



Women's Call to the Presidential Candidates



A Women's Manifesto for
2019/2020

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Declaration

As women, we strive for an ethical political culture and a democratic and just society, within which all human rights are valued and protected by the state, where all people are equal. We strive for a society in which everyone can be free from harm, live with dignity, choose their own employment, have access to quality healthcare and education provided by the state, access decent housing, and live within a society and state where accountability is valued.

We assert that women's rights have historically been curtailed through a socially conservative interpretation of 'gender', which has dictated restrictive gender roles and harmful stereotypes.

We affirm that women and other historically marginalized communities should have the right to access justice and be treated fairly within the justice system. All workplaces should be safe and inclusive environments. The state should uphold this principle, as well as compel the private sector to uphold it.

Our demands:

1. Abolish the Executive Presidential System and introduce a constitutional structure with an Executive that is allied to Parliament through the Cabinet
2. Ensure the independence of the judiciary
3. Ensure the number of cabinet ministers do not exceed 20 and at least 25% of the Cabinet comprises of women
4. Abolish the preferential system of voting and establish a new electoral system based on a combination of first-past-the post seats and proportional representation
5. Provide for temporary special measures to ensure a minimum of 25% representation of women, including at decision making level, in Parliament and government agencies
6. Bring in legislation to prevent cross-overs and allow citizens the right to recall Members of Parliament
7. Introduce mandatory legal provisions to ensure that all registered political parties have at least 25% women in their key decision-making structures
8. Ensure a gender balance in the appointments to all independent Commissions established under the 19th Amendment to the Constitution
9. Expedite legislation to establish an independent National Commission on Women within the provisions of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution
10. Ensure progressive thinking of future generations by including education on the concepts of peace, gender and gender equality in all national curricula
11. Ensure all national level data is sex and gender disaggregated
12. Fulfill constitutional obligations on equality and non-discrimination and ensure special measures are introduced

to protect socio-economic and political rights of all persons, including those with disability.

13. Ensure equal application of the law to all citizens, including all religious clergy
14. Recognize the feminization of ageing (that the ageing population of Sri Lanka will be made up of a majority of women), and formulate policies to address their specific needs and concerns, including inter alia, housing, health, livelihoods and transportation
15. Implementing the transitional justice mechanism without delay to ensure justice and trust building among affected people.

Constitutional Reform

16. Resume the Constitutional Reform process through the Constitutional Assembly (CA) taking into consideration the recommendations made by the Public Representations Committee and the Sub Committees of the CA immediately
17. The Right to Life for all must be recognized as a fundamental human right

In this process consider that:

18. Recognition is given to the fact that women have been historically discriminated against and marginalized and this warrants a special bill of rights for women including a right to exercise autonomy and enjoy bodily integrity; sexual rights and reproductive health, right to be free from violence and live in dignity, and the right to effective remedy and redress for such violence and its consequences
19. Judicial review is enabled to determine the constitutionality of laws post enactment

20. Article 16 of the current constitution is repealed
21. Sexual orientation and gender identity are introduced as explicit categories and are guaranteed protection under the non-discrimination clause, recognizing historic and continuing discrimination, despite the implicit inclusion in Article 12
22. Economic, social and cultural rights are guaranteed as fundamental rights and are justiciable
23. The liability of non-state actors for violations of the equality clause of the Constitution is recognized

Human Rights and Legal Reform

24. Commit to making human rights and non-discrimination corner-stones of all legislation and state structures
25. Progressively incorporate all ratified international instruments, including CEDAW, into domestic legislation and review existing legislation for compliance with international human rights commitments
26. Progressively implement the recommendations of the Consultations Task Force on Reconciliation Mechanisms (2017)
27. Establish the Commission for Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Non-Recurrence
28. Ensure that all women shall enjoy equal rights to the inheritance, acquisition, management, administration and disposition of property and ensure that all discriminatory laws (specifically including the Thesawalamei Law and the Land Development Ordinance) preventing such rights be repealed or amended

29. Amend the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act of 1951 ensuring full realization of demands of Muslim women and full compliance with fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution within six months of securing the Presidency
30. Amend the Penal Code and Election laws to introduce legislation that addresses the issue of violence against women in political life
31. Ensure that public education on human rights and discrimination and all the areas mentioned here, are a key priority of the state
32. Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and commit to not enacting the draft Counter Terrorism Act which is under discussion; instead use provisions in normal criminal law to ensure the safety of all citizens
33. Ensure the Voluntary Social Services Ordinance (VSSO) is amended to protect freedom of association and dissent and that all non-governmental bodies are treated with similar legal and regulatory measures as all other legal entities
34. Ensure that the criminal justice system is implemented in a fair and just manner and not abused for political reasons and that the rights of all those who come within its ambit are not violated

