

Beyond the Binary — Muslims & Malaiyaha Tamils in the Eelam Wars

What a mature Tamil self-determination case must acknowledge: the Northern and Eastern Muslim record, Malaiyaha Tamil history, and comparative constitutional models for three-plus communities.

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§1 PART A — THE SRI LANKAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY (NORTHERN AND EASTERN) IN EELAM WAR I & II

§ A.0 Framing

Sri Lankan Muslims (~9-10% of the population, concentrated in the Eastern Province, with historic Northern Province communities in Jaffna, Mannar, Musali, and Mullaitivu) occupy a structurally distinct position from both the Sinhala-Buddhist state and the Tamil nationalist movement. Most Northern and Eastern Muslims are Tamil-speaking, which put them inside the linguistic category the LTTE claimed to represent, but they do not identify as ethnically Tamil, and their relationship to the "traditional Tamil homeland" claim was — and remains — one of the most contested fault lines in the devolution debate. Both nationalist historiographies tend to flatten this: Eelam-nationalist narratives sometimes present Muslims as an undifferentiated part of "the Tamil-speaking peoples" whose interests are subsumed in the homeland claim; Sinhala-nationalist narratives have at times instrumentalized Muslim suffering under the LTTE to legitimate an anti-federalist, unitary-state position while ignoring the post-war Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist violence visited on the same community. [Tier-A: Haniffa 2007; ICG 2007, Asia Report 134]

§ A.1 The October 1990 Expulsion of Northern Muslims

Facts. On 30 October 1990, the LTTE ordered the entire Muslim population of the Northern Province — Jaffna, Mannar, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, and parts of Vavuniya — to leave within, in most areas, two hours to 48 hours, depending on locality, taking only what they could carry (often a strict cash limit of Rs 150 per adult, nothing per child, in most accounts). Estimates of those expelled range from approximately 72,000 (Wikipedia synthesis of multiple sources; also cited in some UN and NGO documents) to 75,000 (Citizens' Commission) to ~90,000 in some Muslim community accounts inclusive of adjoining areas and natural population growth by the time of return. The Citizens' Commission on the Expulsion of Muslims from the Northern Province (a Sri Lankan civil-society inquiry with public hearings) is the most systematic Tier-A-adjacent domestic documentation; it also became the basis of a submission to the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC). [Tier-A: Citizens' Commission report, cited in Groundviews 2010/2011; Tier-B: Wikipedia synthesis for headline figures — treat numeric range as approximate, not a single agreed figure]

Property — homes, mosques, agricultural land, businesses — was confiscated or occupied by the LTTE and, in the following years, by settlers and by the LTTE's own cadres and civil administration; some was also occupied informally by returning or resident Tamils displaced by the wider war. Northern Muslims were barred from returning for the duration of the war. This is documented by Farzana Haniffa's ethnographic and policy work on Muslim IDPs, and by the UN Panel of Experts (2011) and OHCHR's Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL, 2015), both of which reference the 1990 expulsion as part of the historical backdrop to the conflict's ethnic dimension, though their primary evidentiary focus is the 2002-2009 period. [Tier-A: Haniffa, "Muslims in Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict" (2007); UN Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka, 2011, background

section; OHCHR OISL 2015]

LTTE justification and subsequent acknowledgement. The LTTE's stated justification was retaliatory and security-based: it accused segments of the Northern Muslim community of collaborating with the Sri Lankan military (as informants, Home Guards, or facilitators) amid the breakdown of the 1987-90 Indo-Lanka Accord period and the LTTE's second confrontation with the state. Independent researchers (Haniffa; Hasbullah) find the collective expulsion vastly disproportionate to any such involvement and characterize it as a calculated act of ethnic cleansing intended to consolidate a mono-ethnic Tamil population base in the claimed homeland, not a security operation. Some scholars (Hasbullah, McGilvray) also situate it within a longer pattern of LTTE attempts to eliminate potential internal rivals to its claim to sole representation of "the Tamil-speaking people" of the Northeast. [Tier-A: S.H. Hasbullah, various publications on Muslim IDPs; McGilvray, *Crucible of Conflict* (2008), ch. on Muslims]

The LTTE, at various points post-2002 (notably during the Ceasefire Agreement period and in some statements attributed to LTTE political wing figures), offered qualified expressions of regret or acknowledgement that the expulsion had caused Muslim suffering, but did not issue an unambiguous formal apology, did not accept legal or financial liability, and did not facilitate return or restitution during the period it controlled Northern territory (1990-2009, with interruptions). Some Muslim political actors and researchers describe LTTE overtures during the 2002-2006 peace process (including talks involving the SLMC) as tactical rather than a genuine reckoning. [Tier-B: multiple Sri Lankan press accounts of LTTE statements 2002-2004; ICG 2008, Asia Report 141, Sri Lanka's Eastern Province: Land, Development, Conflict, discusses LTTE-Muslim negotiations]

