

11th August, 2023

Statement Calling for Recognition of, and Reparative Action for Malaiyaham 200

This year marks 200 years since the arrival of the Malaiyaha Tamils from Southern India to Sri Lanka. This anniversary has been commemorated by a number of civil society, religious and political entities, both from within and outside the community, including the on-going “*Maanbumigu Malaiyaha Makkal*, Talaimannar to Matale Walk from July 27th to August 12th 2023. These commemorative events seek to remember the suffering the community has endured, and their struggles to claim a place as equal citizens in this country, while calling for acknowledgement of their history and recognition of injustices. We, the undersigned, echo the calls of the Malaiyaham Tamil community to the Government of Sri Lanka, to take reparative action.

The systemic discrimination of the Malaiyaha Tamils is an issue that has been disregarded within the national agenda for decades. Their treatment under British colonial rule and in post-independence Sri Lanka, including their disenfranchisement in 1948, created a system of inequality, deprivation and vulnerability. Although their labour powers one of highest earning economic sectors on which the economy of this country has been built, members of the community remain some of the most underprivileged and underserved by the State. Even as the State and the plantation industry point to the various assistance schemes provided over the years, the plantation sector continues to lag behind in terms of almost all socio-economic indicators. Addressing the high rates of poverty within this community in the current economic crisis is therefore not just a measure to provide relief, but is an issue of economic justice to right the wrongs of previous decades.

This year Sri Lanka marks a number of key anniversaries, including 75 years since independence and 40 years since Black July. This affords an opportunity for all citizens to reflect on the past and its impact, and to re-imagine a future built on democracy, equality, pluralism, equity and justice. For the State of Sri Lanka, as it discusses initiatives to address power-sharing and transitional justice, there is a responsibility to address grievances and take corrective action for its past actions and failures.

We, the undersigned, endorse the demands of the “*Maanbumigu Malaiyaha Makkal*, Talaimannar to Matale Walk.” Essentially, these demands represent a call for recognition of their distinct identity and affirmative action:

- Acknowledgment of their histories, struggles and contributions
- Recognition as a distinct community and constituent people of post-independent Sri Lanka
- Affirmative action on education, health and social safety measures to achieve parity
- A living wage, decent working standards, legal protection and equal pay for men and women workers
- Land with secure tenure for housing and livelihoods
- Equal use and parity of status for the Tamil language
- Equal access to Government Services

- Demarcation of plantation human settlements as new villages
- Protection of domestic workers

While this list may not be comprehensive, it reflects some of the long-standing demands of the community, that we call to be implemented as steps towards acknowledgement and justice. We also call upon the leaders from the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities to contribute towards making right these historical grievances.

Signatories

Individuals

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|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1) A.R.A. Rameese | 33) Dr Joe William |
| 2) A. Sornalingam | 34) Dr. Mythri Jegathesan |
| 3) Ambika Satkunanathan | 35) Dr. Ramesh Ramasamy |
| 4) Amila de Mel | 36) Dr. Sanjana Hattotuwa |
| 5) Amita Arudpragasam | 37) Dr Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu |
| 6) Angelica Chandrasekera | 38) Dr Sakuntala Kadirgamar |
| 7) Angeline Ondaatjie | 39) Ermiza Tegal |
| 8) Anithra Varia | 40) Fr. Isaac Daniel Dixon |
| 9) Annouchka Wijesinghe | 41) Fr. Nandana Manatunga |
| 10) Anthony Vinoth | 42) Fr. Samuel J Ponniah |
| 11) Anuratha Rajaretnam | 43) Godfrey Yogarajah |
| 12) Anushaya Collure | 44) Hilary Wirasinha |
| 13) Arjuna Parakrama | 45) Ian Ferdinands |
| 14) Asker Khan | 46) Indrajith Gamage |
| 15) B. Gowthaman | 47) Iromi Perera |
| 16) Balasingham Skanthakumar | 48) Jade Jayawardena |
| 17) Bhavani Fonseka | 49) Jagath Siriwardana |
| 18) Bishop Duleep de Chickera | 50) Jansila Majeed |
| 19) Bishop Kenneth Fernando | 51) Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala |
| 20) Bishop Kumara Illangasinghe | 52) Jeanne Samuel |
| 21) Bisliya Bhutto | 53) Jehanki Anandha |
| 22) C. Ranitha Gnanarajah | 54) Juwairiya Mohideen |
| 23) Caryll Tozer | 55) K. Kandeepan |
| 24) Chaminda Jayasekera | 56) K. Nihal Ahamed |
| 25) Chandra Devanarayana | 57) K.P. Chaminda Piyasekara |
| 26) Chandrika Gadiewasam | 58) Kalani Subasinghe |
| 27) Channaka Jayasinghe | 59) Kalavathy Sinnaiya |
| 28) D.M.Dissanayake | 60) Kirupairajah Gowriswaran |
| 29) Dilrukshi Handunnetti | 61) Koshala Lahiru Gunawardhana |
| 30) Dilshani Madhuwanthi Pulle | 62) Lalith Abeysinghe |
| 31) Dinushika Dissanayake | 63) M.N.F. Nifrasa |
| 32) Dr.C.S Jamunanantha | 64) M.V. Nahomi |
| | 65) Madushi Imeshi Priyadarshani |
| | 66) Mahaluxmy Kurushanthan |

