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Sri Lanka

Rally for a collective political power for people from below

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The President has removed Ranil Wickramasinghe and appointed former President Mahinda Rajapakse as the new Prime Minister. Executive Presidents abusing their powers in violation of democratic norms is not new to our political history and this unacceptable act follows in that line. It has also created a crisis in the elite political sphere which can be resolved by either party commanding the confidence of the Parliament.

However, the President's decision to prorogue the Parliament has created a situation of anarchy and uncertainty and has opened up the space for MPs to trade in their loyalties. Due to the President's arbitrary actions, the cost of the political battle of the elite is now being paid with common people's lives. Therefore we demand that the President should convene the parliament and end the crisis without taking any more lives of our people.

However, it should also be noted that this power tussle is taking place in the context of Yahapalana government failing to deliver on the promises it made. The Yahapalana Government executed a highly unpopular economic policy under the direction of the international monetary institutions and a major portion of the government's activity was reserved for a battle between the President and the Prime Minister. The Yahapalana government covered for the crimes of the previous regime and failed to give any meaning to the idea of justice. The run of the Yahapalana government has come to an end bringing the autocratic and repressive Rajapakse regime, which has no alternative economic vision, back into power although they were ousted by majority votes in the 2015 elections.

In the middle of all these changes we should note that there were many people's struggles in the last three years on a number of issues. Privatization of education, enforced disappearances, manpower labour, privatization and sale of national assets, micro credit and indebtedness, EPF robbery and labour law reforms, privatization of water, cuts on the fertilizer subsidiary, government's lackluster intervention in getting a fair price for farmers' crops, Fisheries' community struggles, A fair wage for estate workers, land grabs in North and constitutional reform are some among the many issues that people struggled on. However, the Yahapalana government which treated all these struggles with indifference are reminded to today of democracy when their power is challenged.

This power grab by the former President Mahinda Rajapakse shows that the political elite are no longer capable of adding any meaning to democracy and their concerns are entirely limited to power tussles in the elite sphere. Regardless, people's aspirations for democratic rule of people are not defined by the treacheries of the political, economic and social elite. There we state that against the politics of the elite we stand for a united movement of people's struggle from below. We stress that with the possibility of racist and authoritarian Rajapakse regime coming into power the rights of our brothers and sisters from minority communities are in a serious threat and therefore we commit to form a united front of people's struggles to protect their rights and spaces for dissent. The political elite have put all of us in a deep economic and political crisis, endangering the democratic process of the country.

Therefore, we state that this crisis compels all progressive, democratic forces to join in a united struggle for an alternative vision of politics completely independent of the two mainstream parties UNP, SLFP, AND SLPP based on the people's power from lower strata of the society. We invite all to join in a united movement based on equality, democracy, justice, solidarity and freedom.

Friday 2 November 2018,

PS:

Rally for a collective political power for people from below

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