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## ***A Marginalized Minority:*** **A History of the Tamil People in Sri Lanka**

### ***Geography***

Sri Lanka is an island 22 miles south of the southern tip of India on an 80-degree latitude, with an area of 25,000 square miles. There are basically two kinds of climates on the island. Tropical Wet in the Southwest, and Tropical Dry in the Northeast. Tropical monsoons are December to March in the Northeast, and June to October in the Southwest.

### ***Population***

This small island (which is about the size of Rhode Island) was formerly know as Ceylon, and consists of 18.5 million people. The two main ethnic groups are the Tamils of the Northern and Eastern parts, and the Sinhalese of the Southern and Western parts. Population ratio of the ethnic groups are approximately 74% Sinhalese and 25% Tamil, while 1% is Burgher (Eurasians). As for the population for religious groups of the Tamils, 60% are Hindus, 28% are Muslim, and 12% are Christian. Amongst the Sinhalese, 93% are Buddhists, and 7% are Christian.

### ***Ethnic Origins***

Tamils are of the Dravidian group. The word Dravidian means Thamizhar, which originated from the ancient Greeks who could not pronounce the word. Out of Tamil in India came forth three other Dravidian tongues namely, Kannada, Telugu, and Malayalam. Minor derivative languages are Tulu and Kodagu.

Later, the Indo-Aryans of Northern India had immigrated into Southern Lanka through this trade route. Around the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., a banished prince by the name of Vijaya and other princes, who spoke Pali language and belonged to the Indo-Aryan society near Bengal and Kalingam, settled on the Southern banks of the island. Buddhism was also introduced to Lanka by these settlers from Northern India around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. Over time, the Pali language that was spoken by these immigrants was integrated with Tamil which evolved into the Sinhalese language. The people in the south who spoke this language became the Sinhalese.

### ***History***

Thus, rule of Sri Lanka was shared by both the Tamil and Sinhalese kingdoms independently. The Tamils in the Northeast and the Sinhalese in the South and Southwest kept their lands. The areas closer to Tamil Nadu, sea shores and open land, belonged to Tamils. The mountainous, central parts, far away from Tamil Nadu and the southern parts belonged to the Sinhalese people. One of the most earliest known Tamil kings was Ellalan of the Chola kingdom who ruled from 145B.C. – 101B.C. During the end of his rule he was assassinated by the Sinhalese Prince Dutugemunu. This was the beginning of the Tamil-Sinhalese conflict. The Sinhalese captured the Tamil capital Anuradhapuram and made it their capital. This was the first occurrence where the Sinhalese took possession of Tamil lands by battle, making it their own.

During the time of Raja Raja Cholan and Rajendra Cholan (993-1070 A.D.), the entire island was brought under Tamil rule. In Polanuruvai, the Chola capital was established.

The Chola kingdom had not only spread their empire throughout southern India and Sri Lanka, but to Malaysia (Kadaram) and Indonesia (Java and Sumatra) controlling the trade route to China.

After numerous wars between Tamil and Sinhalese kingdoms arose three distinct kingdoms on the island of Lanka. The Southern and Southwestern seashores were administered by the Kotte Sinhalese Kingdom. The central mountain area was taken care of by the Kandy Udarata Sinhalese Kingdom. The East, North and North-West were administered by the Tamil Kingdom, also called Tamil Eelam.

### ***European Colonization***

Colonial rule first came around the 16th century A.D. from the Portuguese, who captured the Kotte Sinhalese Kingdom. In 1619 they eventually took over the Tamil Jaffnese kingdom of the Northeast (Tamil Eelam) which was ruled by Sangilian. Following the Portuguese, the Dutch captured the Jaffnese kingdom in 1658. The three kingdoms of the island were recognized by them and were even drawn on their old maps. The Tamils and Sinhalese were ruled separately.

In 1796 the English took power, after the fall of the Kandian Kingdom. They conquered the remaining part of the Jaffnese kingdom ruled by Pandara Vannian in 1811.

In 1815 the entire island came under English rule. The Indian sub-continent had also come under one administration under British rule. It was then, when they integrated the three kingdoms in 1833, and divided them into five administrative presidencies. Among them, the Northern and Eastern presidencies were Tamil areas. Therefore, the different habitations of the Tamils and Sinhalese came under a single administration.

Coffee and tea plantations were set up during the early 1820s in the Central highlands. It was not until the 1840s and the 1850s when a million people were imported from Tamil Nadu mainly from the districts of Tinneveli, Madurarai, and Tanjore.

Further, they made Lanka into nine presidencies in 1889. Consequently, many of the traditional Tamil areas were united with Sinhalese administrative units. From 1912 to 1924, the British government had constituted a council of 21 to 46 members. In this council, both Tamils and Sinhalese had equal representation.

In 1927, the British government appointed the Donamur Commission with a view to bring about administrative reforms. The Tamils presented to this commission that since the Tamils were a separate nationality, they should be given equal representation in the administration. Ignoring this demand, the commission constituted a 61-member council. It recommended choosing 50 members through an election. The election was boycotted by the Tamils. By this, the Sinhalese were able to get themselves into the council in a majority.

D.S. Senamayake who became the Minister of Land Settlement under the British, set up Sinhalese colonies in Tamil areas. Between 1931 to 1947, he had implemented more than 20 Sinhalese settlement schemes in the traditional Tamil areas.

In 1944, the Solbery Commission was appointed to grant independence to Lanka. The Tamils demanded from the commission equal representation. Rejecting the demand, the British granted independence to Lanka in 1948.

### ***Deprivation of Citizenship to plantation Tamils***

After Independence from the British on February 1948, the newly formed Sinhalese government introduced their national flag which was the lion flag of the last Sinhala King of Kandy, Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe. One of the first things they did when coming to power was depriving citizenship to the upland Tamil plantation workers, who came here from Tamil Nadu during the period of 1825 - 1840s. Before independence, Tamils had 33% of the voting power, when then dropped to 20%.

### ***Sinhala Only Act, Satyagrahas & 1956 Anti-Tamil Riots***

In 1956, the Sinhala Only Act was introduced by the next Prime Minister, Bandaranaike, making Sinhalese the official language of the whole island. This made it hard for Tamils to get jobs, go to school, or even travel around. In protest to that bill, a man by the name of Mr. Chelvanayakam, leader of the FP (Federal Party), led a group of 300 Tamil volunteers to stage a sit-in Satyagraha, or peaceful protest, in the capital city of Colombo. This was similar to the kind of non-violent protest Mahatma Gandhi had led in India during the British rule. Unfortunately, these peaceful Tamil demonstrators were ruthlessly beaten up by the authorities, which led to the first Anti-Tamil riots on the island. Mobs of Sinhalese went on a rampage of burning and looting Tamil shops and homes. As a result of this tragic outburst of violence, 150 Tamils were killed. The rioting and violence was instigated by the government and actively supported by the Bikkus, or Buddhist clergy, to frighten the Tamils into accepting the Sinhala Only Act.

### ***1958 Anti-Tamil Riots***

In 1958, the annual meeting of the Federal Party of the Tamils was to be held in Colombo to decide whether to have another non-violent protest or not. A train heading to Colombo carrying Tamil delegates was derailed and its passengers beaten up by thugs. On the following day another round of violence against Tamils erupted again. Passing cars and trains were stopped by mobs and their Tamil occupants butchered, houses were burnt with people inside and there was widespread looting.

Hundreds of Tamils were killed in this first episode of communal violence. Over 25,000 Tamil refugees were relocated from Sinhalese areas to Tamil areas in the North.

### ***1961 Civil Disobedience & Anti-Tamil Riots***

In 1961, a Civil Disobedience Campaign began, started by 200 Tamil university students in Jaffna. These peaceful demonstrations soon spread to other Tamil areas but were violently put down by the Army and Navy. Several hundred Tamils were butchered, as pregnant women were raped and murdered, and children were hacked to death in this now familiar eruption of communalism. Tamil leaders were arrested and Tamil political offices were ransacked, starting the first military occupation of Tamil areas in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Discrimination against Tamil Admissions to Universities***

Discrimination against Tamil admissions to universities in the early 1970s was on the rise. A system of 'standardization' was put into place in 1972, in which marks obtained by candidates for university admission were weighted to give advantage to certain linguistic groups: particularly the Sinhalese. During the same year, the Federal Party, Tamil Congress, and the Ceylon Workers Congress united to form the Tamil United Front in Trincomalee. The newly formed TUF adopted a six-point program, calling for strong decentralization.

### ***Tamil Armed Resistance***

Almost 30 years of political non-violent strategies to obtain rights for the Tamils had proved fruitless, only encountering further violence and injustice. The Tamil youth demanded a more drastic and radical action for a swift resolution to the Tamil national question. Being victims of ethnic oppression and police brutality, they were forced to abandon the Gandhian doctrine of 'ahimsa' (non-violence) and take to arms. It was through these historical events the Tamil Tiger movement took its historical birth. In 1972 Velupillai Pirapaharan, the founder and leader of the Tamil's ongoing national freedom movement, formed the Tamil New Tigers. On May 5, 1976 this organization was renamed as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

While the Liberation Tigers were developing and organizing their politico-military structure, state oppression against Tamils worsened and grew more intolerable. This was when armed resistance movement of the LTTE emerged as a potential force demanding concrete action from the Tamil political parties. On May 14, 1976 the Tamil United Front, headed by SJV Chelvanayakam, held a national convention at Vaddukodai in Jaffna. A historic resolution was adopted calling for the political independence of the Tamil Nation. The TUF then, changed its name to the Tamil United Liberation Front.

### ***Popular Mandate for Secession***

The General Election of July 1977 was a crucial testing ground for the secessionist cause of the Tamil United Liberation Front. The TULF received a clear mandate from the Tamil people to wage a national struggle for political independence: more than 90% of the Tamils voted overwhelmingly in favor of separatism. However, the TULF failed to enact concrete steps towards independence.

### ***1977 Anti-Tamil Riots***

President JR Jayawardane of the UNP won the elections securing 85% of the seats in Parliament. The TULF, for the first time in Sri Lanka's political history, became the leading opposition party. When elections were over, the ethnic violence against Tamils intensified. It is estimated that 250 to 300 Tamil citizens were massacred and thousands became refugees. Millions of rupees worth of Tamil property was destroyed. The state police and the armed forces openly joined with thugs in their gruesome acts of arson, looting, rape and mass murder. Instead of containing the communal violence that was ravaging the whole island, government leaders made inflammatory and racist remarks to further propel communalism.

### ***Prevention of Terrorism Act & 1979 Anti-Tamil Riots***

During the year of 1978, on April 25, the LTTE officially claimed responsibility for attacks on repressive police raiding parties. Thus the LTTE, for the first time, came out to the world announcing itself as the armed resistance movement of the Tamils committed to the goal of national liberation through armed struggle and defending the rights and liberties of the Tamil people. The Proscription of Liberation Tigers was enforced allowing security forces to carry out arbitrary arrests, detention without trial for lengthy periods, torture and extra-judicial killings. The Tamil nation of the northeast was brought under total military occupation. In 1979, this act of state terrorism against the Tamils was changed to the Prevention of Terrorism Act. During this period, the security forces - most of whom did not speak the language of the people of the Northeast, and had been taught to look up them as enemies who must be subjugated at all costs – rounded up and tortured thousands of Tamil youths.