Return process post-2009. With the end of the war in May 2009 and the collapse of LTTE control of the North, Northern Muslims began organized return, particularly to Jaffna, Mannar, and Musali. Return was protracted and uneven: nearly two decades of displacement meant original land and housing had in many cases been destroyed, occupied by others (including returning Tamil IDPs, military High Security Zones, or new settlement), or become subject to competing claims. Humanitarian and development agencies (UNHCR, IOM, and Sri Lankan government resettlement authorities) supported return and housing reconstruction through the 2010s, but the property and land-restitution dimension in particular has never been comprehensively resolved. Research by Haniffa, the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), and the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies documents continuing disputes as of the 2010s over land titling, competing Tamil-Muslim claims in border/contested zones (parts of Mannar and Jaffna), and the slow pace of state-facilitated dispute resolution mechanisms. As of the most recent available scholarship, there is no comprehensive, community-satisfying restitution mechanism; land and property disputes stemming from 1990 remain a live, unresolved grievance raised by Muslim civil society in postwar reconciliation fora (including submissions to the LLRC and later the Office for Reparations). [Tier-A: Haniffa & Iqbal, CPA-published work on Muslim IDP return, various years 2010s; Tier-B: media coverage of ongoing Jaffna/Mannar/Musali land disputes into the 2020s]

Current legal status of confiscated property. No dedicated statutory restitution scheme specific to the 1990 Northern Muslim expulsion exists; affected families have had to use general land/title dispute mechanisms, the Land Commissioner's processes, and — where applicable — the Office for Reparations (established 2018) and general resettlement/housing programmes, which handle the claim as one among many war-displacement claims rather than as a distinct ethnic-cleansing redress case. Muslim civil society organizations (e.g., the Muslim Council/various Northern Muslim associations, and researchers linked to CPA and the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies) continue to describe the property question as substantially unresolved. [Tier-B: this is an area with thinner Tier-A documentation post-2015; flagged as a research gap]

§ A.2 The Kattankudy Mosque Massacre and Eravur Massacre (August 1990)

Kattankudy, 3 August 1990. Armed men — attributed by the Sri Lankan government, survivors, and most independent observers to the LTTE — attacked worshippers at the Meera Jumma Mosque and the Hussainiya

Mosque in Kattankudy, Eastern Province, during Isha prayers. Deaths are most commonly cited at "over 147" (Wikipedia/local commemorative sources) or 110 (contemporaneous New York Times reporting, 5 August 1990, "Tamils Kill 110 Muslims at 2 Sri Lankan Mosques"). The LTTE denied responsibility at the time and has not, to date, retracted the denial or claimed responsibility. No LTTE, state, or international judicial process has produced a definitive forensic accounting; casualty figures should be cited to source rather than treated as settled. [Tier-B for exact casualty count — contemporaneous journalism (NYT) and later commemorative/community sources diverge (110 vs. 147+); Tier-A for the basic fact pattern of an armed mosque attack attributed to Tamil militants, corroborated by international press at the time]

Eravur, 1990. A related massacre in Eravur (Eastern Province, also 1990, in the same period of intercommunal violence surrounding the LTTE's break with Muslim communities) is documented in overlapping literature on the period; specific casualty figures vary by source and should likewise be cited individually rather than aggregated with Kattankudy. [Tier-B: documented in Sri Lankan human rights chronologies and Muslim community histories; independent international verification is thinner than for Kattankudy]

These attacks, together with the October expulsion, are treated by Haniffa, Hasbullah, and McGilvray as constituting 1990 as the founding trauma of contemporary Northern and Eastern Muslim political consciousness — the moment Muslim leaders concluded that neither the LTTE's Tamil-nationalist project nor the Sinhala-dominated state offered protection, catalyzing an independent Muslim political mobilization (see A.4). [Tier-A: Haniffa 2007; McGilvray 2008]

§ A.3 State and Home Guard-Attributed Violence Against Muslims

Documentation of massacres of Muslims attributed to state forces or state-armed Home Guards (as opposed to the LTTE) is comparatively thin in Tier-A literature but not absent. ICG's Asia Report 134 (2007) and subsequent Eastern Province reporting note that in the militarized environment of the East in the 1990s, Muslim Home Guards — armed by the state ostensibly for self-defence against the LTTE — were themselves implicated in reprisal violence against Tamil civilians in some instances, complicating any simple victim/perpetrator binary; conversely, some Muslim civilians were killed in cross-fire or in state security operations misidentifying them, and STF (Special Task Force) conduct in the East has been criticized in human rights reporting for abuses affecting both Tamil and Muslim civilians without always distinguishing victims by ethnicity. UTHR(J) (University Teachers for Human Rights, Jaffna) reporting from the period documents specific incidents of state/Home Guard abuse in mixed Tamil-Muslim areas of the East, but a dedicated, comprehensive Tier-A accounting of "state massacres of Muslims" as a discrete category (comparable to the LTTE-attributed Kattankudy/Eravur/October 1990 dossier) does not exist at the same evidentiary density. This asymmetry in the documentary record should itself be noted as a research gap rather than read as evidence of an asymmetry in actual harm. [Tier-A: ICG 2007 Asia Report 134; Tier-B: UTHR(J) special reports on the Eastern Province, 1990s, which document mixed-perpetrator violence]

§ A.4 The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and the "Third Nation" Question

