

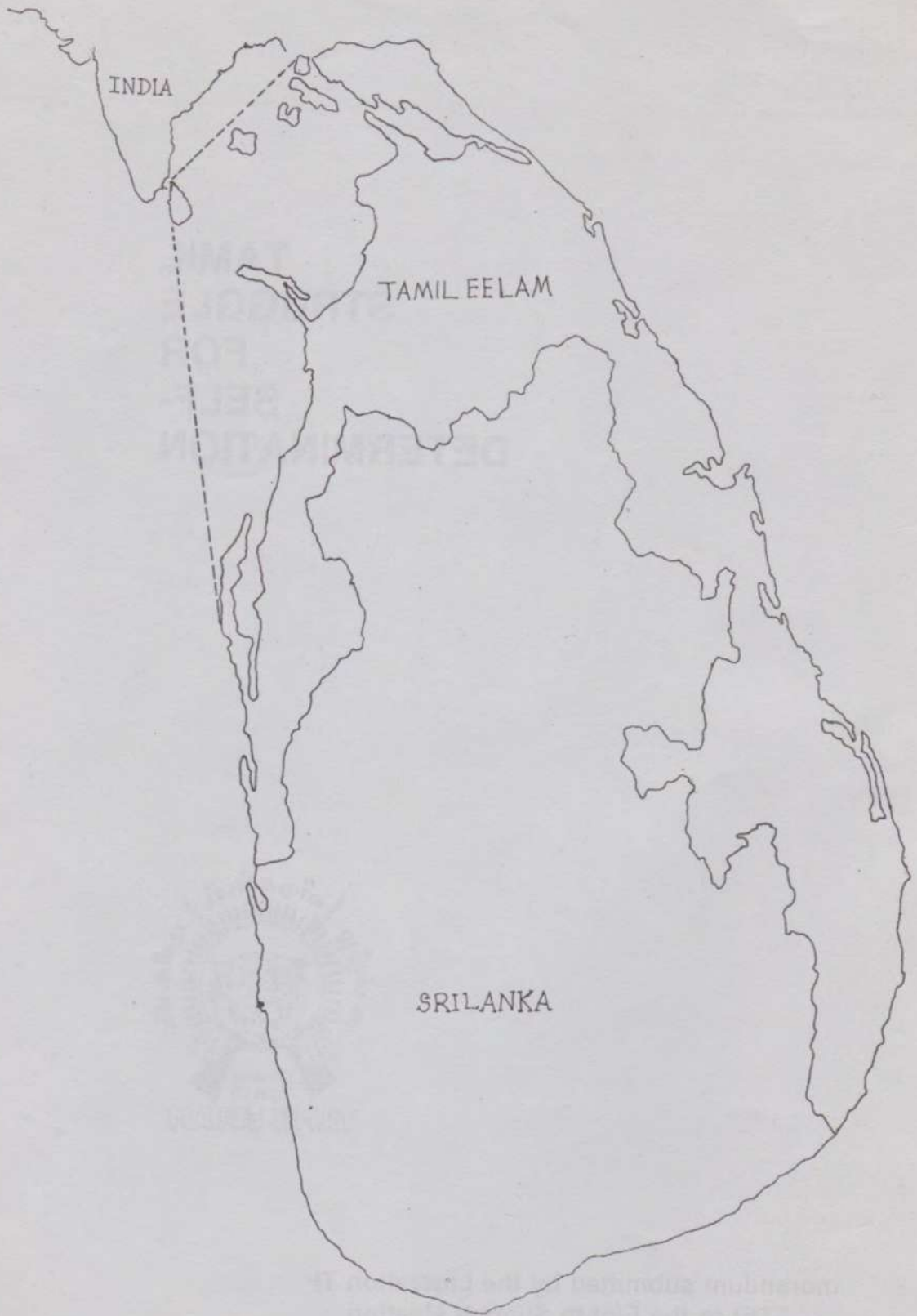
**TAMIL
STRUGGLE
FOR
SELF-
DETERMINATION**

Liberation
Tigers of
Tamil Eelam

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Memorandum submitted by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to the Eighth Summit Meeting of Non-Aligned Nations held in Harare, Zimbabwe, 24th August - 8th September 1986.