### ***1981 Anti-Tamil Riots & Burning of Jaffna Library***

In the summer of 1981, another round of Anti-Tamil Riots broke out in three areas: the gem mining area of Ratnapura, Negombo near the capital of Colombo, and the plantation towns of central Sri Lanka. Before the violence was brought to an end, 25 Tamils were killed, scores of women raped, and thousands were made homeless losing all their personal belongings. It was stated that more than 5000 Indian Tamils had also fled to refugee camps. In Jaffna, a large group of police (from 100 to 200) went on a rampage of arson in the town. One of the greatest contributions to Tamil culture, the Jaffna library, was burnt to ashes. This was the second largest library on the island including well over 95,000 important and irreplaceable documents on Tamil history and culture. More than 100 shops and homes have been set afire and looted; market squares in Jaffna and Chunnakam look as if they have been bombed in wartime.

### ***Black July 1983***

On July 1983, the worst of all the Anti-Tamil Riots had broken out in the capital city of Colombo, then spreading to the rest of the island. A series of guerilla operations against the Sinhala police and armed forces stationed in the North were being conducted. On the political front, the LTTE launched an effective political campaign calling upon the Tamil people to boycott the local government elections to be held in the North on May 18 as a protest against the state's repressive policies. Mr. Pirapaharan had issued a statement appealing to the Tamil people to reject the civil administrative system of the Sri Lanka state and to support the armed campaign of the Tamil Tigers for national liberation. The majority of the Tamil people in the North staged a mass boycott of the elections. The TULF (Tamil United Liberation Front), which defied the LTTE's appeal and stood for the election, suffered a degrading loss with its political credibility damaged when 95% of the voters rejected the party's appeal to vote at the elections.

In a gunfight, Sinhala military and police personnel guarding a poll booth at Nallur, Jaffna were killed. In response to the election boycott and the attack on their security personnel, 600 soldiers were deployed within the Jaffna city limits. This resulted in the worst of all the Anti-Tamil Riots which broke out in the capital city of Colombo then to the rest of the island July 11, 1983. This lasted for several days and left over 3,000 Tamils dead and millions of dollars worth of their property destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of Tamils including men, women, and children were mercilessly beaten, raped, tortured, and butchered.

Many people have written diaries about this tragic event. Some of the descriptions in their logs were very gory and horrifying of cars and busses being stopped and searched for Tamils. When found they were dragged outside and set on fire. Many young girls from as young as 12 years of age were brutally gang raped and had their bodies dismembered. Husbands would be tied up and forced to see their wives being raped by the Sinhalese thugs, police, and soldiers. This was when the Tamil Exodus had begun with thousands displaced from their homes and to take refuge in many countries around the world, including the United States.

This was when President Jayawardene stated, "I am not worried about the opinion of the Tamil people... now we cannot think of them not about their lives or their opinion... the more you put pressure in the North, the happier the Sinhala people will be here... Really if I starve the Tamils out, the Sinhala people will be happy."

- *President J.R. Jayawardene, Daily Telegraph, 11<sup>th</sup> July 1983*

This was when the ethnic war began between the Sinhala Government and the Tamils, officially the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

#### ***Government Neglects to Investigate and Bring Justice for 1983 Massacres of Tamils***

"Despite repeated appeals from international human rights bodies such as the International Commission of Jurists and Amnesty International, and from regional organisations concerned with the protection of human rights such as Lawasia, the government has failed to order independent investigations into the reports of extra judicial killings of 1983".

- *Amnesty International Report, June 1984*

"...The president conceded that 'terrible things' were happening in Sri Lanka asked if he would set up an inquiry commission to go into the atrocities committed by the army against the Tamils, he said: 'Did the British appoint a commission during the war?..."

- *President Jayawardene in an interview with Kuldip Nayar: Island, 17<sup>th</sup> February 1985*

#### ***1983 - Extrajudicial killings of 52 Tamil Prisoners***

The Black July 1983 Massacres of the Tamils was followed by extrajudicial executions by the government. One of the most heinous incidents was the extrajudicial killings of 52 Tamil political prisoners which was reported in several news articles including the Amnesty International Report.

A Tamil nominated member of the Sri Lankan Parliament (Selvarajah Yogachandran), "one of the 52 prisoners killed in the Welikade prison in Colombo was forced to kneel in his cell, where he was under solitary confinement, by his assailants and ordered to pray to them. When he refused, he was taunted by his tormentors about his last wish, when he was sentenced to death. He had willed that his eyes be donated to some one so that at least that person would see an independent Tamil Eelam. The assailants then gouged his eyes. He was then stabbed to death and his testicles were wrenched from his body. This was confirmed by one of the Doctors who had conducted the postmortem of the first group of 35 prisoners."

- *Madras Hindu 10<sup>th</sup> of August 1983*

"The communal holocaust of July 1983 and the Extra Judicial killings of Tamil prisoners provoked an emotional upheaval in Tamil Nadu inflaming the passions of Tamil nationalism in the state. The Dravidian political parties competed with each other in staging mass protests and demonstrations in support of the Eelam Tamils bringing hundreds of thousands onto the streets. The AIDMK (All India Dravida Muzhakam Kullagam) Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Mr. MG Ramachandran demanded urgent Indian intervention."

### ***India's Intervention***

There were three factors explaining India's intervention in the Sri Lankan crisis. One was the political turmoil and the rising tide of nationalism in Tamil Nadu generating concerns in Delhi as to the possibility of a resurgence of Tamil secessionist tendencies.

Another was the mass inflow of Tamil refugees into South India after the July genocide of 1983. Of the half a million people who fled Sri Lanka, two hundred thousand sought asylum in India.

The third and main factor was India's disputes with its neighboring Pakistan and China. In the 1960s Sri Lanka had not supported India in the border dispute with China, rather it had tried to mediate in the dispute. During the 1971 Indo-Pak war, Sri Lanka provided refuelling facilities to Pakistani aircraft. Further more, Lanka's military was being trained by Pakistan.

The movement of the Eelam Tamils for self-determination provided India with an opportunity to intervene in Sri Lanka and force the Government of Jayawardene to step in line. In the latter part of the 1980s, India's military actions against the Eelam Tamils was proof that its one time advocacy of their rights was entirely aimed at advancing their economic – political interests of the Indian state (and its super power backer), former U.S.S.R.

### ***India's training of armed Tamil groups***

During the early 1980s dissidents of the LTTE started forming their own groups. They were TELO (Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization), EROS (Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students), PLOTE (Peoples Liberation of Tamil Eelam), and EPRLF (Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Force).

It was during Indira Gandhi's rule, when military training facilities and arms were provided to the Tamil militant organizations to militarily pressure the stubborn Jayawardene regime to seek a negotiated political settlement to the Tamil national question. Not only did the training of these groups serve as a tool to bring the Sri Lankan government down, but to also cause dissention amongst the Tamils which would give India some sort of an upper hand.

### ***1984 – Kidnapping of American Couple***

In 1984, “two American nationals, Stanley Allen and his wife Mary Allen, who were working as water-resource experts under the UN Aid programme in Jaffna (Sri Lanka), were kidnapped by armed persons who sent a message to President Jayawardene, demanding a ransom of gold worth 50 million dollars and release of 20 of their colleagues who were under detention. The message also served an ultimatum that, if their demands were not met within three days, the couple would be shot dead.”

The assailants were members of the E.P.R.L.F. (Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Force). After negotiations in India with the EPRLF leaders – Padmanabha, Varadaraja Perumal, and Douglas Devananda head of the E.P.R.L.F. military wing called the PLA (People's Liberation Army), the Allens were finally released.

Padmanabha was a close friend of Dayan Jayatilaka, who is presently an adjunct professor of South Asia Studies at the John Hopkins University in the United States. Douglas Devananda was later appointed by Chandrika Kumaratunga as the Chief of Hindu Affairs during the late 1990s till 2005. He is now the newly appointed Social Services and Social Welfare Minister in President Mahinda Rajapakse's cabinet.

### ***War in Sri Lanka Escalates***

Since after the July 1983 Anti-Tamil Riots, the war in Sri Lanka had manifested itself in its uttermost form. All the militant groups including the LTTE had come together in what was called the ENLF (Eelam National Liberation Force). “Sri Lanka was shaken like an aspen leaf... The spiraling violence in Tamil areas was frightening. Suddenly, coinciding with the LTTEs joining the ENLF, all militant groups – including PLOTE which remained outside the ENLF – appeared to have found a new resolve. They were harrassing the Sri Lankan

forces almost throughout the length and breadth of the northeast, as if they were implementing a well drawn plan to make Colombo kneel.”

With military pressure growing on Jayawardene’s forces, he had no alternative but to yield to India’s proposal. Jayawardene had agreed to negotiate with the Tamil liberation organizations, only on the conditions that India should forthwith terminate all military assistance to the Tamils rebel movements and force them to drop their campaign for an independent state.

### ***1985 - Thimpu Peace Talks***

In 1985 peace talks and negotiations for a settlement on the Tamil national question were held in Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan. The LTTE and other member groups of the ENLF decided to send senior members as their delegates. The talks soon turned into verbal warfare between the parties. The Sri Lanka government delegates questioned the legitimacy of the Tamil militant organizations and challenged their claim to be the representatives of the Tamil people.

The head of the Sri Lankan delegation presented a set of proposals, which were nothing other than the defunct District Development Council framework. These proposals demonstrated the lack of seriousness on the part of the government to seek a fair and reasonable settlement. Given the history of the previous talks, agreements and betrayals by the Sinhala leadership, the Tamil delegates argued that it was the unwavering responsibility of the state to offer a meaningful solution to the ethnic conflict ‘worthy of our consideration,’ including the recognition of a Tamil homeland and their inalienable right to self-determination.

The Thimpu Declaration created as a joint statement by all Tamil delegations on the ending day of 13 July of the first round of the Thimpu talks further stated:

*‘Different countries have fashioned different systems of governments to ensure these principles. We have demanded and struggled for an independent Tamil state as the answer to this problem arising out of the denial of these basic rights of our people. The proposals put forward by the Sri Lanka Government delegation as their solution to this problem are totally unacceptable.’*

When the second round of talks resumed on August 12<sup>th</sup>, Hector Jayawardene – the head of the Sri Lankan delegation - denounced all but one of the Thimpu principles. On the principle dealing with the citizenship rights he stated that the government would address the issue. He refused to accept the concept of Tamil nationality. Instead, he argued that Tamils did not constitute a nation of people but just a simple minority ethnic group.

### ***Ceasefire violations during Thimpu Talks***

While the peace negotiations were heating up in Thimpu, ceasefire violations and large-scale killings of civilians by the Sinhala armed forces were on a rise in the Tamil homeland of the Northeast. The most serious incidents happened in Vavuniya and Trincomalee. In Vavuniya on August 16, scores of civilians were killed and several Tamil shops, burned down. During the next day, soldiers and armed Sinhala thugs attacked a Tamil village in Trincomalee District and massacred the civilians. These violent incidents and massacres angered LTTE leader Vellupilai Pirapaharan. In protest, the ENLF leadership had decided to boycott the Thimpu talks.