M.H.M. Ashraff founded the SLMC in 1981, initially as a Muslim political vehicle within the Eastern Province, formalizing what had been a longer current of Muslim communal politics distinct from both the UNP/SLFP Sinhala mainstream and Tamil nationalist parties (TULF and successors). The SLMC's rise accelerated sharply after 1990: the expulsion and the mosque massacres persuaded Muslim leadership that Muslims required autonomous political representation rather than reliance on Tamil nationalist parties' claim to speak for all Tamil-speakers, or on Sinhala-majority parties. [Tier-A: Haniffa 2007; ICG 2007]

On federalism vs. unitary state, SLMC's position has been genuinely ambivalent and has shifted over time — a fact often elided by both nationalist camps. Ashraff and the SLMC engaged with devolution proposals (including participation in constitutional reform processes in the 1990s and 2000s) but consistently sought a Muslim-specific autonomous unit or safeguards distinct from — and not subsumed within — a unified Northeast Tamil-majority federal unit, precisely because Muslims in the East (concentrated in Ampara, Batticaloa, Trincomalee) would be a

minority within any single merged Northeast province dominated demographically and politically by Tamils. This produced the "Muslim as third nation" position: an argument, associated with SLMC and articulated by various Muslim intellectuals, that Sri Lanka's ethnic settlement cannot be resolved as a Sinhala-Tamil binary (unitary state vs. Tamil Eelam/federal Tamil unit) but must recognize Muslims as a distinct political community with their own claim to territorial and political accommodation — most concretely expressed in demands for a separate Muslim administrative unit or safeguarded autonomy within the Eastern Province, and opposition to the temporary North-East merger (1988-2006, under the 13th Amendment/Indo-Lanka Accord framework) partly on the grounds that it subordinated Eastern Muslim interests to a Tamil-nationalist framing of the "traditional homeland." The Supreme Court's 2006 de-merger of the North and East (on a challenge unrelated primarily to Muslim advocacy, but welcomed by significant parts of Muslim political opinion) reflected this fracture. [Tier-A: ICG 2007 Asia Report 134, section on SLMC and federalism; Qadri Ismail's essays on Muslim identity and the "ethnic" categorization problem in Sri Lankan constitutional discourse]

Current fragmentation. Following Ashraff's death in 2000, the SLMC has fragmented repeatedly — through splits producing the National Congress (led by Rishad Bathiudeen), and periodic breakaways/reunifications around figures such as Rauff Hakeem — reflecting both personal rivalries and genuine strategic disagreement within Muslim politics about whether to ally with Sinhala-majority governing coalitions (a persistent pattern, since Muslim parties have entered government with UNP, SLFP, and Rajapaksa-led coalitions at different times to secure ministries and local protections) or to pursue an independent bloc strategy. This fragmentation has generally weakened rather than strengthened Muslim political leverage over constitutional reform, and left the "third nation" argument without a single authoritative political vehicle post-2010. [Tier-B: extensive Sri Lankan political journalism on SLMC splits, 2000s-2020s; ICG 2020 discusses post-Ashraff Muslim political fragmentation]

§ A.5 Post-2009 Anti-Muslim Violence

The end of the civil war removed the LTTE as the dominant threat narrative and coincided with the rise of a Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist movement that redirected communal hostility toward Muslims. Key documented episodes:

- Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), founded 2012, a Buddhist-nationalist organization that conducted an anti-Muslim campaign (halal certification boycotts, anti-hijab rhetoric, mosque-related agitation), widely documented by HRW and Sri Lankan civil society as central to the incitement preceding subsequent violence. [Tier-A: Human Rights Watch, "Sri Lanka: Rise in Anti-Muslim Attacks" and related reporting, 2013-2014]
- Aluthgama riots, June 2014: Anti-Muslim mob violence in Aluthgama and Beruwala (Western Province, outside the former Northeast conflict zone), following a BBS rally, left at least 3-4 people dead (sources vary; HRW and press reporting cite roughly 3-4 dead, dozens injured, and significant property destruction) and was widely linked to BBS incitement and to a permissive/complicit state security response under the Rajapaksa government. [Tier-A: HRW 2014 reporting; Tier-B for precise casualty figures, which vary slightly by source]
- Digana/Kandy riots, March 2018: Anti-Muslim violence in the Kandy District following a Sinhalese man's death in a dispute with Muslim youths, resulting in deaths (commonly cited as 2, per government/press figures), extensive arson of Muslim homes, shops, and at least one mosque, and a nationwide state of emergency declared by the government. [Tier-A: HRW and Amnesty International reporting, 2018; government of Sri Lanka emergency declaration]
- Easter Sunday attacks, 21 April 2019 and aftermath: The attacks themselves were carried out by a local Islamist group (National Thowheeth Jama'ath) with claimed ISIS affiliation, killing over 250 people (Sri Lankan government figures) in bombings of churches and hotels — a qualitatively different category of violence (transnational-linked Islamist terrorism, not an act of the mainstream Muslim community or of Tamil or Sinhala nationalist actors). Its aftermath, however, produced a documented wave of collective reprisal against the broader Muslim community: mob attacks on Muslim-owned businesses and mosques (notably in North Western Province,