- 67) Maithili Wilson
 68) Malkanthi Perera
 69) Manushika Kalhari
 70) Mario Gomez
 71) Marisa de Silva
 72) Marisa Fernando
 73) Maziyya Hilmy
 74) Mirak Raheem
 75) Mohammed Ikram
 76) Mohammed Sali Janufa
 77) N. Harsha Jayarathna
 78) N.M.M. Nijah
 79) Nagulan Nesiah
 80) Nethmini Medawala
 81) Nigel Nugawela
 82) Nilshan Fonseka
 83) Nirmal Ranjith Dewasiri
 84) Niroshan Ekanayaka
 85) P.M. Mujeebur Rahman
 86) P. Pushpalatha
 87) Paba Deshapriya
 88) Peter Rezel
 89) Philip Setunga
 90) Puni Selvaratnam
 91) R. Jeyaraj
 92) R. Kalaiventhan
 93) Radhika Coomaraswamy
 94) Rathindra Kuruwita
 95) Rev. Dr. Jayasri Peiris
 96) Rev. R T B Abeysinghe
 97) Roel Raymond
 98) Ruwan Laknath Jayakody
 99) S.A. Asker Khan
 100) S.T. Ganeshalingam
 101) Sabra Zahid
 102) Sachitha N. Hewage
 103) Sahan Isanka
 104) Samal Vimukthi Hemachandra
 105) Saman Seneviratne
 106) Sandhya Samarawira
 107) Sandun Thudugala
 108) Sanjee Goonetilake

- 109) Sarath Athukorala
 110) Sarath Rasnayake
 111) Sathivel Balakrishnan
 112) Saumya Amarasinghe
 113) Selvaluxmy Kamalathas
 114) Selvaraja Rajasegar
 115) Shageetha Balachandran
 116) Shamalee de Silva
 117) Shivantha Rathnayake
 118) Shreen Saroor
 119) Siritunga Jayasuriya
 120) Sitralega Maunaguru
 121) Sonali Deraniyagala
 122) Srinath Perera
 123) Subathra Yogasingham
 124) Suchith Abeyewickreme
 125) Suhasha Sellayah
 126) Sujeevan Tharmaratnam
 127) Sulochana Peiris
 128) Sunanda Deshapriya
 129) Sunethra Bandaranaike
 130) Suwanthi Weerasekara
 131) Tharindu Uduwaragedara
 132) Thuraijarah Jeyakumar
 133) Thusitha Siriwardana
 134) Thyagi Ruwanpathirana
 135) Tisarane Gunasekara
 136) V. Udayasegar
 137) V. Weerasingham
 138) Vanamali Galappatti
 139) Vanie Simon
 140) Visaka Dharmadasa
 141) Vrai Cally Balthazaar
 142) Wijayananda Kadurupokuna
 143) Zaahid Aman
 144) Zahira Ismail

Organizations

- 1) Affected Women's Forum
- 2) Ampara District Alliance for Land Rights (ADALR)
- 3) Centre for Communication Training

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| 4) | Centre for Journalism and Education | 19) | Law & Society Trust (LST) |
| 5) | Centre for Policy Alternatives | 20) | Mannar Women Development Federation |
| 6) | Collective for Historical Dialogue & Memory | 21) | Maynmai - Tamil Feminist Formation |
| 7) | Committee for Protecting Rights of Prisoners | 22) | Muslim Women Development Trust - Puttalam |
| 8) | Community Development Foundation | 23) | National Peace Council (NPC) |
| 9) | Dabindu Collective Sri Lanka | 24) | Navayugam Social Development Forum |
| 10) | Environment and Community Development Information Centre (ECDIC) | 25) | ORHAN |
| 11) | Hashtag Generation | 26) | Plantation Rural Education and Development Organisation |
| 12) | Hearts Social Welfare Development Centre | 27) | Rule of Law Forum |
| 13) | Hill Country Mass Organization for Social Justice | 28) | Rural Development Foundation |
| 14) | Human Elevation Organization (HEO) | 29) | Savisthri National Women's Movement |
| 15) | Human Rights Hub | 30) | Search for Common Ground |
| 16) | Human Rights Office | 31) | Sirakukal Amayam |
| 17) | International Centre for Ethnic Studies | 32) | Suriya Women's Development Centre |
| 18) | Islamic Women's Association for Research and Empowerment (IWARE) | 33) | The Association of War Affected Women |
| | | 34) | True Vision RRO, Addalaichenai |
| | | 35) | Women for Justice and Peace in Sri Lanka |
| | | 36) | Women's Action Network (WAN) |