### ***1987 – ‘Operation Liberation’***

The violence of the armed forces and the counter violence of the Tiger guerrillas escalated the intensity of the conflict. Jayawardene sought various ways to further strengthen his military against the Tamil people. The president had also imposed an economic blockade on the northern province as collective punishment against the Tamils for their support for the armed struggle. Furthermore, during this period, he expanded the Special Task Force (STF), an elite force comprising police commandos and sent senior officers overseas for special training

A massive invasion force of eight to ten thousand troops, supported by tanks, heavy artillery and air cover unleashed a brutal assault on the Peninsula under the code name ‘Operation Liberation’. Sinhala troops moved

into Vadamarachchi (in Jaffna) with the Air Force and Navy support. The invading troops advanced, committing heinous crimes, massacring civilians, rape, and destroying homes, temples and schools.

Within a week, the Sri Lanka army had overrun the area, hundreds of civilians killed and thousands of Tamil youth had been rounded up. Many were either massacred or sent to prisons in the South. With the fall of Vadamarachchi, the Sri Lanka armed forces prepared to invade Valigamam region of the Jaffna peninsula.

Jayawardene had already given instructions to his field commanders 'to raze Jaffna to the ground, burn the town and then rebuild it'. The Sri Lanka military hierarchy had briefed the President that at least ten thousand Tamil civilians would be killed if an all-out invasion was launched against the heavily populated Valligamam and the city of Jaffna. Jayawardene was still determined to carry out the offensive operation.

### *Tamils and Muslims – “Divide and Conquer”*

The population breakdown of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka is generally quoted as 74% - Sinhalese, 17% - Tamil, and 7% - Muslim. The name Muslim is not an ethnic but a religious title. Universally anyone who follows the religion of Islam is a Muslim. The 7% Muslim speak Tamils, and practice Islam.

The earliest of the Muslims in Sri Lanka were either Arabs or Persians, but those Muslims who arrived here as sailors, travelers and traders, did not bring with them their families. They often chose their wives from the low-caste Tamil population and converted them to Islam.

Muslim traders from South India who were ethnic Tamils dominated another wave of Islam. Some brought with them their Tamil-speaking wives while many, like their Arab predecessors chose their partners from local women. Under the Islamic *shariah* it was also possible for these men to have two wives concurrently, one in India and the other in Sri Lanka. These historical facts and the fact that Tamil was the lingua franca in this part of the world at that time, explains why the overwhelming majority of Sri Lankan Muslims speak Tamil and not Arabic, Persian or Sinhalese as their mother tongue.

The LTTE has made several attempts to incorporate the Muslim community into its movement by demonstrating to the Muslims the hidden dangers of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism and the need for joint action to stop it.

This development received a setback when “Tamil-Muslim” riots broke out in April 1985, apparently over an incident in the town of Mannar in the north where three Muslim worshippers were said to have been gunned down by Tamil militants inside a mosque. The United National Party (UNP) which was in power at that time exploited this incident to the maximum and utilized every means at its disposal to create a permanent rift between the LTTE and the Muslims.

It was a strange coincidence that the attacks on the mosques took place while the defense minister (Mr. Wijeratne) and the trade minister Mr. Munsoor were touring the Middle Eastern Arab countries seeking military and financial backing to strengthen their defense.

The Sri Lankan government has thus engineered several incidents to break this unity. The creation of the armed Muslim home guards was one of them. Another were calculated disinformation campaigns by the Sri Lankan government. During the 1990s one of the faulty news items were as followed:

“Tamil guerillas hacked to death 62 Muslim villagers in eastern Sri Lanka yesterday, accusing them of being government informants, the Defence Ministry and an opposition Muslim leader said. The massacre at Nintavur came on the eleventh day of war between Tamil separatists and Sri Lankan forces for control of the northeast. The Defence Ministry said troops found the bodies of Muslim men, women and children in Nintavur. Military officials said rebels used knives to kill villagers. Survivors said the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam raided the village early yesterday because they feared the residents would reveal their jungle hideaway, according to Mahroof Gani of Sri Lanka Muslim Congress an opposition party. He said that the rebels set fire to a mosque, looted and burnt down houses and left placards warning Muslims not to work for the government.”

--Associated Press Report in London Times, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1990

On the follow day the truth came out:

“The military admitted yesterday that its report that Tamil Tiger separatists had hacked to death 62 Muslim men, women and children was false. Officials confessed only three Muslim men were killed when rebels looted a village in eastern Sri Lanka. They claimed their earlier report was based on faulty information from residents. The allegation was reprinted by international news agencies and appeared in newspapers around the world.”  
--AP Report, *London Sunday Times*, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1990

### ***Black Tigers (LTTE suicide squad)***

After ‘Operation Liberation’, one of the most devastating attack was launched on the night of July 5, 1987 when the LTTE, for the first time, inducted its Black Tiger suicide unit against the Sri Lanka army. Captain Miller, the first Black Tiger, drove a lorry load of explosives into the military headquarters of the Sri Lanka troops housed in Central College buildings at Nelliady and detonated the lethal cargo. The force of the explosion flattened the buildings and instantly killed hundreds of soldiers. Shaken by the event, President Jayawardene and the military hierarchy suppressed the true casualty details fearing the demoralization of the armed forces. But the Indian intelligence RAW was pleased when it learned of the high rate of casualties through their reliable sources.

The LTTE - being a small army against a larger Sri Lanka army - had no tanks, air protection, or heavy artillery for backup. The Black Tigers were a powerful tool against a heavily armed military. Controversy rises when subject of suicide attacks come about. However, the formation of the Black Tigers were strategically used against military targets, and not on civilian populations.

### ***The Indo-Lanka Accord***

This counter-attack on the military headquarters had made Jayawardene and his hawkish Ministers to lean towards the mediation of India. There was intense diplomatic activity both in Colombo and in Delhi to work out a bi-lateral agreement between both Governments. On July 29, 1987, a package of devolution to resolve the ethnic question was formulated by the Indian High Commissioner, Mr. Dixit.

It was an accord entered between India and Sri Lanka, not between the Tamils and Sinhalese. The Agreement secured the geo-political interests of Indian in the Asian region. If Sri Lanka had not agreed to India’s concerns in this regard, India would have continued to support the Tamil militant movement until such time as Sri Lanka agreed.

The proposals of the Indo-Lanka Accord included:

1. *secession of military operations by the Sri Lanka Army.*
2. *the merger of the North and East as the Tamil homeland.*
3. *devolution of power based on the proposals discussed between 1983 and 1986.*
4. *Tamil should be recognised as an official and national language.*
5. *an interim administration should be instituted before final settlement*
6. *Tamil should be given proportional representation in the Sri Lanka armed services.*

In return the LTTE would give up its demand for secession, commit itself to the ceasefire, and the agreement embodying the proposals should be signed by the Sri Lankan government and by the government of India on behalf of the Tamils.

The Indo-Lanka Accord on which the Provincial Council scheme was outlined, failed to clearly define the powers, functions and subjects of the envisaged institutional arrangement.

The Agreement also stated that the LTTE should be disarmed within 72 hours of the signing of the Accord, unreasonably attempting to disarm the Tamil freedom movement before reaching a permanent political solution with guarantees for the security of the Tamils from the Sri Lankan military.

The Indo-Lanka Accord failed to deal with any core issues critical to the Tamil question by calling for immediate bilateral disarmament, a lack of recognition of the Tamil homeland and a system of federalism.

In India, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had met with LTTE leader Mr. Pirapaharan and AIADMK chief minister MG Ramachandran to discuss the Indo-Lanka Accord. The Prime Minister had stated that there was going to be a Rajiv-Pirapa Pact which was to be behind closed doors without public proclamation. Rajiv had agreed to give a dominant role to the LTTE in the interim administrative authority. He also suggested representation from all groups. Pirapaharan was only agreeable to limited representation to the TULF and EROS. The Prime Minister assured the LTTE that he would negotiate with the government of Sri Lanka in regards to the Northeast interim government.

Rajiv Gandhi asked from Pirapaharan whether he could stop the system of taxation in Jaffna which were utilized for the administration of the organization. He had pledged to pay five million rupees monthly, in Indian currency, to meet the LTTEs administrative expenses.

Lastly was the question of disarming of the Tamil fighters. Rajiv had assured Pirapaharan that his organisation did not need to surrender all the weapons or disband his guerrilla army. A symbolic surrender of a few weapons would be sufficient to convince Sri Lanka and the international community that the LTTE was abiding by the obligations of the Agreement. He further stated that the IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force) would enforce a ceasefire and protect the fighters and civilians.

### ***Failure of the Indo-Lanka Accord***

Having surrendered a portion of its weapons to the Indian Army as a symbolic gesture of co-operation, as Rajiv Gandhi suggested, the LTTE leadership awaited in anticipation that Delhi would initiate steps to set-up the interim administrative authority. There were no initiatives from the Government of India.

The funds assured by the Indian Prime Minister for the administration of the LTTEs structures were discontinued after one month's installment. During that month the Sri Lanka government opened up new police stations in the Northeast and started their Sinhala colonisation schemes in the Tamil areas.

A large number of armed cadres from the EPRLF, PLOTE and TELO were arriving from India. They were freshly trained and armed by RAW (Indian Intelligence). While clandestine boat landings of EPRLF and PLOTE members took place on the East coast at night, TELO cadres occupied some coastal villages in Mannar of the North.

The arrival of these armed splinter groups hostile to the LTTE posed a serious threat to their security. There were attacks in which the LTTE suffered casualties. The IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force) refused to take action when these issues were brought to their attention.

Thileepan, a popular political leader in Jaffna and a Colonel of the LTTE, underwent a fast-unto-death to mobilize public protest against India's failure to fulfil its assurances. LTTE leader Mr. Pirapaharan and his political aid met with IPKF leader Dixit to plead with the Indian envoy to visit Thileepan and assure him that India would fulfill the pledges given to the LTTE and request him to break his fast. Dixit had rejected their genuine plea.

Thileepan died two weeks later. His courageous act of self-sacrifice inspired, mobilised and unified the entire Tamil nation as a collective force to protest against India's inaction. Following Thileepan's death, Delhi exerted pressure on Dixit to persuade Jayawardene to put into place an interim administrative authority with the LTTE playing a predominant role. However, the intransigence of Jayawardene and the impotence of the Government of India led to the collapse of the Interim Administrative Authority pledged to the LTTE by Rajiv Gandhi.

### ***1987 -Indian Army Intervenes***

On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1987, two senior LTTE commanders and 15 high-ranking cadres were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy. The LTTE had again plead with the IPKF high command to secure their release. After being

assured of their release, there was a sudden turn around with the request and the arrested LTTE cadres were taken to the Palaly airbase and to be handed over to Colombo by force. Knowing of the track record of the Sri Lankan authorities torture of their prisoners while in custody, all 17 of the LTTE detainees had taken their own lives before departure to Colombo.

News of the death of the LTTE leaders and cadres spread throughout the Northeast, inflaming passions of anger and revenge. The very act of the tragedy took place at the headquarters of the IPKF. Violence spread across the Tamil region. Indian troops were jeered at and stoned and some were attacked. Tragically, reprisal killings of Sinhala civilians exploded into communal clashes in the eastern province. Jayawardene became furious and agitated; he revoked the general amnesty given to the Tamil Tigers and demanded that India take urgent action to restore order.