May 2019), a surge in arbitrary arrests and surveillance of Muslims, and government policies (discussed below) that used the attacks to justify broader restrictions on Muslim religious and cultural practice. [Tier-A: OHCHR statements 2019; HRW and Amnesty reporting on post-Easter reprisals]

- Forced-cremation/burial-rights controversy, 2020-2021 (COVID-19 era): The Sri Lankan government under Gotabaya Rajapaksa mandated cremation for all COVID-19 deaths, contrary to WHO guidance permitting burial, effectively banning Muslim (and Christian) burial practice for pandemic deaths. This was widely documented and condemned by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, OHCHR, HRW, and Amnesty as a discriminatory policy targeting Muslim religious practice; the policy was reversed in February 2021 after sustained domestic and international pressure. [Tier-A: OHCHR/UN Special Rapporteur statements 2020-21; HRW, "Sri Lanka: Reverse Discriminatory Cremation Policy," 2020]

These episodes are essential context because they demonstrate that post-2009 Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism, freed from the LTTE as an organizing enemy, redirected toward Muslims using a similar majoritarian logic — undercutting any simple narrative in which the end of Tamil separatism resolved Sri Lanka's minority question, and complicating any assumption that Muslims' historical grievances with the LTTE translate into straightforward alignment with the Sinhala-nationalist state. [Tier-A: synthesis supported by HRW, Amnesty, OHCHR reporting cited above; analytical framing follows Haniffa's and ICG's post-2009 work]

§ A.6 What Muslim Civil Society Says Today About Federalism and Tamil Self-Determination

This is the area requiring the most caution against projection by either nationalist camp. The available survey and policy-research evidence indicates a position that is neither rejectionist nor simply aligned with Tamil nationalist demands:

- ICG's 2007 and 2008 reports (Sri Lanka's Muslims: Caught in the Crossfire; Sri Lanka's Eastern Province: Land, Development, Conflict) find that Eastern Muslim political leadership has historically supported devolution and provincial autonomy in principle but has consistently insisted that any Northeast political unit must include specific, enforceable safeguards for Muslim political representation, land rights, and administrative autonomy at the district or sub-regional level — precisely because Muslims fear becoming a permanent minority within a Tamil-majority devolved unit, just as they are a minority in the Sinhala-majority state. ICG's analysis is that Muslim support for devolution is therefore conditional and structurally distinct from Tamil nationalist demands for a unified Northeast Tamil homeland. [Tier-A: ICG 2007, 2008]

- Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) survey research on reconciliation and constitutional reform (its "Top Line" and "Democracy in Post-War Sri Lanka" survey series, conducted periodically through the 2010s) has found measurable but qualified Muslim support for devolution/power-sharing generally, generally higher than Sinhala-Buddhist respondent support but with distinct concerns from Tamil respondents about the specific unit of devolution (Muslims in mixed Eastern districts frequently favor district-level rather than merged-province-level devolution, reflecting demographic self-interest). [Tier-A: CPA survey series — cite specific report years where used; general finding is well-established across multiple CPA survey waves]

- Verité Research policy work on constitutional reform (including analysis during the 2016-2019 constitutional reform process) documents that Muslim political parties in that process (SLMC, ACMC, and others) actively lobbied for explicit constitutional recognition of Muslim interests as distinct from the Tamil-Sinhala devolution axis, including proposals for statutory Muslim representation mechanisms, again resisting simple incorporation into a bilateral Sinhala-Tamil constitutional settlement. [Tier-A: Verité Research constitutional-reform tracking publications, 2016-2019]

- ICG's 2020 Watch List entry ("A Dangerous Sea Change in Sri Lanka") documents that post-2019 Muslim political anxiety has been dominated by the immediate threat of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist state policy (surveillance, hate speech, the cremation policy, and Gotabaya-era rollback of the 13th Amendment-era devolution architecture generally) rather than by active mobilization around the Tamil self-determination question

specifically; Muslim political energy in this period has been substantially defensive. [Tier-A: ICG 2020]

Synthesis (Tier-A-supported, cross-source): Contemporary Muslim civil-society and party positions on federalism are best characterized as pro-devolution-in-principle, but insistent on being treated as a distinct constitutional stakeholder rather than as a subset of "Tamil-speaking peoples." This directly contradicts any Eelam-nationalist framing that treats Muslim interests as automatically aligned with or subsumed under Tamil self-determination claims, and equally contradicts any Sinhala-nationalist framing that treats Muslim historical suffering under the LTTE as evidence that Muslims support the unitary, anti-federal status quo — the ICG and CPA evidence shows Muslim opinion is more supportive of devolution than Sinhala-Buddhist opinion, just not on Tamil-nationalist terms.

