutional reforms process, the particular efforts of the local Tamil political representation in this regard, and most recently positive attempts towards reconciliation undertaken by certain Tamil Diaspora groups, such as the Global Tamil Forum, what are the interventions made by the TGTE in relation to Sri Lanka?

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If the Tamil population voted for a Unitary State, or for Federalism, or for a 'Non Federal-Federalism', TGTE will accept that verdict.”

Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran

ANSWER: The TGTE's position is that the Tamil people's sovereignty lies with them. Since the Tamil people did not participate in the 1972 and/or 1978 Constitution making process, they have not delegated their sovereignty to the Government in Colombo. Thus, we believe as a priority for any political resolution today, the Tamil nation should decide in what form they want to participate in that process of a political resolution. The TGTE's position, since its inception, is that the Tamil nation, living inside the island of Sri Lanka and outside,

should decide on their political destiny, through peaceful and democratic means to express their wishes, through a referendum.

The referendum that we envisage is not just for a yes or no vote for an independent State, but a referendum containing options such as a unitary State, a federal State, a confederation and an independent State.



Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran, Prime Minister, Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE)

2) QUESTION: In the context where there are many disparate, polemically opposed, ideological factions within the Tamil Diaspora, who have a negative, pro-LTTE connotation, locally however, especially among the Sinhalese, the TGTE are known as the torchbearers for the separatist, Eelamist cause. Does the TGTE still hold strong separatist and/or nationalistic views?

ANSWER: I can say with confidence that there is a consensus among all the Diaspora groups that the Tamil national question should be resolved through a referendum. Deciding our own political destiny through a referendum is a fundamental human right. Thus, it is not only a political issue but more importantly a human rights issue. International practices also vouch for it. Whether it be South Sudan (Machakos Protocol) or the Good Friday Agreement or the Serbian-Montenegrin agreement or the Papua New Guinea-Bougainville Peace Agreement, all mandate that national questions should be resolved through a referendum.

I must also mention here that when I say referendum, I mean that it is a referendum for the particular nation not for the whole country. With respect to the Quebec referendum, for example, the Canadian Supreme Court did not say that the referendum should be held throughout Canada but only in Quebec.

At the same time, the TGTE believes that due to the rigid Sinhala Buddhist ethnocentric nature of the Sri Lankan State, only through independence can we live peacefully with dignity in the island of Sri Lanka.

Mass killings of Tamils and the large-scale rape of Tamil women in 1958, 1977, 1983 and 2009 in Mullivaikkal, and the latest reports of rape camps of Tamil women run by the Sri Lankan military, are a testament to this belief and conviction.

I also want to bring to attention the late journalist, Tarzie Vittachi's book "Emergency '58: The Story of the Ceylon Race Riots." This book was written immediately after the mass killings of Tamils in 1958. Vittachi, at that time, concluded his book by asking "Have the Sinhalese and Tamils come to parting their ways?" Tamils have been asking this question since the 1958 mass killings, and in the 1977 General Election, they voted overwhelmingly to support the creation of a free Tamil Eelam.

However, I hasten to also add that if the Tamil population voted for a unitary State or for federalism or for a 'non federal-federalism', we will accept that verdict.

3) QUESTION: If the answer is yes in relation to separatism, does the TGTE not feel that this is contrary to the country's best interests including those of all the communities residing within the nation?

ANSWER: We believe that an independent State of Tamil Eelam will contribute to friendly relations between all the communities residing in the island of Sri Lanka. The end is not to preserve the status quo or to preserve the existing borders but to create peace and friendly relations among the peoples of the island.

Moreover, we believe by having a permanent resolution in the form of an independent State we could remove the racial bidding within the Sinhala polity. The Sinhala leaders can focus on the day-to-day problems of the common man. It will also contribute to democracy and development.

An argument can be made that there will always be tension between Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam. But we believe it need not be like that. There is no tension between Norway and Sweden or between

Singapore and Malaysia.

Even if there were to be some tension, there are international legal principles and an international mechanism to manage it rather than for containing intrastate violence.

4) QUESTION: Is there a split or are there splits within the Tamil Diaspora?

ANSWER: As I said earlier, on the fundamental issues such as that the right of the Tamils to constitute a nation, that the North Eastern parts of the island constitute the traditional homeland of the Tamils, and that the Tamils should be allowed to realize their inherent right to self-determination, there is no difference of opinion. I also admit that some of the Tamil Diaspora groups believe that the Tamils' right to self-determination can be realized within the existing borders.

5) QUESTION: What are the canvassing and lobbying efforts (financially and diplomatically) with which the TGTE is engaged in?

ANSWER: The TGTE firmly believes that for any political move power is essential. We have seen that in present international relations and international law, non-State actors have become a power to be reckoned with. Thus, we are engaged in mobilizing the international community. In this regard, we successfully launched a campaign to collect 1.6 million signatures calling for the referral of Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court.

6) QUESTION: Does the TGTE still believe in a LTTE resurgence? Does the TGTE advocate terrorism?