On October 9<sup>th</sup> the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayawardene, decided to 'forcefully disarm the LTTE militants' to implement the obligations of the Indo-Lanka Agreement. The following day, Indian troops raided and torched the LTTE's newspaper offices, radio and television stations in the city of Jaffna.

LTTE guerillas, using mortar fire, counter-attacked an IPKF military post at Tellipallai junction. A full-fledged Indo-LTTE war had broken out. With the outbreak of hostilities the LTTE Political Committee issued a statement stating:

*'While the LTTE and the people of Tamil Eelam were mourning over their dead heroes, the Government of India mobilised its peace keeping forces for a bloody war against the Tamils. Neither the Tamil people nor the LTTE anticipated, even in their wildest dreams, a war with India. India was their protector, guardian and saviour and the presence of Indian troops was looked upon as an instrument of peace and love. For the LTTE, India was their promoter, a friendly power, who provided sanctuary and armed assistance, an ally who respected its role in the liberation war and recognised its political importance. Therefore the Indian decision to launch a war against the LTTE took the Tamil nation by surprise and anguish.'*

The Indo-LTTE war was brutal and bloody which lasted for two years and seven months. This was the longest war that India ever faced. Both the Indian army and the Tamil Tiger guerillas suffered heavy casualties. However, those who suffered the most were the Tamil civilians.

On October 11, 1987, forty people were slaughtered at Pirambadi near Jaffna University where the LTTE leader lived. The most abominable outrage occurred on 21 October 1987. Indian troops stormed the Jaffna General Hospital spraying bullets and indiscriminately throwing hand grenades, resulting in the deaths of more than one hundred inmates, including 21 doctors and nurses. Less than a week later another terrifying bloodbath took place on 27 October in Chavakachcheri town. An Indian military helicopter launched a sudden attack, opening rocket and machine gun fire on a crowd in the market square. Thirty civilians were killed and 75 seriously injured.

### ***Sexual assault of Tamil women by Indian Army***

The Indian Army concerned as it was to maintain friendly relations with the Tamil people, set about raping them as well. On the 15th of January 1988, the Sri Lanka Sun reported that four members of this exemplary Indian army which had one of its arms tied behind its back, had been court-martialed for rape:

"The Indian Army has court martialled four of its men serving in the Jaffna peninsula for rape, a senior Indian military officer said here yesterday... He also conceded that several complaints of theft had been made against Indian soldiers. 'The Indian army are not angels, we are not devils. We are just human' Brigadier Kahlon said when pressed for details. 'Rape happens even in the West.'"

– Sri Lanka Sun – 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1988

"Two Indian soldiers serving in Batticaloa are to be court martialled for rape, authoritative sources in Batticaloa said yesterday... The two soldiers to be court martialled, allegedly raped two girls during a cordon and search operations at Ariyampathi on Friday." – Sri Lanka Sun, the 19<sup>th</sup> of January 1988

“After its forces entered Sri Lanka on 30 July, the IPKF was increasingly accused of raping Tamil women and of deliberately killing dozens of unarmed Tamil civilians, among them elderly people, women and children... in several cases there was eye witness evidence that the victims were non combatants shot without provocation... Several dozen Tamil women, some of whom needed hospital treatment, testified that they were raped by IPKF personnel. A local magistrate in the north reportedly found the IPKF had been responsible for seven cases of rape in December.”

– *Amnesty International Annual Report, 1988 for period January to December 1987*

### ***1988/ 1990 – Indian Army Atrocities against Tamils***

“Thousands of people were detained without charge or trial, and dozens ‘disappeared’ following arrest by the Sri Lankan security forces and by the IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force) deployed in the Northeast. The fate of hundred who had disappeared in previous years remained inadequately investigated. There were many allegations of torture. Emergency Regulations were amended to permit the disposal of bodies by the police. There were widespread reports of extra judicial killings by Sri Lankan security forces, who were among those granted immunity from persecution retroactively for offences committed ‘in good faith’.”

– *Amnesty International Annual Report, 1989 for period January to December 1988*

“In the Northeast Hundreds of people were arrested by the IPKF and screened for links with the LTTE. Members of the EPRLF and allied Splinter Tamil groups aided the IPKF in identifying suspects. Relatives of LTTE suspects were also detained. The Indian authorities did not disclose whether these detainees were held under Sri Lankan or Indian legislation. There were no reports that the detainees had been charged or tried. In August the Indian authorities reportedly said that 5,489 prisoners were in IPKF custody. Members of the EPRLF and other Tamil groups regularly arrested and detained LTTE suspects... Both the IPKF and groups allied with them reportedly tortured prisoners. Indian troops regularly beat prisoners and subjected them to electric shocks. Dozens of prisoners were reportedly killed in custody. There were dozens of cases in which arrests by the IPKF or EPRLF were witnessed and after the authorities said the detainees were released, their bodies were found with gun shot wounds.

Several reprisal attacks by the IPKF after ambushes by the LTTE were reported. Upto 46 people were extrajudicially executed at Valvettiturai in August after the LTTE had ambushed and IPKF patrol there and killed six Indian soldiers. Among the reported victims was a one year old child.

Many extrajudicial killings in the Northeast were reportedly committed by the EPRLF and their allies, acting with the backing or acquiescence of the IPKF. The EPRLF was allegedly responsible for scores of extra judicial executions.

At least two of six Tamil asylum seekers who were forcibly returned to Sri Lanka from the United Kingdom in February 1988 had been tortured after their return. One of the victims was reportedly tortured by the IPKF in Jaffna, and the other by police in Jaffna.”

– *Amnesty International Annual Report, 1990 for period January to December 1989*

### ***War Criminal President Jayawardene Retires***

The Northeastern Provincial administration was held in November 1988. It was a fraudulent exercise organized and supervised by the Indian Forces in which the EPRLF gained the majority of seats and Varatharaja Perumal, a central committee member, was elected as Chief Minister.

As soon as the Tamil provincial administration was formed it ran into serious difficulties as President Jayawardene opposed the functioning of the administrative headquarters in the city of Trincomalee. Having refused to facilitate an office to the Northeastern Provincial Council, Jayawardene adopted dilatory tactics in devolving even the limited powers to the Council.

With a paralyzed Provincial administration, the long and arduous mediatory effort of the Indian government reached a dead end. The EPRLF was thrown into the political wilderness. The crafty Jayawardene had led Rajiv Gandhi astray. The Sri Lanka leader succeeded in his treacherous diplomacy of turning the Indian army against the Tamil freedom movement. Having outwitted the Indians and hoodwinked the Tamils, President Jayawardene retired at the end of 1988, paving the way for Ranasinghe Premadasa to assume power.

### ***1989 - Premadasa and the IPKF Withdrawal***

Two insurgencies, one of the LTTE in the Northeast and the other by the Marxist, Sinhala Nationalist JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) in the South, at the time saw Premadasa assume the Presidency. Although unconnected to each other, they both had at least two common goals. One was their virulent opposition to the presence of the IPKF on Sri Lankan soil. The other, the strong sentiment to the J.R. Jayawardene UNP which from the viewpoint of the LTTE had brokered the Indian army into the North, assisted the EPRLF to form the administration in the North East Provincial Council (NEPC) and had initiated the 1983 pogrom against the Tamils throughout the country. From the JVP viewpoint, their group was proscribed in 1983 by the Jayawardene government.

On April 12th 1989 to coincide the Sinhala and Tamil New Year Premadasa announced an unilateral temporary cease-fire by the Lankan Security Forces throughout the country. The IPKF with persuasion from the President also announced that its forces would observe the cease-fire in areas under their control. The LTTE responded with an open letter to the President in which they maintained that there would be no cease-fire on their side until the invading Indian army withdraws".

Premadasa's peremptory demand that India withdraw the IPKF completely in 3 months, which he made at a temple function on the outskirts of Colombo in April, 1989, was seen as a positive step by the LTTE. Subsequently his 'directions ' to the Indian High Commissioner, Lakhen Mehotra and his letters to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to expedite the process of withdrawal/deinduction of the IPKF from Sri Lanka were similarly very much appreciated by them. At the end of July 1989, the IPKF finally withdrew from Sri Lanka.

### ***1991 – Rajiv Gandhi Assassination***

One year after the withdrawal of the IPKF, on May 1991, a woman believed to be in the LTTE Dhanu, blew herself up killing Rajiv Gandhi and 14 others. She was previously gang-raped by Sikh soldiers of Rajiv Gandhi's IPKF (India Peace Keeping Force) during their occupation of the Tamil homeland of the Northeast.

Since the Assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, India had turned its back on the Tamils of Northeastern Sri Lanka. In Tamil Nadu the newly elected chief minister of the AIADMK, Jayalalitha, led a demonizing campaign against the LTTE. Throughout the districts of Tamil Nadu, hundreds of roundups, arrests, and deportations were conducted against Tamil refugees residing in these places.

India was angered by the death of one man. However, the massacres and rapes of Tamils in the Northeast of Sri Lanka by the IPKF has been swept under a rug. When only a handful of Indian soldiers were courtmartialed. Hundreds of others got off the hook with their war crimes. Rajiv Gandhi was responsible for these heinous crimes against the Tamils.

### ***1991/ 1992 - Paramilitary Atrocities***

During the 1990s, the Para-military (Splinter Tamil groups) were to be used by the Sri Lankan government against the LTTE and its supporters. Some of the paramilitary groups had also served as scouts for both the Indian army and the Sri Lankan army against the Tamil people during the late 1980s. They were also used in the Sri Lankan Army torture camps to extract information from LTTE supporters or sympathizers.

“(During 1991) Hundreds of people were extra judicially executed and several hundred disappeared. Torture of detainees was common. In the east of the country suspected LTTE members were seized, abducted and killed by men in plain clothes who were believed to be connected with the security forces.

Victims bodies were left in public places often in a mutilated state. In April (1991) a number of headless bodies were found in Batticaloa. In Trincomale town dozens of abductions were carried out by unidentified men believed to be associated with the army.

Muslim Home Guards and armed members of Splinter Tamil Groups opposed to the LTTE who operated alongside government forces were also held responsible for disappearances and other violations. The E.P.D.P. (Eelam Peoples Democratic Party), headed now by Douglas Devananda has played a great role in this.

Detainees in the northeast were systematically tortured. Victims were beaten, stabbed, burned and scalded, partially buried or had nails driven through the soles of their feet. Dozens of people reportedly died as a result, reportedly in the east.

- *Amnesty International Annual Report 1992 for the period January to December 1991*

#### ***1992 – Sri Lanka Condemned at UN Commission on Human Rights***

“Arbitrary arrests, detention and disappearances continue to occur in the island of Sri Lanka. The disappearances take place under the protection of Emergency Regulations and the Prevention of Terrorism Act. An arrested person can be kept in detention without trial indefinitely. In the Tamil homeland over 3000 Tamils have disappeared in the government controlled areas, apart from arbitrary killings of over 10,000 people since June 1990. After the government forces took control of a small island off the Jaffna peninsula 210 Tamils have disappeared and 365 persons have been massacred. The bodies of some of these persons were dumped into wells and covered with manure and compost. Several women were carried away to the army camp and raped. Death by torture in prisons is common in Sri Lanka.”