§2 A.7 Muslim Community Timeline (Tiered)

Date · Event · Tier

1915 · Sinhala-Muslim riots (colonial-era antecedent, distinct from Tamil-Muslim relations but foundational to separate Muslim political identity) · Tier-A (well-documented colonial history)

1981 · SLMC founded by M.H.M. Ashraff · Tier-A

3 Aug 1990 · Kattankudy mosque massacre (~110-147+ dead, LTTE attributed, denied by LTTE) · Tier-A (attribution/attack); Tier-B (exact toll)

1990 · Eravur massacre · Tier-B

30 Oct 1990 · LTTE expulsion of Northern Muslims (~72,000-90,000 across sources) · Tier-A (event); Tier-B (precise count)

1990s · Muslim Home Guards armed by state in East; mixed-perpetrator violence documented in UTHR(J) reporting · Tier-B

2000 · Death of M.H.M. Ashraff; SLMC begins fragmenting · Tier-A

2002-2006 · Ceasefire-era LTTE-SLMC engagement; qualified LTTE acknowledgements of 1990 harm · Tier-B

2006 · Supreme Court de-merges North and East provinces · Tier-A

2007 · ICG Asia Report 134, "Sri Lanka's Muslims: Caught in the Crossfire" · Tier-A source

2008 · ICG Asia Report 141 on Eastern Province land/development/conflict · Tier-A source

May 2009 · War ends; Northern Muslim return process begins · Tier-A

2011 · UN Panel of Experts report references 1990 expulsion in historical background · Tier-A

2012 · BBS founded · Tier-A

June 2014 · Aluthgama riots · Tier-A

2015 · OHCHR OISL report · Tier-A

March 2018 · Digana/Kandy riots · Tier-A

21 Apr 2019 · Easter Sunday attacks · Tier-A

May 2019 · Anti-Muslim reprisal riots post-Easter · Tier-A

2020-Feb 2021 · Forced cremation policy for COVID deaths; reversed under pressure · Tier-A

2020 · ICG Watch List: "A Dangerous Sea Change in Sri Lanka" · Tier-A source

§3 PART B — MALAIYAHA (HILL COUNTRY / UP-COUNTRY) TAMILS IN THE EELAM WARS

§ B.0 Framing

Malaiyaha Tamils — descendants of indentured labourers brought by the British from South India from the 1820s onward to work the coffee, then tea and rubber, plantations of the central highlands — are ethnically and linguistically Tamil but historically, socially, and politically distinct from Sri Lankan ("Ceylon") Tamils of the North and East. Their history runs largely parallel to, rather than intersecting with, the Eelam Wars: they were the target of a distinct, earlier, and in some ways more thoroughgoing project of legal exclusion (statelessness), and their political leadership pursued a fundamentally different strategy — negotiated trade-unionism and incremental citizenship restoration — rather than armed struggle or alignment with the Tamil nationalist insurgency. This makes them acutely vulnerable to erasure in both nationalist narratives: Eelam-nationalist accounts have sometimes claimed Hill Country Tamils as part of an undifferentiated "Tamil nation" whose interests the LTTE represented, despite the CWC/Thondaman leadership's explicit rejection of that framing and its choice to work within the unitary Sri Lankan state; Sinhala-nationalist accounts have used the Hill Country community's non-participation in the armed conflict to suggest Tamil grievances generally were exaggerated or externally driven, ignoring the severe, distinct discrimination visited on Hill Country Tamils by the same Sinhala-nationalist state. [Tier-A: Bass, *Everyday Ethnicity in Sri Lanka* (2013); Jegathesan, *Tea and Solidarity* (2019); Kanapathipillai, *Citizenship and Statelessness in Sri Lanka* (2009)]

§ B.1 The 1948-49 Disenfranchisement and Subsequent Deportation Regime

Ceylon Citizenship Act No. 18 of 1948 established citizenship criteria (descent-based, requiring proof of paternal-line Ceylon residency going back generations, with documentation requirements plantation workers — largely illiterate, and whose employment/residency records were held by British planters rather than the workers themselves — could rarely satisfy) that in practice excluded the great majority of Indian-origin Tamils, then roughly 11-12% of the population (approximately 780,000 in 1946 census figures, rising toward the commonly cited ~975,000 figure used for the cohort affected across the following decades). The Ceylon (Parliamentary Elections) Amendment Act of 1949 then removed voting rights from those without citizenship, disenfranchising the community as a political bloc precisely at the moment of independence — widely analyzed as a deliberate move by the Sinhalese political leadership (D.S. Senanayake's government) to eliminate a voting bloc perceived as likely to support Left/estate-labour parties and to reduce the political weight of a population seen as "Indian" rather than properly "Ceylonese." Valli Kanapathipillai's *Citizenship and Statelessness in Sri Lanka: The Case of the Tamil Estate Workers* (Anthem Press, 2009) is the Tier-A monograph documenting this process, its legal architecture, and its consequences in detail. [Tier-A: Kanapathipillai 2009; Wikipedia synthesis of Ceylon Citizenship Act corroborated by standard Sri Lankan constitutional histories]

Sirima-Shastri Pact (1964) between Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Indian PM Lal Bahadur Shastri agreed that of approximately 975,000 "stateless" persons of Indian origin, India would grant citizenship and repatriate about 525,000 (plus natural increase) over 15 years, while Ceylon would grant citizenship to about 300,000 (plus natural increase), leaving the status of the remainder (~150,000) for further negotiation.

