

29th March, 2023

PARL Statement on International Day of the Landless

People's Alliance for Right to Land (PARL) as a coalition of communities, activists and civil society organizations fighting for the housing, land, and property rights of marginalized and landless people in Sri Lanka, we would like to express our support for the struggles of the landless people on the international Day of the Landless.

Since 2015, the Day of the Landless is commemorated every March 29 to gather landless people and land advocates to highlight their struggles for right to land. Land right is a key factor for many to enjoy their rights, including their livelihood rights and identity. However, thousands of people in Sri Lanka cannot enjoy their land rights due to landlessness resulting from various reasons. Thirty years of civil war, militarization, land acquisition laws, land acquisition by the government institutions such as security forces, wildlife department, and archeology department, and improper development projects have resulted in landlessness in Sri Lanka. Also, we would like to point out that the Up-Country Tamils have been living as a landless community for more than twenty decades in Sri Lanka since the British left Sri Lanka.

Recommendations from the People's Land Commission.

We would like to reiterate the recommendations of the People's Land Commission, which was convened by PARL in 2020 – 21, related to solving the issues related to the landless in Sri Lanka. Notably, these recommendations reflect the ideas and demands of Sri Lankans affected by land issues across all districts.

- **The State must immediately implement a programme to return land taken by the military to people and communities. Government should provide adequate support for the people to**



Phone

+94772323277



Email

parlnetwoks@gmail.com

restart their agriculture and other livelihoods in returned land. Compensations should be provided for the losses occurred during the times of occupation.

- **Implement an immediate program at divisional level (under Divisional Secretary) to identify private agriculture land that has been demarcated as forest and wildlife conservations arbitrarily, and release them back to farmers for cultivation. Support farmers to develop these land as forest gardens with mixed crop cultivation to ensure the protection of surrounding environmental systems. Identification of such land should be done case by case basis considering the proof of ownership and previous use, environmental sensitivity and importance of that land for local communities for their livelihoods and food security purposes.**
- **Any attempts of acquiring the land that has been used by local food producers for their livelihoods, for development projects, tourism or industrial agriculture projects should be ceased immediately. Alternatively communities should be supported to develop community based tourism and other development project which integrates their livelihoods and food production systems into development plans.**
- **For food producers, who's land has already been acquired and used for development projects, immediate steps should be taken to provide them with suitable alternative land, with necessary infrastructure, to start their livelihoods. Proper compensations should be provided for their losses.**
- **At least 20 perches of land, with a house each should be granted to whole resident families of plantations as a consequence of working for the plantation. Full ownership of this land should be provided by way of a proper deed, so they have the freedom to decide how to utilize this land for housing and household food productivity. Ensure women get equal ownership for land.**
- **Distribute non cultivated and abandoned plantation land among plantation workers for food crop cultivation.**
- **Land must only be acquired when a reasonable and justified public purpose is identified. When such land is acquired by the State, the Gazette must state the exact purpose. The public institutions/officials must be provided with all necessary information and justifications regarding the public purpose. They must clearly communicate the exact purpose with all those affected. There should be a designated official who is tasked with answering questions from the public regarding the acquisition and plans for resettlement, compensation etc. People who may be affected by State land acquisitions must not experience uncertainty; they must be supported at every step in the process.**



Phone
+94772323277



Email
parlnetworksl@gmail.com