ANSWER: The TGTE's Constitution mandates that it should realize its political goals through peaceful means. In fact, diplomats in various countries are directly engaged with the TGTE.

7) QUESTION: What does the TGTE make of the international communities', the West's and the United Nations' (UN) latest position with regard to the country?

ANSWER: Immediately after the Mullivaikkal genocide, the international community's position was that justice must be done to the Tamils and that the perpetrators of international crimes should be brought to justice. However, they were of the view that it was carried out by leaders of the previous regime. Thus, they brought the Sirisena (President Maithripala Sirisena) regime into power hoping that he will address accountability and the Tamil national question. However, last month's damning report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights has dispelled this illusion. Now the international community has started to realize that the State itself is the cause for the impunity and the genocide of the Tamils.

8) QUESTION: On the question of investigations into alleged war crimes committed by the Sri Lankan armed forces, how will the accountability for atrocities committed by the Tigers be achieved and what will be the intervention made by the TGTE in this regard?

ANSWER: The Tamils' fervent hope is to seek justice for the genocide committed in Mullivaikkal.

9) QUESTION: What does the TGTE make of the country's present situation, especially the state of reconciliation in the country?

ANSWER: As far as the situation of the Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka is concerned, when we look at the big picture, the structural genocide is still continuing.

Prisoners of War are still in detention. The Army still occupies the Tamil homeland. There is no information about the disappeared, while torture and sexual violence is still rampant.

In the South, during the initial period of the Sirisena regime there were some democratic measures introduced. However, now the Sirisena regime in the South is also engaged in 'democratic deconsolidation' like that of Rajapaksa.

10) QUESTION: Is the TGTE satisfied with the Tamil political representation (the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and the Tamil Progressive Alliance (TPA))?

ANSWER: We understand the legal restraints on the domestic leadership to fully articulate the Tamil political aspirations due to the 6th Amendment to the Constitution. The 6th Amendment prohibits calling for an independent State but it does not prohibit calling for the repeal of the 6th Amendment. We want the Tamil domestic political leadership to bring this to the attention of the international community, rather than giving a wrong picture that Tamils no longer claim an independent State. They themselves know that this is not true. Mullivaikkal has strengthened the call for an independent State.

If anyone claims, especially after Mullivaikkal, that the Tamils have given up the call for an independent State, it is a fake claim.

Moreover, we expect the domestic leadership to take some creative action similar to the referendums organized by the Venezuelan opposition parties and the proposed referendums in Iraqi Kurdistan and Catalonia. These referendums were not organized by the UN or by any foreign countries. These referendums were organized by the local leadership.

11) QUESTION: Does the TGTE plan to contest any future national level election in Sri Lanka?

ANSWER: As I have stated on previous occasions, since the Tamils have not delegated their sovereignty to the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) we do not consider Sri Lankan elections as legitimate. However, we are willing to use these elections as a platform to advance our goals. For us to do that the 6th Amendment should be repealed.

12) QUESTION: Do you currently work with Sri Lankan Government or intend to in the future?

ANSWER: As I have stated earlier, we intend to work with the Sri Lankan Government with respect to the logistics and timeframe for a referendum.

13) QUESTION: Previously, TNA MP President's Counsel M.A. Sumanthiran told media that if a solution to the national issue were to be brought in via a proposed new Constitution, they would guarantee Diaspora investment in the country for purposes of development. What do you make of this statement? What is the investment (not solely monetary) the Diaspora is willing to make in the country? And, what do you make of the present state of affairs with regard to the constitutional

reforms process and the role of the Diaspora in it?

ANSWER: As I have stated earlier, any permanent political resolution should come through a referendum held for the Tamil nation. Once a political resolution is obtained through a referendum, then the Diaspora will bring its expertise in various fields as well as financial investments to entities in the island of Sri Lanka.

The TGTE promulgated a freedom charter with the participation of more than one million people.

In the freedom charter, the distinct identity of the Muslims is recognized; education shall be compulsory and free for all. Tamil, Sinhala, and English shall be the official languages of Tamil Eelam.

Moreover, since Tamil Eelam is strategically located in the Indian Ocean, it will also contribute to peace and harmony in the Indian Ocean.

14) QUESTION: What do you make of the work done or the lack of it, whichever way you see it, by the Northern Provincial Council (NPC) and elsewhere on the proposition of a merger of the North and the East?

ANSWER: As we stated during the NPC election, we did not see and do not see that the Provincial Council can deliver anything meaningful. This view has now been corroborated by Chief Minister C.V. Vigneswaran himself.

With respect to the merger, Sri Lankan Government acknowledged that the North-East part of Sri Lanka constitutes the Tamil homeland in the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord. The demerger occurred on technical grounds.

If Sri Lankan Government, including the present Government, is sincere about Tamil aspirations, they can simply remerge this with a simple majority. A two-thirds majority is not necessary for the merger.

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Here is the link to Ceylon Today:

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