Indira-Sirima Pact (1974) divided this residual group roughly equally between the two countries. Implementation of both pacts was slow, bureaucratically punishing, and left a substantial population in prolonged legal limbo for decades. [Tier-A: Kanapathipillai 2009, detailed treatment of both pacts and their implementation gaps]

Deportations. Under the repatriation provisions, several hundred thousand Hill Country Tamils were repatriated to India (a country many had never lived in and to which they had no living ties) through the 1960s-1980s, a process Kanapathipillai and others characterize as a form of state-engineered statelessness resolved through expulsion rather than inclusion — a distinct and earlier "erasure" story than the Northern Muslim expulsion, though structurally analogous in outcome (removal of a population from the polity via administrative/legal rather than

direct paramilitary means). [Tier-A: Kanapathipillai 2009]

§ B.2 The 1977 Anti-Tamil Pogrom: Hill Country Impact

Following the 1977 general election (in which the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) won a mandate on a secession platform for the North and East), anti-Tamil violence broke out nationally, including significantly in the plantation districts of the Hill Country — a dimension frequently underweighted in accounts that treat 1977 primarily as a Colombo/Jaffna-axis event. Official government figures put deaths at approximately 125; other estimates (cited via UTHR-J and other sources) suggest closer to 300 killed nationally, with plantation-area Tamils — despite having no connection to the TULF's secessionist platform and no history of participation in Northern/Eastern Tamil nationalist politics — targeted by Sinhala mobs partly because "Tamil" ethnic markers were read without regard to the deep political distinction between Hill Country and Northern/Eastern Tamil communities. This 1977 violence is a critical corrective to any narrative that treats Hill Country Tamils as insulated from anti-Tamil violence merely because they were not aligned with the LTTE or its precursor militant groups. [Tier-A: cited casualty ranges per Wikipedia/UTHR(J)-sourced accounts — figures should be attributed to specific sources, not merged; Tier-A for the basic pattern of plantation-district violence, documented in UTHR-J retrospectives and Rajan Hoole's writing]

§ B.3 Black July 1983: Impact on the Hill Country

The July 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom (following the LTTE ambush killing of 13 Sri Lankan soldiers) also produced significant violence against plantation Tamil communities, including arson of estate housing (line rooms) and displacement of plantation workers, alongside the much better-documented Colombo-centered violence. This dimension is comparatively under-researched relative to the Colombo narrative but is acknowledged in general histories of 1983 (e.g., in accounts referencing violence "spreading beyond Colombo to the estates") and in Hill Country community memory documented by ISD (Institute for Social Development) oral history projects. [Tier-B: general 1983 histories reference estate-area violence, but dedicated Tier-A quantification specific to Hill Country impact is thinner than for Colombo/Jaffna; flagged as research gap]

§ B.4 Position During the Eelam Wars: Why the Hill Country Did Not Join the Armed Struggle

Several converging Tier-A-supported factors explain the Hill Country's non-participation in the LTTE-led armed insurgency, a fact both nationalist narratives tend to under-explain (Eelam-nationalist accounts sometimes imply passive solidarity that did not translate into political alignment; Sinhala-nationalist accounts sometimes imply this non-participation as evidence Tamil grievances were localized/exaggerated):

1. Geographic and demographic isolation from the conflict zone. Hill Country Tamils are concentrated in the central highlands (Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Kandy, Matale districts), geographically and administratively separate from the North and East that constituted the LTTE's claimed "traditional homeland" and operational theatre. The LTTE's homeland claim, based on continuous Tamil-majority settlement in the North and East, structurally excluded the Hill Country, whose Tamil population resulted from 19th-century colonial labour migration rather than pre-colonial settlement. [Tier-A: Bass, *Everyday Ethnicity in Sri Lanka*, 2013, ch. 1-2, on the homeland-claim's exclusion of Hill Country Tamils]
2. Distinct economic dependency. The plantation economy tied Hill Country Tamil livelihoods directly to continued operation of estates within the unitary Sri Lankan state and its export economy; armed secession offered no plausible economic improvement and considerable risk to an already precarious workforce. [Tier-A: Jegathesan, *Tea and Solidarity*, 2019]
3. CWC/Thondaman's strategic choice of the trade-union and parliamentary path. Savumiamoorthy Thondaman, who led the Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC) from 1939 (as general secretary, later president) until his death in 1999, made the deliberate and long-sustained strategic choice to pursue Hill Country Tamil interests through trade-union bargaining and, crucially, through entering coalition governments with Sinhala-majority parties

(notably an alliance with J.R. Jayewardene's UNP from 1977, continuing in various governing coalitions through the 1980s-90s) in exchange for incremental citizenship grants, wage agreements, and cabinet representation (Thondaman himself held ministerial posts). This is the single most consequential strategic divergence from the Northern/Eastern Tamil nationalist trajectory: rather than seeking a separate state or federal Tamil unit, CWC leadership under Thondaman pursued inclusion within the unitary state on improved terms, betting — correctly, in narrow citizenship terms, though at real political cost in autonomy and dignity — that patient coalition politics would restore citizenship and protect plantation workers' economic interests better than alignment with an armed secessionist movement whose homeland claim did not even encompass Hill Country territory. Critics within and outside the Hill Country community (including later Hill Country political figures) have argued this strategy, while pragmatically successful on narrow citizenship metrics, entrenched long-term structural neglect of the plantation sector (housing, land rights, wages) by tying Hill Country political leadership to whichever Sinhala-majority party held power, with limited independent leverage. [Tier-A: Bass 2013; Jegathesan 2019; general Sri Lankan political histories of the CWC-UNP alliance]

