



British Tamils Forum United Kingdom

19th of December 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

No Sirs, We are a Nation

The re-emergence of the trend of referring to the Tamils inhabiting their historical homeland in Sri Lanka as an ethnic minority is of concern. It is the denial of the history which can have ramifications to the long struggle of the Tamils of Sri Lanka to regain their political independence. It is an undeniable historical fact that the Tamils of Ceylon, as it was then known, lived within their own kingdom, which had a well defined geographical land mass, own governance, legal system, language and culture, quite separate from the Sinhala kingdoms of the south of the island.

The Portuguese and the Dutch, who colonised the maritime provinces of the island of Ceylon retained the separate identities of the Sinhala and Tamil kingdoms as they existed. It was the British colonial ruler, for administrative convenience and economic viability, unified the Tamil and Sinhalese kingdoms in 1833, in terms of the recommendations made by Colebrooke and Cameron commission.

Even under the Colebrooke constitution of 1833, quasi recognition of the separate Tamil nationhood was retained, as can be seen from the Tamils being granted representation in the Legislative Council. It was the one man, one vote system introduced under the Donougmore constitution that the Tamils, for the first time, found themselves as a minority in their own homeland from 1931 onwards.

The Soulbury constitution which was introduced at the time that the British granted independence to the island of Ceylon, quite unfortunately, did not take account of the historical facts. The recommendations of the Soulbury constitution perpetuated the myth that Tamils are a minority. The subsequent constitutions of 1972 and 1978 spelt great disaster to the Tamils, in that even the vestige of the nationhood and the political rights had been denied to the historical Tamil nation. The 30 years of civil war had its roots in this constitutional injustice committed by the British colonial rulers and vigorously perpetuated by the independent Sinhala state. The Tamil nation has been relentlessly struggling to re-establish its own identity as a nation, with a considerable success.

It took decades and a 30 years of civil war for the international community to recognise that historically, Tamils lived in their own kingdom quite separate from the Sinhala kingdom, even before the emergence of the states in Europe which is commonly referred to as origin of states in the European context. The Tamil inhabitants of Ceylon and the Ceylon Tamil diaspora were able to convince the international community that it was through some misconceived acts of the British colonial rulers, that the Tamil national identity became submerged into the wider



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Sinhala nation, leading to Tamils being relegated to a minority status. It is a historical travesty which should be corrected politically and diplomatically to ensure that the proud Tamil nation is not denied its existence.

We will urge the world leaders to revisit the history and acknowledge the existence of the Tamil nation within the island of Ceylon. The Tamil nation stakes this demand, not on an emotional basis, but on facts founded in history.

The British Tamils Forum (BTF) publication “**No Sirs, We are a Nation**” opens up a space for the academics, historians, politicians, social movements, activists and decision makers to engage and arrive at a facts based conclusion.

Please click here to download the publication [No Sirs, We are a Nation](#).

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Notes to Editors:

British Tamils Forum exists to harness the skills and the knowledge of the members of the forum, well-wishers and significant others including mainstream decision makers in the UK with the aim of alleviating the sufferings of the Tamils community in the Island of Sri Lanka and to further their right to self-determination within a democratic frame work under pinned by international law, its covenants and conventions. For more information info@britishtamilsforum.org and/or visit: www.britishtamilsforum.org