



Response to the Venerable Bellanwila Wimalaratne Thero's Comments on the Centre for Policy Alternatives

2 November 2017, Colombo, Sri Lanka: On Saturday 28th October, both Hiru and Ada Derana News broadcast ideas about the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) expressed by the Venerable Bellanwila Wimalaratne Thero. Addressing a conference of Bikkhus at the Dhammikaramaya in Ratmalana on the proposed new constitution, the Venerable Thero stated that CPA and its Executive Director Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu are behind “constitutional courts” and are “pumping” the constitutional reform process with “NGO money”. A report to this effect was also published in the Lankadeepa newspaper on 1st November 2017.

CPA strongly rejects the statement made by the Venerable Thero. His comments unfortunately associate him with the extremist opponents of the constitutional reform process. These extremists have labelled supporters of a new constitution “traitors”, threatened them with death and called for Parliament to be bombed if a new constitution is passed by its members. In this context, CPA is appalled and saddened by these remarks of such a highly respected member of the Sangha.

CPA also notes that the Venerable Thero does not produce any evidence in respect of the allegations made against CPA and its Executive Director's purported role in the constitutional reform process. Accordingly, CPA regrets to have to state that such remarks by such a personage are alarmingly irresponsible and even inflammatory.

Our shock and sadness in this regard are compounded by the fact that the Venerable Thero made a deeply respected contribution to our ‘Never Again’ public interest television campaign in 2008 marking the 25th anniversary of Black July, the central message of which was non-violence and peaceful coexistence amongst all the peoples of our country.

In keeping with its non-partisan organisational mandate, CPA has engaged in strengthening good governance and democracy in Sri Lanka since its inception in 1996. CPA will continue to work on research and advocacy to build broad public support for a new constitution.

CPA fervently hopes that the public debate on the new constitution can be carried out without misinformation, insinuations and threats of violence, which are all reminiscent of the recent past. We believe our country needs a new constitution that meets the aspirations of all of its peoples and comprehensively rejects the politics of hurt, harm and hate. We strongly appeal to our fellow citizens, politicians and all religious leaders to engage in and lead an informed, responsible and constructive debate on this pivotal issue.