

to disadvantage political opponents. We hope that former practices, which have been used for so long that they have come to be almost considered acceptable are not resorted to during these elections.

Outstanding among these are election related violence, use or abuse of state property and resources for ones election campaign and the use of loopholes and weaknesses in the election law to subvert the spirit of free and fair elections.

We call on the political leaders to publicly announce the disciplinary measures that they intend to take to deal with their candidates who violate election laws and/or break the laws of the land during their campaigns it would assist in maintaining peace during election time. Also public announcements by political leaders of the measures they intend to take to curb their own nominees who violate election laws, disrupt the peaceful conduct of the polls , regardless of whether they win or lose the elections, will greatly enhance the confidence of the people in the democratic processes and elections as well as the sincerity and commitment of the leaders and political parties to peace and democracy.

The responsibility falls on the members who are elected to these Municipal, Urban Councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas to ensure that councils provide efficiently the numerous services that local governance bodies are supposed to provide. Even though local governments do not have access to the large funds available to Ministers and Parliamentary members, the services that local governments should provide are equally important and necessary in the conduct of the affairs of the citizens from the time of their birth up to death.

If the leaders of the government and political parties provide the maximum necessary co-operation and space for the election, this would enable the Commissioner and his department, the election officials at all levels and the police to carry out their functions efficiently, impartially and without fear. This would go a long way to convince the citizens of this country that our leaders truly have the will and commitment to lead the country towards democracy. The world too would be watching these elections to see whether we are headed towards peace, justice and the rule of law after termination of the war. It would not suffice to compare our conduct with our past and with countries in the region and be complacent with the relative improvements so far achieved.

The public of course need to be vigilant and observe carefully how the promises made are kept. The majority of nearly 20,000 candidates belong to the major political parties. We believe that if the leaders of these political parties truly want to ensure that their nominees conduct peaceful campaigns according to the election laws, they can ensure free, fair and peaceful elections. The leaders need only to take the necessary disciplinary actions to curb the small numbers of law breakers. Hence these elections are an opportunity to check whether our political leaders value democracy and want to lead the country towards peace and that they consider this of greater importance than victory of the party and its candidates.

Thanking You

Yours Faithfully,



Rohana Hettiarachchi

Executive Director