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இலங்கை தேசிய கிறிஸ்தவ மன்றம்  
National Christian Council of Sri Lanka

***THE FORTHCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION  
STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF SRI LANKA***

The National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCC) welcomes the recent decision of the Supreme Court that reiterated the need for the presidential elections to be held later this year in keeping with the constitution. Regular, free and fair elections are a crucial feature of a democratic society and it is essential for people to exercise their franchise.

The National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCC) calls upon the people of Sri Lanka to exercise their sovereignty, which includes fundamental rights and the franchise, with diligence and responsibility. This requires the people to be informed about the political and economic crisis facing the country and to critically assess the parties and the candidates seeking election at the presidential and parliamentary elections that are likely to follow. This is an essential feature for a constitutional, multi-party democracy.

The NCC wishes to remind the people that the root causes of the current economic crisis that has affected all sections of society are essentially political. The economic mismanagement that has plagued the country in recent years, the corrosive corruption, and the expenditure on vanity projects that lacked any economic justification, were possible because there were inadequate checks and balances on those who exercised political power, ineffective scrutiny of the executive and the cooption of the legislature, so that there were no effective accountability mechanisms as well.

The NCC reiterates its call for the abolition of the powerful executive presidency, as the concentration of massive powers in one individual, irrespective of the person and political party she/he may represent, undermines constitutionalism and democratic norms. The over-mighty presidential system also nullifies other democratic institutions. We note that in the past most presidential candidates in successive elections have promised to abolish the executive presidency during their election campaigns, but conveniently ignored this once elected to office. The NCC wishes to call on all presidential candidates to commit to support the abolition of the executive presidency within a specified period and implement it without fail.

It is also of paramount importance for all presidential candidates to declare their positions and policies on crucial matters affecting the country. These include the economic crisis, the rule of law including addressing impunity, the restoration of a competent and independent public service, institutions and policies to prevent corruption, people-oriented measures to ensure sustainable development, and ensuring an independent Constitutional Council and judiciary.

The NCC has, over the years, stated that it was the inability of successive governments to resolve the legitimate grievances of the Tamil community in the North and East that led to war and massive polarization amongst ethnic groups in the country. The NCC believes that the ethnic conflict can only be resolved through a political solution that will address its root causes, which includes the political grievances of Tamils in the North and East and discrimination suffered by them. A political solution must include recognitions of the Tamils in the North and East as a distinct Nation together with substantial autonomy and power sharing to the North and East, within the framework of a united country. It is important also to address the genuine aspirations of the Malayaha Makkal in the Plantation areas, for decades a community that has been deprived of dignity and other human rights.

There must be genuine initiatives to respond to the consequences of the ethnic conflict and war, such as enforced disappearances, justice to political prisoners, acknowledgement and accountability for killings, sexual crimes and other serious wartime atrocities. It must also include addressing ongoing violations, including continuing occupation of lands by the military and various government agencies, obstructions, restrictions and intimidation in remembering the war dead, and the suppression of dissent. Therefore, the NCC calls upon all candidates to clearly state their policies to address and permanently resolve the long festering ethnic conflict, which now remains unresolved even 15 years after the end of the war.

The NCC calls upon all Sri Lankans to exercise their franchise with responsibility, paying due attention to positions and plans presented by the candidates and parties they represent. They should also examine the history and conduct of the candidates, and reject candidates with credible allegations of being implicated in serious crimes, human rights violations, corruption, racism, suppression of dissent etc.

The NCC believes voting is also a spiritual - political act, which is an opportunity for voters to express compassion and solidarity with all marginalized and vulnerable groups in order to ensure a better country for all and ensure the prosperity and welfare of our motherland.

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National Christian Council of Sri Lanka

Signed:

Rt. Rev. Dr. V Pathmathayalan – Bishop of the Jaffna Diocese of South India and Chair- NCCSL, Rt. Rev. Dushantha Rodrigo – Bishop of Colombo- Church of Ceylon, Rt. Rev. Nishantha Fernando – Bishop of Kurunagala, Church of Ceylon, Rev. Ebenezer Joseph – President, Methodist Church of Sri Lanka, Rev. Lakmal Wijerathne– President, Christian Reformed Church, Rev. Wilee Ranasinghe– President, Sri Lanka Baptist Sangamaya, Rev. Saman Perera - Moderator, Presbytery of Sri Lanka, Col. Nihal Hettiarachchi – Territorial Commander, Salvation Army Sri Lanka, Rev. Chrisso Handy – Superintendent/Chair – Assemblies of God, Rev. Harim Peiris – Acting President, Foursquare Gospel Church, Sri Lanka,

Back To the Bible Broadcast, The Ceylon Bible Society, Christian Literature Society, Student Christian Movement, Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association, Theological College of Lanka, Colombo Theological Seminary and Youth for Christ. Rev. Sujithar Sivanayagam – General Secretary, NCCSL.

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