

The Federation of Tamil Associations of the United Kingdom

Earlier known as the Co-ordinating Committee of TAMIL ASSOCIATIONS of the UNITED KINGDOM

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MEMORANDUM TO THE MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT... ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE OF THE ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION & DEVELOPMENT, AND MULTILATERAL AID AGENCIES

ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND AID TO SRI LANKA.

The civil conflict in Sri Lanka between the two nationalities of the Island, the Sinhalese people and the Tamil people, has been escalating since 1983, and has now reached a new peak of intensity.

The consequence of this brutal war has been gross violation of human rights of its citizens, destruction of its societies, damage to its infrastructure, retardation of its economic progress and development. This has created a large refugee problem of both internally and externally displaced people. The civil war has taken a heavy toll on human lives and resources of the innocent and helpless.

Independent organisations for human rights and humanitarian assistance have reported extensively about conditions in Sri Lanka and there is international awareness on the plight and suffering of its citizens. The impact of this ongoing civil war on the social and economic decline of Sri Lanka has been acknowledged by multilateral aid agencies. This conflict unless terminated, seriously would impact the economy and development of the island.

The successive Sri Lankan governments, despite their public pronouncements have been pursuing a military solution to resolve the national conflict. The size of the military and the defence expenditure, direct and indirect, have increased enormously since 1983. The increase in defence expenditure as a percentage of total expenditure over the years is striking. Even more glaring is the increase in foreign aid. There is an obvious correlation between the increase in Foreign Aid and Defence Expenditure over the same period.

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In 1983 the defence budget of the country was a meagre US\$ 76m representing only 4% of the of the total budget , and the defence personnel was around 10,000. Whereas , in 1996 the defence spending has spiralled to US\$ 775m representing almost 20% of the total budget with a military strength of over 120,000. These figures do not account for indirect defence related expenditure.

The national resources are wasted in war effort at the expense of essential activities such as education, health , industrial and infrastructure development., which are starved of much needed funds . Due to unprecedented levels of increasing current account deficits over the years, external debt too has increased to unacceptable levels as a percentage of the GNP

Interestingly, the foreign aid commitments to Sri Lanka in 1983 was US\$ 355m , whereas the amount pledged in Paris on April 1993 was as high as US\$ 850m . It appears that the total defence expenditure of the Sri Lankan Government in 1996 would be equivalent to the total foreign aid. In effect the Donor Countries to a large extent would be underwriting this inhumane and destructive war effort.

To us the Tamil People the response of the international community to the mounting tragedy in Sri Lanka and the plight of its people seems at best, muted, and at worst, cynical. What inducement or incentive is there for the Sri Lankan Government to seek a negotiated political settlement with the LTTE on behalf of the Tamil People?

There is recognition by the international community that the conflict in Sri Lanka is essentially political and that there should be a negotiated political solution. Successive Sri Lankan Governments, including the present one, have demonstrated that they do not have the capacity to resolve this conflict via political means. They need persuasion and encouragement to seek a political settlement. Member countries in the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD have offered their good offices to facilitate talks between the warring parties towards this end.

Recently at an international conference held in Bergen, sponsored by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs the LTTE spokesman expressed its position thus " the current situation demonstrates, that a negotiated settlement may become feasible only with active participation of the International Community. The rationale is that the distrust between the two parties is too deep, as such effective communication is impossible in the absence of international mediation." The LTTE has also repeatedly announced its willingness to "consider a political arrangement short of an independent state". No serious attempts have been made by the International Community to bring the warring parties to the table.

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The Donor Countries through their aid program, have the clout and capacity to, persuade Sri Lanka to accept international mediation and seek a negotiated political settlement. They by supplying aid to Sri Lanka without any preconditions, and an internationally supervised peace process in place, would be abetting Sri Lanka in its strategy in using the peace process as an instrument to conduct war on the Tamil People. This is a moral and humanitarian responsibility from which the Donor Countries cannot abdicate.



Dr. N. Satchithanathan
General Secretary.



J. K. Karan
Secretary.

பாரிஸ்
03-04-1996

கிளைப் பிரதிநிதிகளிற்கு,

சிறீலங்காவுக்கு நிதி உதவி வழங்கும் நாடுகள் அவ்வுதவியை நிறுத்தக் கோரித் தயாரிக்கப்பட்ட அறிக்கையை இத்துடன் அனுப்புகிறோம். இவ்வறிக்கை, எமது வேண்டுகோளின் பேரில் தயாரிக்கப்பட்டது. இதனை அடிப்படையாக வைத்து வேறு அறிக்கைகள் தயாரித்து உடன் அவ்வந் நாடுகளின் நிதி உதவி வழங்கும் நிறுவனங்களுக்கு அனுப்பி விடவும். கொடுக்கப்படும் நிதி பற்றிய, எந்த எந்த நாடுகள் எவ்வளவு நிதி கொடுக்கின்றன என்ற விபரம் பின்னர் அறிவிக்கப்படும்.

அனைத்துலகச் செயலகம்