

LAND GRAB AND SINHALA COLONIZATION OF THE TAMIL HOMELAND

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Extent of land ownership symbolizes the strength of a nation and the ownership of same gives life and blood to a nation. Ceylon as a nation before gaining. Its Independence in 1948 had three kingdoms, and in the earlier periods witnessed rule by Tamils however had their majority concentrations in the north and east with 80 to 90 percentage in these areas. The independence gained in 1948 heralded the beginning of the sinister schemes of colonization and Signalization, first in the east. The first prime minister of Ceylon D.S. Senanayake when inaugurating the Padaviya scheme of colonization openly and with no qualms stated the objective of his government as follows:

"Today you are brought here and given a plot of land. You are men and women who will carry this island's destiny on your shoulders. One day very soon they will look up to you as the last bastion of the Sinhala"

From this day onwards, the process of land appropriation and Sinhala colonization continued unabated with no respite until the emergence of LTTE whose military might put an end to these moves. However from 1948 to 1980, eastern province witnessed the creation of electorate, Ampara with Sinhalese as majority and the Trincomalee witnessing a rise in Sinhalese population. A percentage of five in 1948 now risen to thirty-four percent in the Trincomalee district, the electorate Seruwila for the Sinhalese has been carved out with the motive of severing the contiguity of the Tamil homeland, thereby changing the demographic structure.

The defeat if LTTE has given way to naked land grabs and colonization in the north which was not farreached earlier. While land grabs are still

continuing in the east with lands belonging to Muslims also going under the hammer. The situation in the Northern Province is alarmingly threatening the existence of Tamils. To those who hoped for permanent peace and honorable political settlement for Tamils are ringing alarm bells and heaving signs of disdain, dismay and disbelief.

Sri Lankan government has contemptuously dismissed the calls of international community for political settlement. Instead of withdrawing the armed forces, the government camps and appropriating lands to settle the families of the soldiers. The following are the extent of lands proposed for appropriation by the armed forces in the north:

- 8000 acres in the high security zone areas
- 7000 acres in the Tellpallai area
- 2000 acres in the Kopay area.

These are lands which were owned and occupied by the Tamil civilians who were displaced during the periods of hostilities. The governor of Northern Province and Gohabahaya are working hand in glove to deny the resettlement of displaced and to pave way for subsequent Sinhalese settlements.

The irony of this situation is the brazenness of these acts which are proceeding unchecked and unhindered. The TNA appears to be in the role of spectators without commanding a unified action and approach to the issues. TNA is standing on uneven pillars by trying to patch up the inside dissent, as often commented. Self-interest and self-glory dominate the Tamil politicians from the very inception and TNA is not an exception. While Sinhalese politicians never hesitate to forge unity to protect their race, language or religion, Tamil politicians never hesitates to express opinions or

take actions opposing each other. We urge TNA and all other Tamil politicians with self-respect to forge a unified stand and launch appropriate peaceful agitations to stop the Rajapakses vicious agenda of uprooting the Tamils and make them landless refugees in their homeland.

The Tamil Diaspora also bears heavy burden and responsibility to act promptly to expose the Sri Lankan governments III intentioned schemes to the international community. Time is running out and any time lost in this grave matter will only hasten our loss of identity and demise of the Tamil nation in the north and east.

It is gladdening to note the displaced Tamils rallying round and demonstrating to protest the government's are scheduled in Murugandi on 26th June, for which we extend and urge the support of all Tamils world wide.

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