

A number of NGOs and concerned individuals have combined together in a campaign for peace and democratic rights under the rubric "Campaign for Peace with Democracy". The assumption behind the movement is that only a peace settlement that is democratic in ensuring democratic rights for all citizens will be just and capable of lasting.

The campaign commenced with a rally, a march and a concert in Colombo on December the 9th; a few days later a delegation handed over to the President an appeal for peace. Since then the campaign has held 10 rallies and meetings in the principal towns and over 30 small meetings and seminars in other places. Its last rally was at Vavuniya on February 16th.; it was well attended by the citizens of Vavuniya as well as by a large contingent of activists from the south who wanted to demonstrate concretely their wish for peace.

Immediately after this rally, a 17 member peace delegation of activists, intellectuals, politicians and members of the clergy led by Vasudeva Nanayakkara, S.Balakrishnan, Jayadeva Uyangoda and Y.P.De Silva visited Jaffna. The visit was arranged in concurrence with the LTTE and its intention was to submit to the LTTE leadership a peace memorandum listing a series of steps it could take to achieve a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The delegation met with a delegation of 5 representatives of the LTTE comprising of Anton Balasingham, Thamil Chelvam, Baby Subramaniam and Balakumar.

They asked the LTTE to present their proposed political package to resolve the conflict. In response the LTTE expressed their willingness to consider a credible alternative to an independent state once the economic embargo is lifted, fishing rights are restored and the Pooneryn causeway is re-opened. They viewed a federal alternative as an acceptable basis for political negotiations.

The LTTE was then asked for a commitment that they would not be the first to breach the current agreement on a cessation of hostilities. They responded that the present agreement was a very general one and that they could only make this assurance after the specific details of a cessation of hostilities are worked out between them and the government. They viewed this as an annexure to the main agreement for the cessation of hostilities.

The delegation requested the LTTE to ensure the immediate and effective functioning of the monitoring committees during the cessation of hostilities. They saw difficulty in the operation of these monitoring committees after the annexure is worked out by the two parties. The delegation also emphasised that the LTTE should be serious and committed to the peace process and negotiations.

The delegation also raised a number of questions with regard to democracy and human rights in areas under LTTE control. On behalf of the delegation Vasudeva Nanayakkara requested the release of four political prisoners as a gesture of the LTTE's willingness to respect individual rights and democracy. They requested the release of Selvi and Manoharan (both former students of Jaffna University), and the release of a Sinhala and Muslim prisoner.

On the 18th, Vasudeva Nanayakkara addressed a massive public meeting held in front of the Kachcheri grounds and the delegates distributed 5000 copies of the Peace Memorandum to the people of Jaffna.

We reproduce below the appeals made by the campaign to the President and to the LTTE.

## AN APPEAL TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA

**D**uring the last decade and a half, the people of this country have experienced, a breakdown of democratic practice and peace between ethnic groups. Oppressed by these conditions and desiring change, the people-Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher-have used their franchise in unprecedented numbers to install in power a government of the People's Alliance. This mandate casts on the government the responsibility of re-establishing both peace and democratic practice.

We appreciate the measures that have been taken so far by the government in this direction, but we believe that more needs to be done.

1. We call on the government to dispel all doubts about its intentions by firmly declaring its total commitment to the achievement of peace and that it will not permit its efforts to be thwarted or disturbed by any obstacles that may be placed in its path.

2. We also call on the government to present without delay the contours of the political solution that it is prepared to implement for the resolution of the ethnic conflict; this solution should take into consideration the genuine aspirations of the Tamil and Muslim peoples and affirm to all citizens the full enjoyment of their democratic rights.

3. In the meantime, while negotiations to end the war proceed, there are a number of other measures that the government can take to ease the situation and gain the greater confidence of the minorities:

i. the implementation throughout the country of the constitutional provisions regarding the use of Tamil as an official language;

ii. the reconstitution of national institutions such as the police, the armed forces, the media and local government bodies so that they reflect the multi-ethnic nature of our society;

iii. the appointment of a Commission to look into the plight of those Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people who have been affected by the colonization policies of successive governments, bearing in mind that these colonization policies have themselves served to exacerbate the ethnic conflict; the Commission should consult directly with those affected and also be empowered to make recommendations to resolve this question;

iv. investigations into the mass killings of unarmed civilians suspected to have been carried out by the state security forces in the course of military operations in the north-east and the punishment of perpetrators;

v. accession to the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Additional Protocol II of the Geneva Convention relating to internal conflicts and implementation of their provisions, as well as adhering to the norms of International Humanitarian Law.

vi. the extension of the period that has now been stipulated for the Commissions that are investigating disappearances and similar violations to 1.1.79 so that disappearances in the north-east too are brought within the ambit of investigations.

4. People living in the areas affected by the conflict have suffered inordinate deprivations over the past years, facing scarcities of even essential requirements. Urgent measures as outlined below are needed to alleviate their living conditions:

i. embargoes on the transport of goods must be lifted; food, drugs and other essentials should be made available in sufficient quantities;

ii. relief and rehabilitation measures must be expanded to cover the needs of all displaced Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim persons as those well as whose livelihoods have been affected by the conflict;

iii. peace committees consisting of senior army personnel, state officials, representatives of human rights and other non-governmental and civic organizations must be set up in all areas of conflict so that violations of human rights can be monitored and prevented;

iv. difficulties that exist for the free movement of civilians and goods must be removed;

5. Arising from the existence and the continuation of the ethnic conflict, there has been a growing militarisation of our society. To restore normal civil life and to ensure to all people the possibility of a peaceful future, we propose that the following measures be considered:

i. the formulation of measures for the rehabilitation of members of the armed forces, homeguards and others, whose present livelihoods are directly or indirectly dependent on the conflict;

ii. the formulation of measures for the rehabilitation of Tamil youth who have been involved in the conflict;

iii. measures for the speedy rehabilitation of those persons and areas adversely affected by the conflict.

6. Persons who have been detained for long periods under the PTA or the emergency regulations without being indicted or brought before the law must be released. The Prevention of Terrorism Act, which was meant to be a temporary measure must be repealed.

We, as citizens committed actively to peace, make these proposals to the government and pledge our support for all efforts to achieve peace with democracy. We also call upon all citizens of Sri Lanka to extend their maximum support to the peace process.

We attach to this document an appeal that we are also making to the LTTE to work towards peace with democracy.