

Presidential Election 2024 - No 02

Devolution Reconciliation Accountability



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1. The 9th presidential election of Sri Lanka will be held on 21st September and 39 candidates are contesting.
2. Among them are 4 candidates representing major political parties or alliances. They are UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe (RW), SJB leader Sajith Premadasa (SP), NPP leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake (AKD), and SLPP national organiser Namal Rajapaksa (NR).
3. None of the candidates have used the terms ethnic issue/ political solution/Tamil national question as a specific policy area in their manifestos.
4. The NPP/AKD manifesto has 129 pages in Sinhala (No English translation is available up to 3 Sep 2024). UNP/RW election manifesto is 62 pages, SJB/SP has 41 pages & SLPP/NR has 49 pages. (The links are given below)
5. UNP/RW and SJB/SP have a section on Reconciliation in their manifestos. Only SJB/SP has the term Reconciliation on the content page.
6. The issue of accountability for serious human rights violations and implementation of a comprehensive transitional justice package is absent in all four manifestos. None of the 4 parties has an action plan on accountability and war crimes.
7. All 4 candidates have promised to implement the 13th amendment to the constitution except devolving police and land powers. UNP/RW says that he will leave the decision on those powers to a new parliament to decide. SLPP/NR says that he will not devolve police and powers. SJB/SP says that he will implement the 13 A fully. NPP/AKD is ambiguous on the issue.
8. All 3 candidates except SLPP/NR acknowledge that unresolved postwar land issues remain and propose to resolve them through special mechanisms.
9. Only SJB/SP and NPP/AKD have promised to abolish the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

10. NPP/AKD has publicly stated that [they will not seek to punish](#) anyone accused of human rights violations and war crimes during Sri Lanka’s brutal 26-year civil war. However, the chapter on issues related to North and East has a comprehensive action plan.

11. Under reconciliation, the UNP/RW manifesto says:

- i. “We will give prominence to reconciliation in creating prosperous lives with all citizens. Viable solutions will be provided for the social economic political cultural and educational issues of the Northern and Eastern provinces. (pg. 57)
- ii. “Tamil Muslim communities in the northern and eastern provinces who have started their life anew after the war are facing number of issues. The following action will address their issues: Enacting the Truth and Reconciliation Act; Implementing the Navas Commission report on missing persons; Provide financial assistance to the rehabilitated LTTE members to engage in self-employment. (pg. 57-58) (Note The Navas Commission report is not available in the public domain. To read its contents here: [Sri Lanka Briefing Note No31: Recommendations of the Nawaz Report on TRC](#) .

12. SJB/SP manifesto has a section under the heading ‘STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY & RECONCILIATION’. It says:

- i. ‘The Office of National Unity and Reconciliation, the Office on Missing Persons and the Office for Reparations will be strengthened to effectively and efficiently implement their objectives. We will facilitate resettlement of those affected by displacement. All lands not required for security purposes will be returned to their owners without further delay. The policy of no state sponsored demography changes will be maintained.’ (pg.37)
- ii. ‘Racism, extremism or separatism will not be promoted in any way. Every citizen shall be treated equally under the law irrespective of race, religion, caste, class or sex.’
- iii. ‘We will Implement the Trilingual language Policy as required under the current constitution of Sri Lanka.’
- iv. ‘The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act will be abolished and a new, anti-terrorism law that protects national security and human rights will be enacted.’ (pg. 36)

13. The NPP/AKD manifesto has a longer chapter on issues related to reconciliation and interracial justice. It says that “the National Peoples Power is dedicated to creating national unity for the building of the Sri Lankan nation, not divided based on ethnicity language, religion cast or gender and by respecting the diversity of identities and ensuring their survival and protection.” Among the proposed actions are:

- i. Political partnership of all ethnicities, no citizen or community should be subjected to humiliation operation degrading treatment Injustice on the basis of ethnicity, language, religion, cast, sex or any other grounds.
- ii. Introduce a new constitution that strengthens democracy and ensures equality of all citizens. The proposed constitutional reforms will guarantee equality and

- democracy, and the devolution of political and administrative power to every local government District and province so that all people can be involved in the governance of one country.
- iii. A commission against discrimination with a legal mandate will be established.
 - iv. In investigating and serving justice to the political assassination, disappearances and assaults that happened in the past in all areas including in the north and east.
 - v. Expanding the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate acts of violence caused by racism and religious extremism.
 - vi. Releasing all political prisoners and ensuring their free socialization.
 - vii. Abolition of all oppressive acts, including the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and ensuring civil rights of people in all parts of the country.
 - viii. Providing relief to war widows, internally displaced persons, people with disabilities and people with trauma in need of relief and shelter.
 - ix. Ending settlement programs that operate with the aim of changing population composition.

14. The SLPP/NR election manifesto does not have any reference to reconciliation or justice for war-affected people. On the contrary, his manifesto is based on war triumphalism and promoting Buddhism with state patronage. His action plan includes:

- i. During the Mahinda Chinthana Decade, separatist terrorism was defeated, and the age-old unitary state of the republic was preserved. However, there are still some separatist political groups acting against the republic. As it has always been, our main policy is to protect the republic from such dangers by implementing all necessary security measures. (Pg. 12)
- ii. To protect and nurture the Buddha Sasana, we plan to enrich the young monks with Buddha Philosophy and proficiency in English, French, German, Korean, and Italian languages in addition to the oriental languages as well as with Information and Communications Technology. We believe that this is the way to take the Buddha Dharma to the future world. We plan to train 5,000 monks in the first phase.
- iii. Every temple will be completed with the essential facilities while a special medical insurance scheme has been planned for the elderly monks who have dedicated their lives to the Sasana. There will also be a special programme to support the parents of the monks. (Pg. 14)
- iv. A museum and a library will be established for future generations to learn about the humanitarian war against terrorism that hindered the development of this country for 30 years. It will be open to local as well as foreign tourists. (Pg 28)

Ranil Wickremasinghe's Election Manifesto: <https://www.ranil2024.lk/manifesto>

Sajith Premadasa's Election Manifesto: [Download: English Manifesto](#)

National Peoples Power Election Manifesto: <https://www.akd.lk/policy>

Namal Rajapaksa's Election Manifesto: <https://namal2024.com/full-manifesto>