*THE HONOURABLE CHAIRMAN,
RESPECTED LEADERS OF THE THIRD WORLD,
DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,*

We wish to bring to your kind attention and urgent consideration of a very grave and critical situation in Sri Lanka. It is the plight of the Tamil nation of four million people and their struggle for political independence from state terror and tyranny. The Tamil struggle for self-determination and statehood arose as a consequence of nearly four decades of violent and brutal oppression practised by successive Sri Lankan Governments aimed at the genocidal annihilation of the Tamil people. Decades of peaceful, non-violent, democratic political struggles of our people were met with brutal forms of military repression. The intensified military domination of the Tamil homeland, the intolerable terrorism of the armed forces, the inhuman massacres, mass arrests and massive destruction of property – all these repressive methods were employed to stifle and subjugate the will of our people to live free and stamp out their legitimate struggle for justice. This ever unfolding thrust of state terror and genocide made unitary existence intolerable and finally led to the demand for secession by the oppressed Tamil people.

You are certainly aware that in contemporary times national liberation struggles have assumed world historical significance. The right of nations to self-determination is the cardinal principle upon which many struggles for national freedom are being fought today. It is the principle that upholds the sacred right of a nation to decide its own political destiny, a universal principle enshrined in the UN Charter that guarantees the right of a nation to political independence. The Tamil national independence struggle is fought on the very basis of our nation's right to self-determination.

To the community of world nations Sri Lanka attempts to portray itself as a paradise island for democracy, cherishing the Buddhist ideals of peace and compassion, adhering to a noble path of non-alignment. Paradoxically, behind the political facade lies the factual reality, the reality of racial repression, of the blatant violations of democratic liberties and human rights, of police and military brutality, of state terrorism and genocide. Masterminding a totalitarian political system with the collusion of US imperialism and zionism, the Sri Lankan ruling elite has been practising a dangerous policy of racial repression aimed at the annihilation of the national entity of the Tamils. It is a tragic paradox that dictatorial regimes like Sri Lanka who stand indicted by world human rights movements for crimes against humanity could parade on a world forum with the mantle of democracy and dharma. Our objective is to expose this hypocrisy and place before you the authentic story, the story of the immense sufferings as well as the heroic struggles of our people who have no choice but to fight for dignity and freedom rather than reduced to slavery and slow death.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Tamils of the island of Ceylon (now called Sri Lanka) constitute themselves as a nation of people, forming into a coherent social entity with their own history, tradition, culture, language and economic life. The nation is popularly called Tamil Eelam. Tamils have been living in the island from pre-historic times before the arrival of the Sinhalese from northern India in the 6th century B.C. The Sinhalese people who constitute the majority nation of ten million have a distinct language, culture and history of their own. Historical chronicles document that the island was ruled by both Tamil and Sinhalese Kings. From the 13th century onwards, until



Victims of Sri Lankan State Terrorism

the penetration of foreign colonialism Tamil Eelam lived as a stable national entity with a state structure and was ruled by its own kings. The Portuguese annexed the territory in 1619 yet ruled it as a separate national entity, as the traditional homelands of the Tamils. Dutch colonialism, which followed did not violate the national and territorial autonomy, until British imperialism in 1833 brought about a unified state structure amalgamating the Tamil and Sinhala kingdoms laying the foundation for the present national conflict. Another significant event in the British imperialist rule was the creation of an exploitative plantation economy for which a million Tamils from South India were brought as workers and settled in the island. Constituting a crucial part of the Tamil Eelam national totality, this huge mass of Tamil labourers who produce the wealth of the island yet subjected to most sinister form of racial repression.

DIMENSIONS OF NATIONAL OPPRESSION

The Sinhala chauvinistic oppression against the Tamil nation began to unfold its ugly forms soon after national 'independence' in 1948 when the British handed over state power to the Sinhalese ruling elite. This oppression was not simply an expression of racial prejudice, but a well calculated genocidal plan aimed at the gradual and systematic destruction of the essential foundations of national community. The oppression, therefore assumed a multi-dimensional thrust, attacking simultaneously on the different structural levels of the national foundation, the levels of the conditions of existence of a nation, its language, education, culture, economy and territory. As part of this genocidal programme formed the state inspired communal riots which led to the mass destruction of life and property of the Tamils.

A MILLION WORKERS DISENFRANCHISED

The first major onslaught of this genocidal oppression was directed against the Tamil plantation workers, who as the only organised proletariat wielded immense political power which the Sinhalese ruling class wanted to castigate. By enacting notorious citizenship laws (Citizenship Acts 1948 and 1949) the Sri Lankan Government disenfranchised a million Tamil plantation workers. This repressive measure reduced these people to a condition of statelessness and dehumanised them without any basic human or civil rights.

