
WOMEN'S COALITION FOR PEACE SUPPORTS P-TOMS

We welcome the P-TOMS as a necessary step in addressing the urgent needs of the population affected by the Tsunami. The goodwill and sympathy showed by many for the victims of the Tsunami in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy proved that it is possible to overcome long held antagonisms of class, caste and ethnic barriers. Women's groups were amongst the many that mobilized to provide speedy relief assistance to those affected.

Unfortunately the Tsunami crisis led to partisan differences and political wrangling has prevented adequate assistance, particularly with regard to alternative shelter, housing and livelihood support for those affected. This is a reality in the South as well as the north and East. The still unresolved issue of the buffer zone is only one example of the manner in which the State Tsunami assistance mechanisms have failed to put the concerns of the affected first.

Most anti P-TOMS agitation that the country experienced during the past few weeks portray an irresponsible disregard for the plight of those most affected. Many of those affected in the North and East were already victimized by the conflict. It is imperative therefore that the government puts in place an inclusive and representative structure that is both responsive and responsible for alleviating their suffering with the greatest possible speed.

While the inclusion of Muslim representation at the High Level Committee is an important development, the fact that neither the Muslims nor the dissenting Tamil parties were included in the negotiations that led to the formulation of the P-TOMS, and that Muslims were not given signatory status is regrettable. Given that this represents an important benchmark of the government and LTTE coming together, and marks a forward movement towards any future power sharing, it is hoped that a more democratic and representative process is followed in future negotiations.

The Women's Coalition for Peace, regards the joint mechanism or the P-TOMS as a welcome proposal that will hopefully address the needs of those affected. We also commend the fact that the text contains language assuring "proper gender balance" in both the district and regional bodies. It is hoped that in implementation, the inclusion of women will be more than mere tokenism. ■

VIOLENT MUSLIM MOBILIZATION IN SRI LANKA: SOME QUESTIONS

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Many observers of Sri Lanka politics are baffled by the reports of relatively well organized, though isolated, Muslim armed violence in the eastern corner of the island. Usually, conditions such as unequal treatment, oppression and discrimination either by the state or dominant groups lead to political and armed mobilization among minority ethnic groups.¹ This essay is an attempt to look at various dimensions of Muslim extremist mobilization recently emerged in the Eastern periphery of Sri Lanka.

Why have some Muslims in Sri Lanka begun to rebel? Is the state the main target of their 'rebellion'? Can a Muslim rebellion, if it exists at all, consolidate itself effectively? Answers to these three questions would be useful to understand the nature as well as the roots of Muslim rebellion in the eastern part of Sri Lanka.

Answers to the first two questions are simple. The Sri Lankan Muslims, who actively identify themselves as distinct from the Tamil, Sinhalese and Burgher communities on the basis of religious differences, consider themselves the most peaceful ethnic community in Sri Lanka. They live in a relatively peaceful atmosphere both with the largest minority, the Tamils, who have been fighting to establish an independent state and institutions in the North and the East of Sri Lanka, and the majority Sinhalese who seek domination over the minorities, particularly the Tamils.

Motives For 'Rebellion

Why are some Muslims rebelling? Social, political, and/or economic grievances usually encourage communities to use either political protests or violence as alternative means of expression. Oppression of non-dominant groups by the dominant