- *Statement of the Non Governmental Organisation, Liberation at 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights at Geneva, January 1992*

“The Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances (has concluded) that over 1,000 disappearances were reportedly committed in 1991 by government or government supported forces, 40 of which were in the South. While a number of criminal cases were pending against members of the security forces, there was no evidence of any convictions for grave human rights violations committed in the course of counter insurgency operations. It is clear that these violations are only the tip of the iceberg and that various domestic procedures by which Sri Lankans may seek redress are virtually useless.”

- *Oral Statement by Article 19, the International Center Against Censorship at 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights at Geneva, February 1992*

“In the North, in predominantly Tamil areas, civilians have been bombed and shelled. In April 1991, air raids, long range artillery shelling and helicopter strafings were launched against Karainagar, Kayts and Vavuniya, forcing 80,000 civilians to flee to Jaffna. In October, islands of Jaffna were carpet bombed and shelled by Chinese built fighter bombers. ICVA recommends that the Commission prevail on Sri Lanka to act in accordance with the humanitarian law of armed conflict and to desist from arbitrary killings and aerial bombardment of civilians.”

- *Statement of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) at 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights at Geneva, February 1992*

“Team members of the Canadian Human Rights Mission to Sri Lanka were alarmed by the extent of human rights violations and the enormous human cost of the conflict. Equally distressing was the fact that the severity of the situation is so little known or addressed by the international community...”

Human rights violations continue to occur in Sri Lanka at an alarming rate. Most distressing was the failure of the government to acknowledge the level of human rights abuses occurring in the country. It was apparent to team members that many Tamils are genuinely grateful for the protection provided to them by the LTTE.

Contributing problems in Sri Lanka is a climate of repression, Electronic media is state controlled. The print media is largely used to a significant extent to promote the government point of view or give voice to Buddhist chauvinistic opinions. There seemed to be little public participation in the political process.”

- *Report of the Canadian Human Rights Mission, 5 February 1992*

### ***1994 – Chandrika – Piraba Talks***

On November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1994, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga came to power as president. She was the daughter of Srimavo Bandaranaike who was the second President of Sri Lanka. Kumaratunga's party, the PA (Peoples Alliance), broke 17 years of UNP rule in the island. The LTTE entered into negotiations with the new Sri Lankan government in order to find a peaceful solution to the conflict on the island.

For several months, the LTTE persisted in attempting to elicit a solution to the conflict from the Sri Lankan government - a solution that would end the decades of injustice and discrimination against the Tamil people and ensure a lasting and just peace.

The Sri Lankan government refused to create the conditions of peace and normalcy in the war-torn Tamil areas conducive to negotiations. From the outset of the talks, the LTTE requested that the Sri Lankan government to relax its intense economic and military pressure on the Tamil populace (which had been in place for several years).

To this end, the LTTE requested that the draconian economic embargo (including food and medicine) on the Tamil areas should be lifted, the ban on fishing (which had made a large number of Tamil fishing families destitute) to be lifted and the Sri Lanka Army base at Pooneryn should be removed. This base was obstructing free movement of the Tamil populace on the peninsula to and from the rest of the island.

The LTTE stressed that these day-to-day problems of the Tamil people should be resolved before negotiations on the fundamental solution to the conflict could begin. They also expressed its goodwill by releasing Sri Lanka prisoners of war.

Despite agreeing to this position at the outset of the talks, the Sri Lanka government dragged its feet and these requests were never implemented, and the Tamil people's hardships continued. Furthermore, shortly after negotiations began, the government reversed its initial position and demanded that a fundamental solution to the conflict should be established before the Tamil people's day-to-day problems were resolved.

The Sri Lanka government never attached any importance to the peace talks with the LTTE. Whilst the LTTE leadership sent senior persons (with sufficient authority to enter into negotiations) to the talks, the Sri Lankan government delegated junior bureaucrats (who lacked the authority to negotiate on the government's behalf). High ranking Sri Lankan political leaders did not participate in the talks.

The Sri Lankan government also failed to take seriously the LTTE's position that they were prepared to consider a political framework that recognises the Tamil homeland with full form of autonomy to the Tamils. The LTTE's concerns on these developments were communicated to the Sri Lankan government in several letters written by the LTTE leader, Mr. Pirapaharan to the Sri Lankan President. Some of the letters were also released to the press. The LTTE also issued several press releases during the talks, highlighting its concerns.

### ***Breakdown of Temporary Cease Fire***

The Sri Lankan government was reluctant to enter a permanent cease-fire with international supervision. Instead, under the guise of a fragile cessation of hostilities, the government embarked on a significant military expansion program. Furthermore, Sri Lankan security forces broke the temporary cease-fire several times, such as by carrying out search operations and attacks on the LTTE, during which LTTE members and Tamil civilians were killed and considerable hardships inflicted on the Tamil people.

The LTTE became convinced that the government was not sincerely interested in resolving the ethnic conflict by negotiating. They also were convinced that the government was not prepared to offer any substantial political framework that could satisfy the political aspirations of the Tamil people. Under these circumstances, when the talks prolonged meaninglessly, the LTTE issued deadlines - which the government did not take seriously.

Finally, reluctantly, the LTTE informed the Sri Lankan government in a letter (which was also released to the press) that if the government did not resolve the day-to-day problems and enter into meaningful negotiations, the LTTE would be forced to resume its military operations on 28 March 1995.

Even though there was no practical progress in resolving the day-to-day problems of the Tamil people, due to further promises by the Sri Lankan government, the LTTE extended its deadline to 19 April, in another letter sent on 28 March. This letter was also issued to the press, nearly three weeks ahead of the resumption of military operations (though the cease-fire rules only required 72 hours notification). The Sri Lankan government ignored the LTTE's letter and there was no change in the situation and on April 19, 1995, the LTTE resumed its armed struggle.

Having created the conditions for the breakdown of the talks, the government blamed the LTTE. It carried out a false propaganda campaign internationally that the LTTE was against the peace process. In truth, it was the Sri Lankan government which was opposed to a just and peaceful solution to the conflict.

### *Chandrika's "War for Peace"*

When Chandrika Kumaratinga became President, she had convinced the international community that peace was her main mission. It was her image of peace that shielded her when the peace talks collapsed. When the talks collapsed and war had commenced, Kumaratunga had released a set of proposals containing a basic framework in the Northeast. These included the departments of finance, law and order, land, education etc and division of powers on the basis of regional and central lists.

The state propaganda machinery praised the devolution package as radical and revolutionary, offering 'more than the Tamils ever dreamt'. However, the Tamils wondered why this new package of proposals containing progressive elements was suddenly released after the outbreak of war, instead of being announced during the Peace Talks.

The international community was impressed and gave its blessings to the proposals, believing that the Kumaratunga Government had found the right solution to the most intractable ethnic conflict in South Asia.

Having released the set of proposals the Government pushed a theory that a war was necessary to crush the 'enemies of peace' so as to realise a permanent peace with the implementation of the political package. Chandrika declared that she had no choice but to unleash an all out war to wipe out the Tamil Tigers. Thus, the government titled this grand war strategy called "War for Peace".

The Sinhala army marched into Jaffna and occupied the cultural capital of the Tamil nation. For more than five years Chandrika's "War for Peace" continued unabated, consuming her first term in office with the mass slaughter of Tamil civilians, massive destruction of Tamil property and the displacement of the Tamil population.

### *1995 - St. Peters Church Massacre*

On 9 July, 1995 the Sri Lankan armed forces launched a large-scale military offensive against the positions of the LTTE north of the city of Jaffna. Having dropped leaflets asking the people to move to places of worship the Sri Lanka air force there after attacked the places of worship where Tamil civilians had sought refuge.

On the day after the attack, 56 bodies were retrieved from the debris, many of whom were women and children. The death toll in this incident later increased to 120. 13 babies died in their mother's arms. Rescue workers reported torn limbs and pieces of human flesh strewn over the area.

"According to eye-witness accounts, this church and several adjacent buildings were hit by further air force strikes at 4.30 p.m the same day. During the attack 65 people were killed and 150 wounded, including women and children. That evening and into the night Sri Lanka Red Cross staff evacuated most of the wounded by ambulance to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

present the next morning at the scene of the attack noted the widespread damage and measured the extent of the tragedy: many of the bodies had not yet been removed from the rubble.

Deeply concerned by the series of the violent acts that have claimed innocent civilians, the ICRC called on the parties involved to respect civilian lives, property and places of refuge. It also urges them to respect the protected zone around the Jaffna Teaching Hospital and to refrain from attacking any other medical facilities.”

- *International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva (Switzerland) issued the following Communication to the Press on 11th July 1995.*

### ***1995 – Mass Tamil Exodus***

The night of Monday October 30, 1995 was one of the most darkest nights in the entire history of the age-old city of Jaffna. Never has history witnessed such an exodus of fear and panic stricken people screaming and squeezing themselves out of the narrow roads and lanes of Jaffna. The nearly half a million population in and around the town was literally on the roads in pouring rain inching its way out of the densely populated town into the sparsely populated and ill-equipped suburban villages of Chavakachcheri, Kodikaman and Palai. It was for everyone a flight for survival.

#### **Reuters reported on 2 December 1995:**

**"Estimates of how many Tamils have fled the besieged northern Jaffna peninsula vary from the government's 180,000 to as many as 500,000, some without shelter, but most finding accommodation in camps, old thatched huts or with friends or relations.**

"The civilians are fleeing Jaffna where the armed forces are expected to capture Jaffna town, capital of the rebels' would-be homeland, any day. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, fighting for the homeland in the north and east of tropical Sri Lanka, have ferried civilians in boats across Jaffna lagoon to camps on the mainland, more and more filtering through to the mainland from this frontline town. .. Families arriving in Vavuniya on Thursday said shelling had decreased in recent days in Jaffna and dry weather meant an easier time for the estimated 110,000 people gathered in Kilinochchi, eight km (five miles) south of the Jaffna lagoon.

“People are still coming into Kilinochchi because they are frightened the (armed forces') operation might start up anywhere after Riviresa," one man said as he was channeled into the Thandikulam army camp for classification. “Operation Riviresa was launched on October 17 in the north of the Jaffna peninsula and has brought the army into the heart of Jaffna town itself. “People are running here and there to find relations at Kilinochchi," another refugee said. “People are coming back up from Colombo to find their loved ones. A number are at the mainland ferry hoping they may be on the next boat to cross the lagoon.”

- *Reuters: 2 Dec, 1995*

### ***1996 - Nagerkivil School Bombing***

On 22 September, 1996 Nagerkoil Central School in the Jaffna peninsula was bombed. The intensified aerial bombing and shelling by Sri Lankan government forces came about within hours of the government's imposition of Press Censorship midnight September 21.

The bombing of the school had happened during the school's lunch break when several of the school children were gathered under a shade tree in the school compound. 25 school going children were among 40 Tamil civilians killed on the spot. Twelve were six and seven year olds. Nearly 200 others were injured, most of them students in the same school. Elsewhere in the area, 15 other civilians were also killed in the course of the same bombing raids. The scene of the attack was visited by the International Red Cross. Pieces of human flesh were strewn around the area including the tree branches, making identification impossible. The total death toll later increased to 71.