PLANNED ANNEXATION OF TAMIL LANDS

The most vicious form of oppression calculated to destroy the national identity of the Tamils was the state aided aggressive colonisation which began soon after 'independence' and now swallowed nearly three thousand square miles of Tamil Eelam. This planned occupation of Tamil lands by hundreds of thousands of Sinhala people aided and abetted by the state was aimed to annihilate the geographical entity of the Tamil nation.

In recent times, the Sri Lankan armed forces launched a massive search and destroy operation in Trincomalee, Mannar and Vavuniya with the aim of driving the Tamil population from their traditional areas. Trincomalee District suffered the worst, where more than 100 Tamil villages were destroyed and nearly 50,000 Tamils were made refugees. The objective of this military terror is to disrupt the demographic composition of the population and to make Sinhala settlers the majority in the Trincomalee District.

State Terrorism



REPRESSION ON LANGUAGE, EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

Sinhala chauvinism struck deeply into the spheres of language, education and employment of the Tamils. Championing the ideology of ultra-nationalism, Mr. Bandaranayake came to political power in 1956 with the pledge to install Sinhala language and Buddhist religion as the only official language and state religion of the island. His first Act in Parliament, the Sinhala Only Act, put an end to the equality of status enjoyed by the Tamil language and made Sinhala the only state language. This infamous legislation had disastrous consequences. It forced the Tamil public servants to learn Sinhala language or leave employment. In the decades that followed all employment opportunities in the public service were practically closed to the Tamils. They were gradually rooted out from positions of power in the public sector as well as in the armed services.

Education was the crucial area in which the onslaught of racism deprived a vast population of Tamil youth from access to higher education. A notorious discriminatory selective device called "standardisation" was introduced in 1970 which demanded higher merits of marks from Tamil students for university admissions whereas the Sinhalese students were admitted with lower grades. The present regime introduced a new scheme which turned out to be far more discriminatory than the earlier one denying thousands of deserving Tamil students the right to higher education, and created a huge army of unemployed youth.

ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION

The thrust of national oppression that penetrated into the spheres of language, education and employment had far reaching consequences on the economic life of the Tamil speaking people as a whole. For more than three decades all successive Sri Lankan Governments pursued a deliberate policy of totally isolating Tamil areas from all the national development projects. While the State poured all the economic aid into the South, while the Sinhala nation flourished with massive development programmes, the nation of Tamil Eelam was isolated as an unwanted colony and left to suffer the worst form of economic deprivation.

ANTI-TAMIL RIOTS AND MASSACRE OF TAMILS

Anti-Tamil riots that constantly plague the island should not be viewed as spontaneous outbursts of inter-communal hatred between the two communities. All major racial conflagrations that erupted violently against the Tamil speaking people were inspired and master-minded by the Sinhala ruling regimes as a part of the grand genocidal programme. Violent anti-Tamil racial riots exploded in the island in 1956, 1958, 1961, 1974, 1977, 1979, 1981 and in July 1983.

In these holocausts thousands of Tamils, including women and children were mercilessly massacred, billions worth of Tamil property destroyed and hundreds of thousands made refugees. Since July '83 till now the pattern of genocidal attacks on Tamils assumed a new horrifying dimension in which the armed forces directly involved in the physical liquidation of people. The army adopted the notorious method of collective punishment as a response to the escalating guerrilla war killing innocent civilians in large numbers in a series of planned massacres. Since July '83 till now nearly 10,000 innocent Tamil civilians have perished in these barbaric military brutalities.



Massacre at Mandai theevu.

The cumulative effect of this multi-dimensional genocidal oppression threatened the very survival of the Tamils. It aggravated the national conflict and the struggle for self-determination, political independence and statehood became the only inevitable choice.