Information and Hate-Speech

35. Ensure that multiculturalism is encouraged and prioritized, thereby establishing national coexistence; commit to drafting and enacting a National Policy to ensure this
36. The state should take proactive measures to counter hate-speech, such as counter-messaging campaigns and public education

37. The state should hold all perpetrators, irrespective of socio-political and religious status, to account in cases of incitement to violence
38. Commit to strengthen and implement right to information (RTI) procedures and mechanisms through public education and capacity-building, including for the state sector

Language and Culture

39. Fully implement official languages policy and ensure compliance of the state sector
40. Ensure greater appreciation of cultural pluralism to promote national integration through policy, legislation, education and practices, including the new National Policy on Culture
41. Notwithstanding the above, ensure that culture should not override human rights of all citizens

Development, Traditional Livelihoods and Ecological Justice

42. Ensure all development policies are inclusive and benefit all communities regardless of socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, disability, age and so on
43. Commit to enacting special policies to address the issues of women in poverty, as a recognition of the feminization of poverty
44. Recognize the contribution of women in sustainable agriculture and environmental management, and take measures to protect their role in this sector, including to ensure land tenure and other economic resources for women
45. Make environmental assessments compulsory at the initial conceptual stage of development projects

- 46 Develop a comprehensive national policy to face ecological challenges and put in place safeguards to minimize various disasters and accidents caused by climatic changes such as drought, forest fires, floods, landslides and sea erosion
- 47 Take immediate and consistent action, with dedicated resources to prevent and mitigate the impacts of climate change
- 48 Support both female and male farmers by increasing pensions and writing off farmers debts
- 49 Support traditional livelihoods including those of women through more inclusive policy and resources
- 50 Increase State support to expand the use of traditional seeds, and to prevent the acquisition of a monopoly in seeds by corporations
- 51 Ensure the non-destruction of forestation and conserve sensitive ecological systems
- 52 Ensure that all environmental laws will be implemented without reservation and impunity in cases of violations
- 53 Ensure energy security by developing renewable energy sources such as biomass power, wind power, solar power and ocean energy and reduce the dependence on fossil fuel.

Labour and Work

- 54 Include unpaid care work in the National Labour Force Survey and in the assessment of GDP
- 55 Introduce and enforce stringent laws and regulations to effectively monitor and regulate micro finance and micro credit institutions.

- 56 Ratify ILO Convention 190 on Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the World of Work.
- 57 Ratify ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers
- 58 Withdraw all current discriminatory regulations restricting the right of women to migrate for overseas employment
- 59 Ensure the protection of the law to all women, regardless of their chosen employment, thereby giving women the freedom to pursue employment of their own choosing
- 60 Introduce a pension scheme for women and men migrant workers
- 61 Introduce a contributory pension scheme to all citizens and ensure this is linked to the Cost of Living Index

Violence against Women and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

- 62 Expand the legal definitions of rape (to include marital rape), torture (to include sexual violence), and sexual harassment. Definitions of forms of violence against women should include technology-related violence
- 63 Sentencing should reflect the broadened definitions above, and suspended sentences in cases of rape and sexual violence should be prohibited
- 64 Ensure that all girls from all communities are equally protected by the statutory rape law
- 65 Amend legislation where necessary and enforce standardized practices of evidence-gathering which center the testimony of the survivor/victim. Ensure that the practice of independent corroboration in the case of rape and sexual violence is abolished

- 66 Enact amendments to the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act 2005 currently before the Legal Draftsperson within six months of securing the Presidency
- 67 Repeal Section 303 of the Penal Code and ensure strengthened access to all sexual and reproductive healthcare choices, for all
- 68 Repeal sections 365 and 365A of the Penal Code which criminalize private same-sex conduct between consenting adults
- 69 Amend Cheat by Impersonation to ensure it cannot be used to legitimize discrimination against transpersons; IGP of Police should endorse the validity of the Gender Certificate and issue directives to all police to consider this document valid
- 70 Amend the Bribery Act and explicitly include the act of compelling sexual bribery
- 71 Repeal the Vagrants Ordinance
- 72 Delete the question in the birth certificate regarding the marital status of the parents
- 73 Ensure that all policy and legislative interventions affecting women are based on evidence which reflect the lived realities of women
- 74 Include age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality and reproductive education as an integral part of all educational curricula, including in teacher training