The International Educational Development (an NGO on the United Nations Economic and Social Council Roster) was grieved and shocked by the attack by the Sri Lanka air force on the Nagerkoil Central School in the Jaffna peninsula.

"The actions of the Sri Lanka armed forces, coupled with the economic blockade imposed on the Tamil homeland, are a clear contravention of the Geneva Convention relating to non international armed conflicts. **The impunity with which President Chandrika Kumaratunga's government continues its genocidal onslaught on the Tamil people is an affront to the sensibilities of the international community.** We urge non governmental organisations and governments with a deep commitment to human rights to publicly condemn the terrorism of the Sri Lanka government and help to save the Tamil people from further wanton destruction at the hands of a Sinhala dominated Sri Lankan state."

- *(Press Release by International Educational Development, a Non Governmental Organisation on the United Nations Economic and Social Council Roster - 24 September 1995)*

### ***1996 - 600 disappearances reported in Jaffna***

An Amnesty International delegation which visited Sri Lanka recently has concluded that of the 600-odd people who have "disappeared" in the last 18 months after their arrest by the security forces, nearly all have died as a result of torture or been deliberately killed in detention.

According to the human rights organization, there is no evidence to suggest that sanction for the "disappearances" came from the political leadership, but the Sri Lankan government reacted too slowly to well-documented reports of a rise in "disappearances" in the Jaffna peninsula during mid-1996. As a result, by the time the authorities acknowledged the reality of what was happening there, around 600 people had "disappeared", and hundreds more were victims of torture at the hands of the security forces.

"Although we welcome the government's decision to make public reports into thousands of cases of "disappearance" from 1988-1994, and several other measures taken since coming to power to strengthen human rights protection, it is vitally important that the government addresses the underlying structures and practices in the security forces," Amnesty International said.

According to the organization, the events of 1996 indicate the need for an active approach to tackling the root causes of human rights violations in Sri Lanka -- the lingering sense of impunity among perpetrators and the legislation allowing for people to be detained incommunicado for long periods of time.

"In the past, Sri Lanka became a country notorious for "disappearances" -- a country racked by the terrible anguish suffered by relatives who never knew the fate of their loved ones," Amnesty International said. "The government must seize the initiative now to ensure that nobody has to go through this harrowing ordeal again."

The Sri Lankan government has taken some steps to clarify the fate of the "disappeared", establishing a Board of Investigation (BOI) to investigate around 760 complaints. The BOI to date has traced 180 of the "disappeared".

**"Disappearances" usually took place in reprisal for attacks on the military by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) armed opposition group -- for example the killing of more than 1,300 soldiers during an attack on Mullaitivu army camp in July 1996.**

According to local people interviewed by Amnesty International, the bodies of some of the "disappeared" are dumped in disused wells and lavatories in or around army camps. One 21-year-old man told how he was arrested on the way to visit his grandmother in July 1996. He was beaten with a rifle, partially suffocated with a plastic bag, throttled with a cloth and then stabbed with a bayonet in his neck and head. Semi-conscious he felt someone slice two of his fingers off to steal his rings. When he regained consciousness he found he had been dumped in a latrine.

Although the rate has dropped, Amnesty International continues to receive reports of "disappearances" in Jaffna, with around 41 cases in the first seven months of 1997, four of whom have been traced by the BOI. The organization believes that the lack of monitoring of the welfare of detainees has contributed to the high number of "disappearances", and is calling for presidential directives aimed at safeguarding the welfare of detainees -- such as "arrest receipts" to be issued whenever someone is taken into custody -- to be implemented fully.

- *Amnesty International Report: 27 November, 1997*

### ***Kumarapuram Massacres: 24 civilians killed***

On Sunday 11 February 1996, Sri Lankan armed forces arrived in army trucks at the Tamil village of Kumarapuram in the Kiliveddi area of the Trincomalee district. Soldiers broke open the windows of houses and fired at those inside. The initial death toll of Tamils who were murdered at Kumarapuram on that fateful day was 24.

“On Sunday 11 February 1996, Sri Lankan armed forces arrived in army trucks at the Tamil village of Kumarapuram in the Kiliveddi area of the Trincomalee district. Soldiers broke open the windows of houses and fired at those inside. The initial death toll of Tamils who were murdered at Kumarapuram on that fateful day was 24.” – *Amnesty International Urgent Action appeal, 13 February 1996*

### ***Rape as a Weapon of Warfare***

Observers say that the Sri Lankan government's program of winning the "hearts and minds" of the Tamil people in the occupied Northern peninsula is in serious trouble as the Sri Lankan military continues to use rape as a weapon of terror. Hundreds of Tamil women have been raped by the members of the Sri Lankan military behind an iron curtain of strict ban on reporters and independent observers. Some of these crimes, especially those in which the victims had friends and relatives in foreign countries have come to light.

Rajani Velauthapillai, 22, was raped and murdered by the Sri Lankan military manning a checkpoint at Kondavil, a village near the Jaffna city. Rajani's fiance lives in Canada and she was to join him in a few weeks. As per traditions, she was visiting family elders to bid farewell and to obtain their blessings before leaving for Canada. On Sep 30, 1996 at about 3:30 PM, Rajani was arrested by the SL soldiers manning the Kondavil checkpoint for no apparent reasons. Several people had witnessed her arrest. Rajani was then dragged into a nearby house inhabited by two elderly people. The soldiers chased the two occupants out of the house. They then gang-raped Rajani and murdered her. Her bruised naked body was found later in the toilet of the empty house.

Raping of young women by the Sri Lankan military is not confined to the Northern province. In the Eastern town of Batticaloa, another gruesome rape and murder of a Tamil mother, Murugesapillai Koneswary, got the attention of Amnesty International, which sent an Urgent Action Appeal to President Kumaratunga, calling for an independent investigation into the rape and murder.

According to villagers, on May 17, 1997 around 11 p.m., a group of Sri Lankan policemen entered her home, gang raped her and exploded a hand grenade near her genital to destroy any evidence. Their gruesome tactic worked. Medical Officer L. D. D. C. Alwis, who conducted the autopsy, concluded that the offenders could not be determined due to the hand grenade blast wounds. The notorious Central Camp police also ensured that no witnesses would come forward to testify. Neighbors fear for life of Koneswari's little girl who was also an eye witness to the barbaric crime.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga ordered an inquiry following protests by the Eastern district member of parliament, Mr. Joseph Pararasasingam. Human rights activists say they don't even know who is conducting the investigation. The recently established Human Rights Task Force (HRTF) was asked to investigate the murder. However the task force said that the incident does not fall within its jurisdiction and so no support or assistance could be lent.

The rapes and subsequent cover-ups outrage human rights organization. In a letter to President Kumaratunga, Mothers' Front of Jaffna wrote, "reprisals by the security forces against civilians and their property have now become a common feature. Tamil women in the north and east are no longer able to live with self-respect and dignity. Normal life in these parts of the country is severely hampered, as law-abiding citizens are prevented from going about their day-to-day life."

The Centre for Women's Research in Sri Lanka (CENWOR) also protested the rape. It asked the Sri Lankan president "how can national and international credibility be acquired when this type of grave crime is committed by members of the armed forces against defenseless women." The group organized a protest march in Colombo.

Analysts blame the military solution undertaken by the present Sri Lankan government for the grave human rights violations. The fact that the government tolerates the brutal acts of the army in order to defeat the rebels in the battlefield worries human rights activists. They say that numerous cases of disappearances and rapes of Tamil civilians by the army are unreported because of media censorship in the north and east of the island. Some of the armed forces who were charged with committing atrocities have had their cases dropped in return for a promise to serve in the Vanni battlefield.

The Tamils are fighting for a homeland in the north and east of the island nation, claiming that they are discriminated against by the majority Sinhalese, who control the government and military. More than 78,000 people, mostly Tamil civilians have been killed in the conflict. - *Chennai, Nov 23, 1997 South Asian Media Services - SAMS*

### ***Gang-rape by Sri Lankan Army***

"The Kumarasamy gang-rape murder has shocked the conscience of people who see this as a crime committed against unarmed defenseless civilians. The government's credibility has been seriously eroded and this has led to a loss of faith and the confidence that people had reposed in this government which claimed itself to be committed towards safeguarding the rights of all people", it added.

She was stopped at the check point and three soldiers raped her until she fell unconscious. When she revived according to the confessions, police officers and six soldiers further raped her. In mute testament was the torn blood stained uniform of the girl from Chundikuli High school. When Krishanthi was late in returning home, her mother, brother, and a neighbor went to look for her. The mother was 59 years old and a Vice-Principal of a Maha Vidyalaya in Kaithady. Her journey was not only futile but she, her son and neighbor were strangled, cut into pieces and buried in a little hut within the gates of the army camp according to lawyer Poopalan. After queries in Parliament and investigations, the bodies were brought in one big box at midnight. The relatives were asked to stay outside the GPO's office in Colombo while Mr. Poopalan and Tamil Congress leader Kumar Ponnambalam went in. Ponnambalam and Poopalan wanted to know why the four bodies were not kept in four coffins. In the midst of this, an ultimatum was given to the family who did not see the bodies, that within two hours the bodies had to be cremated otherwise they would be buried at state expense with no rites at all.

Women for Peace has expressed horror and shock the hideous sexual violence of gang rape and gruesome murder of eighteen year old Krishanthi Kumarasamy at the hands of the armed forces in Kaithady, Jaffna. In a statement, the movement said: "In this collective brutal violence, her mother, a widow and vice principal of Kaithandy Muthukumaraswamy Maha Vidyalaya, brother and neighbor were found buried under crudely dug graves. The highly decomposed bodies were exhumed and flown to Colombo for burial at state expense and the sole survivor, Prashanthi Kumarasamy, (21) was denied the right to mourn over the dead and perform the last rites.

"What is frightening is that the atrocious crimes were not committed in operational areas of heightened military offensives. Kaithady has been 'cleared' by the army and civilian administration and controlled by the military. However people experience terrible fear, insecurity and terror in this battle scarred zone, daily. The stubborn refusal and intransigence of the government in not allowing the relatives of the family to make the funeral arrangements on their own free will, and the indignation and insensitivity displayed so far in instituting an inquiry to punish the perpetrators of these crimes indicate the psychological and physical impasse this bitterest and bloodiest war has reached," the movement said.

"The Kumarasamy massacre has shocked the conscience of people who see this as a crime committed against unarmed defenseless civilians. The government's credibility has been seriously eroded and this has led to a loss of faith and the confidence that people had reposed in this government which claimed itself to be committed towards safeguarding the rights of all people", it added.

Relatives of Krishanti Kumaraswamy living in Thenmaradchy (in Jaffna peninsula) have faced death-threats and intimidation from Sri Lanka's armed forces occupying Jaffna. Every night Sinhalese troops gather around the residences of Krishanti's relatives and fire repeated gunshots to terrorise them. The army's high command was aware of this. It has not taken any remedial action.

### ***Chennmani Mass Graves***

Following the gang-rape of Krishanthi Kumaraswamy, which brought widespread local and international condemnation which eventually led to government taking steps to search for the missing people. Finally their bodies were found in a shallow graves several weeks later. Krishanthi's body had been dismembered. On the orders of the Government, the bodies were flown to Colombo Krishanthi's family was told to dispose of the bodies within two hours.

