

PREAMBLE

The Commission (PCOI) was appointed by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in terms of the Gazette Notification (Extraordinary) No.2211/55 – Thursday, 21 January 2021.

The mandate of the Commission (hereinafter referred to as the PCOI or the Commission) was to investigate and inquire into, take necessary action and report on the findings and recommendations of preceding Commissions of Inquiry and Committees into human rights violations, serious violations of international humanitarian law and other such serious offences. The Presidential Warrant also mandated the Commission to specify the steps that need to be taken to implement the remainder of the recommendations of the previous Commissions that remain unaccomplished. In order to accomplish this task, the PCOI took testimonies and heard narratives of witness accounts not only in Colombo but also in the Northern and the Eastern provinces.

In the discharge of its mandate, the Commission traveled to the conflict ravaged areas and having heard witness accounts, it feels emboldened by the sanguine hope that the promise of the present moment and opportunity predicates the attendant duty to seize upon the concomitant challenges and usher in an era of lasting peace and harmony.

For all Sri Lankans to be able to equally enjoy the benefits of democracy and citizenship, it is incumbent that time and space must be established for social healing and the underlying outcry must be to traverse through a legacy of travails to an era of sustainable peace and harmony.

The Commission was pleased to learn from the many who spoke before it, and it has been the privilege of this Commission to explore a part of that landscape and to represent the truths that emerged in the process. We have made an attempt, in whatever way we could, to weave into this truth narrative about our past some essential lessons for the future.

After having heard witness narratives from people in the different parts of the nation from all social strata, the Commission is inclined to share the optimism of a united,

peaceful and resurgent island home, notwithstanding some challenging and daunting tasks ahead.

The Government and all political leaders must, however, demonstrate political will and sincerity of purpose to make the necessary decisions to ensure the good-faith implementation of this Commission's recommendations if our expectations are to become a reality in the form of a multiethnic and pluralistic nation at peace with itself in a democratic Sri Lanka.

The Commission is confident, like previous Commissions and Committees have recommended, that the public is prepared and willing to support consensus-building strategies that would advance the national interest, reconciliation, justice, and equality for all citizens as long as the political leaders take the initiative in a spirit of tolerance, accommodation, and compromise, based on what the Commission has heard from the people.

The Commission expects that its findings and suggestions would bring out evocative responses so as to put in place structures and mechanisms that would promote social healing, reconciliation and peace requiring the concerted efforts of all civic conscious leaders and the diverse community of stakeholders.

We feel confident that the recommendations would go a long way towards establishing a foundation for enhancing amity, collaboration, post-conflict peace and security among the various strata of Sri Lankan polity. The earnestness with which the recommendations of this Commission made in its second interim report for a truth seeking mechanism have been translated into a prospective reality gives us the hope and expectation that we are transitioning in the right direction. It is comforting to learn that our interim recommendations for an advisory board, immediate release of detainees on long incarceration and a truth seeking mechanism have been accorded due cognizance, though a number of recommendations of the previous Commissions which we have surveyed in this final report have not met with the same fate.

In our recommendations we reject impunity and promote accountability to be achieved for all acts and incidents that have been documented by the previous Commissions.

The PCOI would like to acknowledge historical events, incidents, and reported injustices;

Pay tribute to those who sacrificed and contributed to the island's political independence, territorial integrity, peace, justice, unity and development;

Believe that all citizens of Sri Lanka, regardless of their differences, stand united for the upkeep of the country and its future generations.

Resolve to reconcile divisions and build a society founded on democratic principles, social justice, and human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of fundamental human rights and freedoms.

To provide the groundwork and new beginning for a democratic, open society where law protects all persons equally and governance is founded on the will of the people;

Enhance the standard of living for all residents and unleash the potential of each individual; and establish a united, democratic Sri Lanka that is capable of assuming its rightful position as a sovereign State with political independence in the international community.

It is in that sincere hope that we feel honoured to commend this final report to you.