Institutions and Policy

- 75 Enact legislation to ensure the independence of the judiciary regardless of changes in government
- 76 Introduce a Directorate of Public Prosecutions bifurcating the office of the Attorney General and taking on the task of all prosecutions, including against the State
- 77 Ensure that every person can exercise their right to access justice and that this right is justiciable; in cases where this right is violated, the victim should have access to timely remedies and immediate relief to support any required action
- 78 Provide the necessary human and material resources to fast-track investigation and prosecution of violence against women cases, where cases should be completed at the most within the period of one year
- 79 Conduct a review of all existing National Action Plans relevant to violence against women and consolidate implementation into one instrument
- 80 Mandate that each police station should have a well resourced Women and Children's Desk staffed by adequately trained officers who are proficient in local languages and that this service is available 24 hours of the day
- 81 Develop policies for female heads of households, which enable an environment in which they can live free from harm and oppression, in dignity, where their socio-economic rights are protected, and their access to social welfare benefits are strengthened
- 82 Commit to increasing the financial provisions towards maternal and child health in the budget to 3%

Endorsements: Women’s Manifesto 2019

Organisations

1. Women and Media Collective (WMC)
2. Viluthu
3. Women’s Resource Center
4. Rural Women’s Front
5. Women’s Development Center
6. Women’s Solidarity Front
7. Ruhunu Sisila
8. Dabindu Collective
9. Women’s Political Academy
10. Equal Ground
11. Human Elevation Organisation (HEO)
12. Islamic Women's Association for Research and Empowerment (IWARE)
13. Amara district union for female headed households – Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mulativu, Mannar, Trincomalee, Batticalo and Puttalam
14. Action Network for Migrant Workers (ACTFORM)
15. Women’s Education and Research Center (WERC)
16. International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES)

Individuals

1. Prof. Camena Guneratne
2. Dr. Sepali Kottegoda
3. Dr. Selvy Thiruchandran
4. Dr. Thiloma Munasinghe
5. Kumudini Samuel
6. Anebriya Hanifa
7. Chandra Jayarathne
8. Mario Gomez
9. Kshama Ranawana
10. Velayudan Jayachithra
11. Nelun Chrisanthi Gunasekera

12. Velusamy Weerasingham
13. Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala
14. Raisa Wickremethunge
15. Hanah Ibrahim
16. Aaranya Rajasingham
17. Nilmini Renuka
18. Chandani Pushpalatha
19. B.P Liyanage
20. R.K. Priyadharshini
21. R. Manishalini
22. S. Dharsika
23. K. Sowmya
24. W.M.C. Pushpalatha
25. J. Metlickmary
26. P. Logeswary
27. E.M. Nilmini Renuka Damayanthi
28. Thilaka Weerakoon
29. K. Chalanika Jayangani
30. A. Shamdi Rasangika
31. Kusum Amarasinghe
32. Shasthi Karunarathne
33. E.G. Amara
34. Sriyani Pathirage
35. E.M. Indra Irangani
36. Nisansala Gamage
37. Ranmalee Anandagoda
38. M.H. Nasmiya
39. W.H. Maneesha
40. W.M. Samanthi Wijerathna
41. R.D.G. Rajapakse
42. Inoka Edirisinghe
43. W.A.C. Kumari
44. R.D.D.S.R. Fernando
45. Sumika Perera
46. Sandya Ekneligoda
47. Seetha Ranjani

48. Maithreyi Rajasingham
49. Shirani Mills
50. Uda Deshapriya
51. Lila Rasool
52. S. Mariyarasali
53. Subha Wijesiriwardena
54. Tharanga De Silva
55. Edna Malkanthi
56. Stella Philip
57. Inoka Priyadharshani
58. Kimaya De Silva
59. Sanchia Brown
60. H. Inthumathy
61. Vasanthan Sumathi
62. Singarasa Saranja
63. Makenthiran Nirmala
64. Paskaran Raji
65. Sivathurai Kulamankalam
66. Sivarasa Mariyarisari
67. Kanthaiya Thurkka
68. Ksntharasa Santhiravanthani
69. P. Saroja
70. Srikantharasa Suseeka
71. P. Ampikai
72. S. Lassumirani
73. V. Karthika
74. A. Thavarani
75. E. Saila
76. P. Rathneswary
77. N.Thilakarani
78. Navarathnam Alakeswary
79. Kanalinkam Lakavanthi
80. Varatharasa Yokarani
81. Vaiththinkam Navaransithamany
82. Vijaratnam Alairarasai

83. Makeswaran Vanitha
84. Maikkal Joni Jesithra
85. E. Kanmaniyamma
86. M.N. Immunijha
87. N. Mireka
88. N. Nirija
89. Ayisaumma
90. Paththila Sawasrir
91. K. aSWINI
92. K. Nilani
93. K. Jeevasalini
94. K. Rubiny
95. S. Sutharsini
96. S. Anpurani
97. S. Nirija
98. T. Santha
99. S. Kairala
100. S. Genkamma
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