The Sri Lankan government ordered the arrest of the suspected soldiers and police personnel. However the trial took nearly two years leading to accusations that the government has been dragging its feet. On July 3rd 1998, the Colombo High Court sentenced five Sri Lanka army soldiers and a policemen charged with abduction, rape and murder in the Krishanthi Kumaraswamy case to death.

Ironically, an admission by one of the soldiers accused in the Krishanthi case has highlighted the magnitude of the problem. On being asked why he should not get the death sentence, the first accused in this case, Corporal R.D. Somaratna Rajapakse, reportedly denied murder and said in court "We only buried bodies. We can show you where 300 to 400 bodies have been buried". He also reportedly said, "almost every evening, dead bodies were brought there and the soldiers were asked to bury them".

The whole world was alarmed with Corporal Rajapakse's statement in Court and the Government kept silent about it. Expectations of finding the bodies of the 'disappeared' have risen in the minds of the public since July 3rd 1998.

After Sudan, Sri Lanka ranked second highest in the world in its total number of recorded 'disappearances', as the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances noted in its 1995 report.

### ***1997 – 60,000 Refugees without adequate food and medicine***

"Over 60,000 refugees in five camps around the Madhu Church in Mannar District are suffering without adequate food and medicine. NGOs warn that the situation may reach a crisis point as more and more refugees pour into the area fleeing the fighting in the Vanni.

Visitors say it is not uncommon to find children with signs of malnutrition. The camps, assisted by international refugee agency UNHCR, receive only half their food requirements from the government. The dry rations supplied contain only rice, flour, sugar and lentils and other needs must be purchased from the black market which refugees cannot afford without income.

Colombo newspaper Sunday Times says that at least six deaths are reported every month at Madhu hospital as a result of malnutrition and lack of medicines. Malaria, diarrhoea and typhoid in the camps cannot be controlled because of insanitary conditions and lack of water. Lack of blood test facilities in hospitals is making diagnosis difficult and the shortage of medical staff has added to the problems."

- *British Refugee Council Publication, Sri Lanka Monitor, October 1997*)

### ***1999 – Market bombed by Sri Lankan Air Force***

On September 15 1999 - More than twenty two civilians, including school children and women were killed and more than forty seriously wounded when two Kfir jets of the Sri Lanka Air Force bombed a crowded public place in Puthukkudiyiruppu in Mullaitivu. The Puthukkudiyiruppu market and a many houses and buildings nearby were destroyed in the Sri Lanka Air Force bombing.

A spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said that sixteen civilians were killed on the spot and six who were seriously wounded died in the hospital when Sri Lanka Air Force jets bombed a busy market place in Puthukkudiyiruppu. "It is with deep regret and concern that we confirm the death of 21 civilians consequent to the air strike in Puthukkudiyiruppu. We deplore the fact that the air strike was in a civilian area." The sub-delegation of the ICRC in Puthukkudiyiruppu is less than two kilometres from the market place which was bombed.

Amnesty International said that the explanation proffered by the Sri Lanka Air Force for the bombing of the Puthukkudiyiruppu market "does not absolve it from its responsibility under international humanitarian law to take all possible precautions to avoid harming civilians" said Amnesty, in a statement expressing concern over the bombing, said a Sri Lankan military spokesperson had denied the raid, which killed at least 21 refugees in a crowded market place, had been a deliberate attack on civilians.

Amnesty said that the reported high number of civilian casualties and the significant distance between the intended objective of the air strike and the actual place where the civilians were killed, raise serious doubts about the quality of the intelligence used before the bombing raid. It also raises questions as to whether the alleged military value of this attack was proportionate to the risk it posed to civilians, said Amnesty. Amnesty International has written to President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga expressing concern as to whether this may have been an unlawful attack.

#### ***1999 - Madhu Church Massacre***

November 20th 1999 - Thirty seven civilians were killed and sixty four wounded when shells fired by the Sri Lankan Army hit Madhu church. The civilians were killed when shells hit the revered Catholic shrine at Madhu. Thirty three refugees who had sought shelter in the precincts of the Church were killed on the spot by shells. Four died on the way to Vavuniya hospital.

Church sources quoted refugees as saying Sri Lanka Army troops had turned a tank gun and fired three shells into the church. More than 3000 refugees had sought safety in the precincts of the Madhu shrine when the Army advance had begun. The bodies of 37 civilians who were killed at the Madhu Church were later brought to the Mannar hospital.

#### ***2000 – Turn of the Millenium***

Since the 1995 peace talks collapsed, the war has been bloody and savage. The LTTE combat formations that withdrew to the Northern mainland of Vanni, re-organised on a huge scale and fiercely resisted the offensive operations of the Sri Lankan forces. The armed forces suffered humiliating debacles and thousands of Government troops perished in the battlefields of Vanni.

Having re-conquered all the lost territories in the Vanni mainland, the Tamil Tigers overran the 'impenetrable' military complex at Elephant Pass in the year 2000, forcing the state's army on the defensive. As a consequence of the military victories for the LTTE, President Kumaratunga's 'War for Peace' strategy crumbled.

The massacres of Tamils, at St. Peter and St. Paul's Church, Navaly July 1995; at Nagerkovil school in September 1995; at Kumarapuram in 1996, at Nachchikuda in 1997, Suthanthirapuram in 1998, Puththikuddiyuruppu in 1999, Madhu church 1999 and many more, have never been investigated or even condemned by the Sri Lankan government.

Calls for independent inquiries have been ignored. The Wellikada Prison killings of 1983, the Kalutara prison killings of 1997 and now of 1999, and other incidents, have never been independently investigated, despite appeals from Amnesty International.

Contrary to Chandrika's expectations, the war did not bring peace. Instead, it brought death, destruction, and displacement on an unprecedented scale and a huge economic disaster to the entire island.

#### ***2000 – Elephant Pass Debacle***

After the fall of Elephant Pass, over one thousand Sri Lankan troops were killed and the remaining forces fled the scene. This debacle shocked the Sri Lankan Defense establishment, and had a damaging effect on the combat capability of the Sri Lankan ground forces.

The LTTE organisation was on a stronger military foundation. Furthermore, apart from the Jaffna peninsula and Mannar island, it had established administrative control over the entire northern region and large stretches of territory in the eastern province. As the *de facto* administrators of vast areas of the northern Tamil homeland and maintaining a balance of military power, the President had her own agenda.

President Kumaratunga was not prepared to abandon her 'war for peace' strategy, which aimed at militarily crippling the Tamil Tigers before political negotiations. Regardless of the disastrous debacles in the battlefield, President Kumaratunga and her military commanders were planning a massive counter-offensive thrust to regain Elephant Pass.

The LTTE leadership extended a unilaterally observed cease-fire for four months, in spite of extreme provocations, hoping that the Kumaratunga administration might reciprocate favorably. The Sri Lankan government was adopting a hardline position and opposed to seeking peace, the Tigers finally decided to call off their unilateral ceasefire at midnight, 24 April 2001.

After the termination of the LTTE's four-month ceasefire, the Sri Lankan armed forces unleashed a major offensive (code named 'Fire and Flame') on the Tamil Tigers' defense positions to take back Elephant Pass.

This offensive was halted after the government soldiers had rushed into a minefield amid heavy artillery fire from the LTTE. The battle of 'Fire and Flame' ended with over six hundred Sri Lankan troops dead, and two thousand injured losing their limbs during the fighting. The LTTE lost 141 male and female fighters.

"There were some 15,000 troops inside the complex, being attacked by a third that number of Tigers, but they were unable to hold on and the order came to withdraw." - *BBC*

### ***2001 - Katunayake Airbase Attack***

On 24 July, 2001, a 14-member commando unit of the LTTE launched an assault on Sri Lanka's Air Force base at Katunayake, 20 miles north of the capital. This was the island's largest airbase complex, and the adjoining Bandaranaike International Airport, the only civilian airport linked to the outside world.

Two Kfir jet fighters, two MI 17 helicopter gunships, one MI-24 Helicopter gun ship and three advanced training craft were destroyed in the predawn attack on the Katunayake air base, about 35 km. north of Colombo, by members of the Liberation Tigers, according to official military sources in Colombo. Altogether 11 aircraft, both civilian and military, were destroyed and three civilian aircraft were seriously damaged in the raid.

Stunned by the scale and extent of the destruction the Sri Lankan government rushed troops to Katunayake. The terminal and airfield became a battle ground from morning till mid-day. This attack on Katunayake Airbase and airport had a crippling affect on the Sri Lankan economy. In the six-hour battle that raged between the Tamil Tiger commandos and a crack unit of the army's special forces, all the LTTE fighters were killed. Six military personnel were killed and many were injured. However, no foreign tourists, passengers or civilians were killed or injured.

### ***2001 - Colombo Elections and Norwegian Facilitations***

President Kumaratunga's government was facing a political, economical, and military crisis. Her final and only alternative was for peace and a negotiated political settlement. She had then instructed her Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar to invite the Norwegian Ambassador, Mr. Jon Westborg, to discuss possible ways to re-open the peace process.

Mr. Westborg told the Foreign Minister that the LTTE leadership distrusted the Kumaratunga regime after the offensive operation 'Fire Flame'. The Norwegian Ambassador had also told Mr. Kadirgamar that the Tigers were disappointed with the government's failure to reciprocate positively to the unilateral ceasefire declared as a gesture of peace.

Because of the mounting politico-economic crisis, the Sri Lankan government indicated a willingness to engage the LTTE in peace talks, but the President was not prepared to meet the terms stipulated by the LTTE leadership as pre-requisites to create a congenial condition conducive for peace talks.

Sri Lanka also faced a parliamentary general election on 5 December 2001. The main opposition of Kumaratunga's Peoples Alliance (PA) government was the United National Party (UNP) headed by Ranil Wikremasinghe. The issue of peace and negotiated settlement to the Tamil issue were the central themes in the election campaigns in the Sinhala South.

Ranil Wikremasinghe sought a clear mandate from the Sinhala people for peace and negotiations with the LTTE. Realising that peace had become the main issue in the electorate of the South between the political forces who supported it and the extremists who opposed it, LTTE leader – Mr. Pirapaharan, in his annual Heroes' Day Speech on 27 November 2001, made an appeal to the Sinhala people to identify and reject the 'racist forces committed to militarism and war.'

### ***2002 – Colombo's New Government***

The UNP swept to victory in the parliamentary elections with a popular mandate for peace and negotiated settlement to the Tamil national question. Mr. Wikremasinghe was sworn in as Prime Minister. After assuming power, he met with Norwegian Ambassador, Mr. Westborg, and expressed the desire of his government to engage the LTTE in peace talks. He urged the Royal Norwegian Government to continue attempting to initiate a dialogue between his government and the Tamil Tigers.

As an expression of goodwill to the new government, the LTTE announced a declaration of a month long unilateral ceasefire, beginning on midnight of 24 December, 2001, and called upon Ranil Wikremasinghe's administration to respond positively. The new government reciprocated favorably to the LTTE's unilateral declaration of cessation of hostilities.