PEACEFUL CAMPAIGNS FOR FEDERAL AUTONOMY

Following the implementation of the Sinhala Only Act in 1956, the Tamil Parliamentary leadership organised mass agitational campaigns demanding a federal form of autonomy for the Tamil nation. The satyagraha (peaceful picketing) campaigns of 1961 was a great event in the history of the Tamil freedom struggle. This civil disobedience campaign unfolded into a massive national uprising, participated by hundreds of thousands of Tamil people, symbolising the collective resentment of the whole nation against the oppressive policies of the Sinhala rulers. Within a few months this successful satyagraha campaign paralysed the whole government administrative machinery in Tamil Eelam. Alarmed by the success of the Civil Disobedience Campaign the State oppressive machinery reacted swiftly. Under the guise of Emergency and Curfew, military terrorism was let loose on the peaceful satyagrahies. Hundreds of these non-violent agitators sustained serious injuries, and their leaders arrested. Thus, state violence finally succeeded in silencing the non-violent campaign of the oppressed; the armed terror ultimately crushed the ahimsa of the Tamils. The success of this violent repression encouraged the Sri Lankian state to utilise military terror against all forms of democratic political campaigns of the Tamils. Large contingents of armed forces were poured into Tamil areas and the Tamil nation was finally brought under military siege.

THE DEMAND FOR SECESSION

In 1972, a new republican constitution was adopted which removed the fundamental rights and privileges accorded to national minorities. This infamous constitution created the conditions for the political alienation of the Tamils and cut a deep wedge between the two nations. Confronted with steadily mounting national oppression, frustrated with the failures of democratic political struggles demanding basic human rights, the Tamil nationalist parties converged into a single movement (The Tamil United Liberation Front) and resolved to fight for political independence on the basis of the nation's right to self-determination. At the general elections of 1977, the Front demanded a clear mandate from the people to launch a national struggle to establish sovereignty in the Tamil homeland. These elections took the character of a referendum and the Tamil speaking people voted overwhelmingly in favour of secession. Thus a new historical era in Tamil politics began, ushering a revolutionary struggle for national independence.

ARMED RESISTANCE AND THE TIGER MOVEMENT

The struggle for national freedom having failed in its democratic popular agitations, having exhausted its moral power to mobilise the masses for peaceful campaigns, gave rise to the emergence of armed resistance movement in Tamil Eelam in the early seventies. Armed resistance as a mode of popular struggle arose when our people were presented with no alternative other than to resort to revolutionary resistance to defend themselves against a savage form of state terrorism. The armed struggle, therefore is the historical product of intolerable national oppression; it is an extension, continuation and advancement of the political struggle of our oppressed people. Our liberation movement which spearheads the revolution



LTTE guerrillas at battlefield.

nary armed struggle in Tamil Eelam is the armed vanguard of the national struggle. The strategy of revolutionary armed struggle was formulated by us after a careful and cautious appraisal of the specific concrete conditions of our struggle, with the fullest comprehension of the historical situation in which masses of our people have no choice other than to fight decisively to advance the cause of national freedom. Our total strategy integrates both national struggle and class struggle, interlinks the progressive patriotic feeling of the masses with proletarian class consciousness to accelerate the process of socialist revolution and national liberation.

The armed struggle of our Liberation Movement is sustained and supported by wider sections of Tamil masses since our revolutionary project expresses the profound aspirations of our people to gain political independence from the autocratic domination and repression of the Srilankan State. After 10 years of consistent, committed struggle our guerrilla warfare is transforming into a people's war of national liberation.

Our freedom struggle is legitimate. Our war of liberation is a war of justice. We are fighting this war to uphold the liberty and dignity of our people. We are fighting this war to bring peace.

AN APPEAL TO THE WORLD LEADERS

Our liberation struggle, as an oppressed nation fighting against the oppressor, constitutes an integral part of the international struggle, the struggle of the revolutionary forces against the forces of reaction, the forces of imperialism, neo-colonialism, zionism and racism. Though each liberation struggle has its own historical specificity and its unique conditions, in their essence they articulate a universal historical tendency of the human aspiration for freedom from all systems of oppression and exploitation. In this context, Tamil Eelam national struggle is similar in content to that of the Palestinian struggle or Namibian struggle or any national struggle of the oppressed people based on their right to national self-determination.

WE THEREFORE APPEAL TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE, WHO HOSTS THIS GREAT FORUM, AND TO THE LEADERS OF THE THIRD WORLD TO SYMPATHISE AND SUPPORT THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE OF THE EELAM TAMILS. IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY, LIBERTY AND JUSTICE, WE CALL UPON YOU TO CONDEMN THE GENOCIDAL OPPRESSIVE POLICIES OF THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT AND TO RECOGNISE OUR PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION

We, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, wish to express our wholehearted support to the Non-Aligned Movement for its struggle to establish a new international political and economic order founded on freedom, equality and social justice.

We also wish to express our militant solidarity to all the revolutionary liberation struggles of the oppressed masses of the world.

**POLITICAL COMMITTEE
LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM**

