

# Sri Lanka: Executive presidency not the culprit

Thursday 17 December 2009, by [KARUNARATNE Vickramabahu \("Bahu"\)](#) (Date first published: 13 December 2009).

Some pundits claim that the greatest tragedy in Sri Lanka today is the executive presidency; hence all attention is concentrated on that. Then they argue that as Mahinda does not agree to change the constitution to eliminate the executive presidency, he should be defeated. In other words, the whole campaign against the chauvinist repressive Mahinda regime is reduced to a debate on the executive presidency and the 17<sup>th</sup> amendment. In this manner, they have indirectly whitewashed a regime responsible for crimes against humanity, and also the devastation and misery caused in the last four years. If we take their argument further, Mahinda has behaved like a wicked dictator because the constitution as it is, legitimized that behaviour and automatically railed him in that direction. In addition, the executive presidency has a natural resistance to transparency, hence all corruption and malpractices of the Mahinda regime arises due to the flaws of the executive presidency. To make matters worse, some Tamil and Muslim pundits have joined this orchestra of passive democracy, to say that the war and discrimination against the minorities is also rooted in the executive presidency.

## Constitutional conditionality

Hence the demand for equality, autonomy and self-determination is redundant and concentration should be on the elimination of the executive presidency. So, in the end we have to stomach that the genocidal attacks on the Tamil people, attacks and discrimination against the Muslims, attacks on Christian churches etc. are all due to the executive presidency. In the meantime, the despicable chauvinist elements of the Mahinda regime are given a simple escape route. Because, all these were faults of the constitution and they were mere actors and victims of a constitutional conditionality!

Of course, the executive presidency is bad and it should be removed. I said this in 1978 February 4, when all these pundits and advocates of democracy were either sleeping or worshiping the socialist democracy of president Jayewardene. Having done much damage to the democratic traditions of this country, now these preachers of democracy are busy covering up the central issue of democracy. This government is wrong and should be defeated not necessarily because it used the dictatorial power of the executive presidency but because it followed a policy of inhuman war and the repressive agenda of the global capital.

Whether there was the executive presidency or not, the Mahinda regime backed by the Brahmins of Delhi and the western powers would have done this devastation to Sri Lanka.

We have to challenge the government on its politics and socio economic programme before we discuss the bad use of the constitution.

On the other hand, whenever the change of constitution is discussed it is imperative to take the devolution issue with the abolition of the executive presidency. It is the chauvinist policy of the JVP to raise the issue of the executive presidency in order to push the devolution issue under the carpet. In any case, it is wrong to say that parliament without the executive presidency was more receptive to the demands of the Tamil speaking people. Both SWRD and Dudley, prime ministers with executive powers, were pressurized to abandon devolution by the opposition. However, president Jayewardene used executive powers to demolish the opposition and establish the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment and a Tamil chief Minister for the Tamil homeland. Of course the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment is an eyewash, but

it is certainly better than total submission to the Sinhala chauvinist hooligans.

### **Mahinda's incapacity**

The point is, that it is wrong to say that the executive presidency was the reason for Mahinda's incapacity to work for a political solution to the Tamil national problem. Mahinda should be defeated for his repressive and reactionary attitude to the Tamil national problem, for breeding majority chauvinism and for following the agenda of foreign plunderers. But, in place of that if we implant a reactionary general in the name of tranfering executive power, we may end up in a total wilderness. What is necessary is, a Left alternative to fight for democracy based on national unity.

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**P.S.**

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