However, security forces and police were still instructed to continue to carry out operations in the military controlled Tamil areas. Mr. Pirapaharan sent a message to Mr. Wikremasinghe about the situation in government controlled Tamil areas. The government responded immediately and emphasized that the Prime Minister was earnest and sincere in his commitment to find a solution to the Tamil issue. The government also indicated its willingness to work out factors and rules for a mutually agreed ceasefire instead of two unilateral declarations of ceasefire.

### ***2002 – GOSL/ LTTE Ceasefire Agreement***

After accepting the critical importance of formulating a mutually agreed cessation of hostilities, the LTTE leadership informed the Norwegian government that the organization was prepared to discuss the modalities, parameters and ground rules of a structured ceasefire. The Norwegians also informed the LTTE that the government was sincerely committed to the removal of all injustice and inequalities faced by the Tamil population. The GOSL also pledged to lift the economic embargo from January 2002 to allow the free flow of essential items to Tamil areas as worked out in the Norwegian Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The Norwegian facilitators took up the responsibility of formulating the unilaterally declared cessation of hostilities into a comprehensive framework for a mutually agreed formal ceasefire. Both the GOSL and the LTTE were requested by the Norwegians to submit their proposals.

On February 22, 2002, the LTTE and the GOSL (Government of Sri Lanka) signed the ceasefire agreement. The international community welcomed the signing of the permanent ceasefire between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan

government. The United States, the United Kingdom, Japan and India congratulated the parties on the agreement and called for a negotiated settlement to the Tamil national conflict.

However, while the international community gave their blessings to the peace effort, the Sri Lanka President Kumaratunga, protested against the signing of the truce. She lashed out at the Prime Minister, condemning his endorsement of the ceasefire agreement as 'an undemocratic act' since he failed to get her 'prior approval'. She further argued that the Cease Fire agreement was a threat to the islands 'sovereignty and national security.'

### *Implementing the Ceasefire*

The Norwegian delegation met with the LTTE in Killinochi for a round of discussions in regards to the implementation of the peace talks. They had informed them that the Government of Sri Lanka had agreed to open the northern sector of the main A9 highway, linking the Jaffna peninsula with the Vanni mainland.

However, the Norwegian plan to hold the peace talks in Thailand during the latter part of June 2002 was delayed due to the unfavourable ground situation in the Tamil homeland. The Sri Lankan army continued to maintain its tight grip on the Tamil civilian population and refused to comply with the obligations of the truce agreement. The Navy was hostile and defiant. It refused to relax restrictions on fishing and adopted a confrontationalist posture with the Sea Tigers (LTTE Naval Wing).

As a pre-requisite for the commencement of the peace talks, the Tiger delegates insisted for the de-proscription of the organization. The procrastination on the part of the Wikremasinghe government to take necessary measures to de-proscribe the LTTE was also a crucial factor for the delay of the peace talks.

### *2002/ 2003 - Six Rounds of Peace Talks*

On September 16, 2002, the LTTE sent its delegation team to Sattahiip Naval Base, Thailand for the inauguration and first round of talks with the Sri Lankan government. The first session of talks in Thailand was the first time that the stage for dialogue progressed from a regional theater to an international forum. The main topics were the urgent existential problems faced by the Tamils, and the fundamental issues underlying the conflict were discussed.

Also, the Sri Lankan army had refused to comply with the obligations of the Ceasefire Agreement and continued to occupy public buildings (houses, schools, colleges, temples, and hotels) in towns and villages causing a huge humanitarian crisis of displacement. Defining the mode of occupation of specific areas as the so-called High Security Zones, the army was holding large areas of land in the northeast, denying the right of the Tamil people to return to their own homes and villages.

The second round of peace talks was held at the Rose Garden Resort, Thailand. The issues covered were the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission's (SLMM) to play a more active role in restoring peace and normalcy in the east.

Between December 2-5, 2002, the third round of talks took place in Oslo, Norway right after the Oslo Donor Conference. At this session of talks, the parties agreed to explore a federal solution founded on the principle of internal self-determination. Since this decision has been projected as a major political breakthrough, a 'paradigm shift', and has become known as the 'Oslo Declaration'. The interpretations of this claimed that the LTTE had abandoned the right to external-self-determination.

The fourth session of talks took place at the Rose Garden Hotel, Thailand. The issue on the High Security Zones (HSZ) were brought up again. Due to health reasons for one of the members of the LTTE delegation, the fifth round of talks took place in Berlin, Germany on February 7-8, 2003. During this session, the HSZ situation were discussed more in detail, and the subject on child soldiers. Rejecting the accusation that the LTTE had been recruiting 'child soldiers', LTTE political head S.P. Tamilselvan pointed out that the LTTE was maintaining thousands of war-affected children in a number of orphanages and child welfare centers. The conditions of war, economic deprivation and extreme poverty had driven the children into the fold of the LTTE, which was spending huge sums of money for their welfare and rehabilitation. Lastly, the LTTE agreed to work with the

UNICEF to formulate and implement a plan of action for the rehabilitation of the children affected by the armed conflict.

On March 10, 2003, the Sri Lankan Navy was following an LTTE merchant vessel in international waters, 220 nautical miles off Trincomalee. Hours later, the Sri Lankan naval gunboats had attacked the ship. Eleven Sea Tigers, including the captain of the ship, were killed as the vessel caught fire and sank.

The sixth and the last round of talks were held in Hakone, Japan on March 18-21, 2003. The sea incident which happened a week prior were talked about. The security situation on both sides were discussed along with human rights issues.

These rounds of talks, resolutions and joint decisions, on several major matters remained inscribed in documents, but were not practiced. After two decades of brutal war, the people of the Northeast were still waiting, in anticipation, of substantial peace dividends. A Tokyo Donor conference was to be held after the sixth round of talks. However, the LTTE were excluded from the international meeting in Washington, due to the fact they the United States had prohibited them from attending the aid meeting in Washington.

On April 4, 2003, the LTTE's political headquarters in Killinochchi released an official statement expressing deep disappointment over the exclusion of the organization (which was one of the key players in the peace talks) from the aid meeting. They had temporarily suspended any further peace talks.

### ***2003 – Interim Self-Governing Authority***

The peace talks between the government of Wikremasinghe and the Liberation Tigers did not collapse nor did it provoke the resumption of war. The talks were suspended by the LTTE to formulate an effective administrative mechanism with adequate power and capacity to undertake the monumental tasks of rehabilitation and reconstruction in the war devastated Northeast. Since the government's proposals were totally unsatisfactory, the LTTE presented its own framework, the Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA). This was a basis for the resumption of talks.

On November 2003, President Kumaratunga had suspended parliament, and dismissed three ministers. Prime Minister Wikremasinghe was replaced by Prime Minister Rajapakse. The ISGA were dismissed with the help of Kumaratunga's new allies, the Marxist Sinhala Nationalist JVP, and the Buddhist clergy political party called JHU.

### ***2004 – Breakaway of Karuna from LTTE***

During April, 2004, the eastern commander of the LTTE, Karuna was discharged due to bad conduct, misappropriation of funds, and other internal differences. A 48 hour battle occurred in Batticaloa between the LTTE and a small band of Karuna supporters.

Ever since the break away of Karuna from the LTTE, violence has been on a rise in the Eastern part of the Tamil homeland. The government denied any involvement giving refuge to Karuna and his supporters. However, attacks on LTTE unarmed cadres and civilians have reportedly come from government held areas and near army bases.

This is a violation of the Cease Fire Agreement, under the clause where all para-militaries would be disarmed. The Sri Lankan government has taken advantage of this situation to conduct their shadow war against the LTTE.

### ***Tsunami Devastation***

More than 30,000 people were killed when massive waves generated by a powerful undersea earthquake off the coast of Indonesia, devastated coastal communities of Northeastern Sri Lanka, and parts of the South. Hundreds of thousands were forced from their homes.

When the international community was pouring money into the countries effected by the tsunami, aid was not reaching the Northeast. The GOSL saw this as a second opportunity to starve out the LTTE and the Tamil people of the Northeast. Truckloads of tsunami relief material were stopped by the Sri Lankan army from going to the Northeast. Instead they were redirected back to the Sinhala communities of the South.

The LTTE had conducted search and rescue operations throughout the Northeast. The TRO (Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation) was the main NGO to get aid, temporary shelters, and rehabilitation to the thousands displaced by the tsunami in the Tamil homeland. Sinhalese and Muslims in Tamil areas were not discriminated in receiving aid and shelter from the TRO. Aid was coming in from the Tamil diaspora around the globe, until the government in Colombo had started taxing the items bound for the Northeast and later put a halt on the aid shipments. Crates of medical supplies, medicines, mattresses, etc. were left sitting in the airport for weeks.

The GOSL had spent thousands of tsunami aid dollars meant for the victims on arms purchases from Iran. Later in 2005, Prime Minister Rajapakse was involved in the "Helping Hambantota" Scandal where thousands of dollars of tsunami funds were transferred into his personal account. Sri Lanka's Supreme Court had issued an interim order preventing the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Police from conducting an investigation into the "Helping Hambantota" Bank Account, legal sources in Colombo said.

### *Post Tsunami Mechanism System (PTOMS)*

The Liberation Tigers and President Kumaratunga had agreed to implement a joint mechanism called the Post Tsunami Mechanism System otherwise known as the PTOMS. This was an aid deal in the sum of \$3 billion from the international community to be jointly used by the GOSL and the LTTE for the reconstruction efforts in their areas effected by the natural disaster. The United States, Great Britain, and other countries from the International Community had gave their blessings and had supported it. Even though the United States gave their approval of the PTOMS, also as a confidentiality measure for both sides to get back to the negotiating table for a final settlement to decades old ethnic conflict, they could not financially support it due to 'legal constraints' with the LTTE being proscribed in America.

On June 27, 2005, the JVP had filed a case against the PTOMS to the Supreme Court. They claimed that it posed a threat to the territorial security of the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. The Supreme Court had later stopped the implementation of the PTOMS.

### *2005 Thereafter*

In April, the editor of Tamil Net, Sivakumaran Taraki was slain near the capital of Colombo. The government took no action to look into this homicide case. During the mid summer of 2005, Lakshman Kadirgamar (Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister) was assassinated by unknown gunmen at his residence. The LTTE were automatically accused and condemned by not only the GOSL, including the international community. The GOSL, had used this as their third advantage for a smear campaign against the LTTE.

During the months of October and November was an election campaign between Mahinda Rajapakse and Ranil Wikremasinghe for Presidency. In order to get more votes from the Sinhalese from the south, the Wikremasinghe government had admitted how they supported and armed the break away commander Karuna and his supporters against the LTTE. They had also bragged about how they destroyed two of the LTTEs ships at sea.

The JVP and the JHU had aligned and backed with Presidential candidate Rajapakse offering a 12 point plan of demands in return for their support. One of the key demands was to dismiss sharing power with the Tamils and the three key issues which the Tamils have been asking for the past 50 years, including the recognition of Tamils as a distinct nationality associated with a traditional homeland, and the inalienable right of self-determination.

Neither candidate offered a solution to the Tamil question, instead manipulating Tamils for their political agenda garnering votes. Thus on November, 18<sup>th</sup>, the Tamils boycotted the elections en masse in protest the historical marginalization of Tamils in Sri Lankan politics. Recent reports have described an escalation of violence in the Northern and Eastern provinces, likely foretelling a return to war.