4. Ethnic/caste and social distance from Northern/Eastern Tamils. McGilvray, Daniel Bass, and other scholars document persistent social distance — including caste-based hierarchy perceptions by some Northern Tamils toward Hill Country Tamils (many of whom derive from lower-caste South Indian labour-recruitment pools), regional dialect differences, and distinct cultural practices — that limited organic political solidarity between the communities, notwithstanding shared language and periodic rhetorical claims of pan-Tamil unity by Northern nationalist politicians. [Tier-A: Bass 2013, extensive treatment of intra-Tamil social distance]

§ B.5 Present Day: Housing, Land, Citizenship, Wages, Commemoration

- Line-room housing. The colonial-era "line room" system — barrack-style single-room worker housing, typically without individual sanitation, originally built for a transient labour force — remains the dominant housing form for a substantial share of plantation workers into the 21st century, documented extensively by ISD, Jegathesan, and UN-linked housing rights reporting as a persistent structural deprivation distinct from and additional to the citizenship question. [Tier-A: Jegathesan 2019; ISD publications]

- Land rights. Because plantation land is predominantly estate-owned (post-1970s nationalization created state-owned plantation companies, later partially privatized via management contracts from the 1990s), individual plantation worker households have historically lacked land ownership or even secure tenure over the housing they occupy — a structural land-rights deficit distinct from the North/East land-dispute questions (which center on displacement/occupation of previously-owned land) and instead rooted in never having held land title in the first place. [Tier-A: ISD and Bass 2013 discussions of estate land tenure]

- 2003 Grant of Citizenship Act. This Act finally granted Sri Lankan citizenship to the residual stateless population of Indian-origin Tamils remaining after the Sirima-Shastri and Indira-Sirima pacts' implementation, generally treated by scholars as closing the citizenship gap "in principle." [Tier-A: widely cited in Kanapathipillai's and subsequent scholarship as the formal end-point of the citizenship-denial era begun in 1948]

- Remaining statelessness. Despite the 2003 Act, UNHCR and Sri Lankan civil-society sources have documented a residual population of persons who remain undocumented or stateless in practice due to implementation gaps (birth registration failures, lost/never-issued documentation, generational gaps where parents never regularized status) — the scale of this residual population is contested and not comprehensively quantified in recent Tier-A sources; UNHCR statelessness mapping in Sri Lanka references the Hill Country Tamil case as a legacy caseload but exact current numbers should be sourced to UNHCR's most recent country-specific statelessness statistics rather than asserted here without a specific citation. [Tier-B: general acknowledgment of residual statelessness is well-established; precise current figures require direct citation to UNHCR's latest statelessness reporting, which should be checked for the specific year needed]

- Wage struggles. The "Rs 1000 per day" campaign — a sustained plantation trade-union and civil-society

campaign (spanning roughly the late 2010s into the 2020s, involving CWC and rival/successor unions as well as newer Hill Country political formations) demanding a daily wage of Rs 1,000 for plantation workers (compared to historically much lower collectively-bargained rates) — became a major mobilizing issue, reflecting continued economic marginalization of the plantation workforce and, notably, was pursued through strikes and wage-board/collective-bargaining mechanisms rather than through any framing linked to Tamil nationalist political demands. [Tier-B: extensive Sri Lankan labour-press coverage of the Rs 1000 campaign 2020-2021; treat specific wage figures/outcomes as time-bound and check current status if precision needed]

- 200-year commemoration, 2023. Marking two centuries since the first indentured labourers arrived (commonly dated from 1823 or thereabouts, with the Institute for Social Development (ISD) and the Collective for Historical Dialogue and Memory (CHDM) organizing the "Malaiyaham 200" deliberations in Nuwara Eliya and a related public exhibition, "ROOTED," in Colombo in August 2023). The Malaiyaham 200 deliberations produced a 13-point declaration (per Newswire.lk reporting, May 2023) articulating community demands — reported to include recognition of historical labour contribution, land rights, housing, and continued citizenship/documentation gaps, alongside political recognition — adopted at the Nuwara Eliya gathering bringing together plantation workers, trade unions, academics, and artists. [Tier-A: ISD as convening organization is a credible primary source; Tier-B for the specific enumerated content of the 13-point declaration, which should be verified against ISD's own published text if a full point-by-point rendering is needed]

§ B.6 The "Parallel Sovereignty" Question: What Malaiyaha Civil Society Actually Says

This is the point at which projection by outside observers (both Eelam-nationalist and Sinhala-nationalist) is most likely, and where the evidentiary base for firm claims is thinnest. Based on the available record:

- Malaiyaha civil-society organizations — the Institute for Social Development (ISD), the Plantation Human and Ecological Landscape/Rights (PHDA/PARL — note: verify exact expansion; treat as an Uva/Hill-Country-focused Tamil rights body), the Human Development Organisation (HDO), and the Uva Shakthi Foundation — have, in their public-facing work (deliberative fora such as Malaiyaham 200, published research, and advocacy campaigns), consistently framed Malaiyaha demands around citizenship completion, land rights, housing, wages, historical recognition, and political representation within the unitary Sri Lankan state's provincial and national structures — not around alignment with a Northeast Tamil federal or confederal self-determination project. The Malaiyaham 200 declaration and associated commemorative work emphasize historical erasure and labour recognition rather than a shared-sovereignty claim with Northern/Eastern Tamils. [Tier-A for ISD's role and the general thrust of its published advocacy — cite ISD's own publications directly for exact wording; Tier-B for characterizing the absence of a self-determination alignment claim, since this is an inference from the pattern of demands documented rather than a direct negative statement collected via systematic survey]

- Academic synthesis (Bass 2013; Jegathesan 2019) supports the conclusion that Malaiyaha political identity has been constructed, deliberately and over generations, as distinct from Northern/Eastern Tamil nationalist identity — "Malaiyaha Tamil" as a category is itself a relatively recent (late 20th/21st century) self-designation partly intended to assert this distinctiveness against both Sinhala-majoritarian erasure ("Indian Tamil," a colonial/state category with connotations of foreignness) and homogenizing Tamil-nationalist inclusion. [Tier-A: Bass 2013; Jegathesan 2019]

- No systematic, methodologically transparent survey specifically asking Malaiyaha respondents about support for/opposition to Northeast Tamil federalism or self-determination was identified in this research; CPA's general reconciliation surveys sometimes disaggregate by ethnicity (Sinhala/Tamil/Muslim) but do not always separately disaggregate Hill Country from Northern/Eastern Tamil respondents, which is itself a methodological gap worth flagging — the absence of disaggregated survey data is a real limitation on any confident claim about "what Malaiyaha public opinion holds" on the specific self-determination question, as opposed to what organized civil society leadership has publicly stated. [Tier-B/Research gap — flagged explicitly rather than filled with inference]

Conclusion on this point, stated with appropriate caution: the documentary record supports the claim that organized Malaiyaha civil society pursues a parallel but distinct rights agenda centered on citizenship, land, housing, and wages within the unitary state, rather than a shared-sovereignty or federal-alignment claim with Northeast Tamil nationalism — but this should be reported as the pattern visible in published advocacy and academic synthesis, not as a comprehensively surveyed popular-opinion finding.

§4 B.7 Malaiyaha Community Timeline (Tiered)

Date · Event · Tier

1820s onward · British-organized indentured labour migration from South India to Ceylon plantations begins · Tier-A

1948 · Ceylon Citizenship Act No. 18 — mass disenfranchisement · Tier-A

1949 · Ceylon (Parliamentary Elections) Amendment Act — voting rights removed · Tier-A

1964 · Sirima-Shastri Pact · Tier-A

1974 · Indira-Sirima Pact · Tier-A

1960s-80s · Deportations/repatriations to India under the pacts · Tier-A

Aug 1977 · 1977 anti-Tamil pogrom, including Hill Country plantation violence · Tier-A (event); figures vary by source

Jul 1983 · Black July; estate-area violence and displacement · Tier-B (Hill Country-specific quantification thin)

1977-99 · Thondaman/CWC coalition strategy with UNP-led governments · Tier-A

2003 · Grant of Citizenship Act · Tier-A

2010s · Institute for Social Development and allied bodies document ongoing housing/land/statelessness gaps · Tier-A

2020-21 · "Rs 1000/day" wage campaign · Tier-B

May 2023 · Malaiyaha 200 declaration (13 points), Nuwara Eliya · Tier-A (event); Tier-B (full content detail)

Aug 2023 · "ROOTED" exhibition, Colombo, marking 200 years · Tier-A

§5 PART C — WHAT A MATURE TAMIL SELF-DETERMINATION CASE MUST ACKNOWLEDGE

1. Harms done by the LTTE and by Tamil nationalist militancy more broadly, to non-Tamil-nationalist Tamil-speaking and Tamil communities, must be acknowledged without minimization or "context" that functions as exculpation. The October 1990 expulsion, the Kattankudy and Eravur massacres, and the LTTE's suppression of internal Tamil political pluralism (assassination of moderate Tamil politicians, including TULF figures, and violent elimination of rival militant groups such as PLOTE, TELO, and EPRLF cadres in intra-Tamil violence of the mid-1980s) are integral to the historical record any credible self-determination case must reckon with, not peripheral embarrassments to be bracketed. [Tier-A across cited sources above]

2. Harms shared with the Sinhala-majority state's majoritarian project must also be acknowledged as a basis for potential solidarity, without eliding the distinctness of each community's experience. The 1948-49 citizenship laws, the 1977 pogrom's Hill Country dimension, post-2009 anti-Muslim violence, and the broader unitary-state, Sinhala-Buddhist-nationalist constitutional architecture (from the 1972 and 1978 Constitutions' Buddhism-privileging clauses onward) are experienced, in different ways and to different degrees, by Tamils, Muslims, and Malaiyaha Tamils alike, and constitute the actual common ground for a plural minority coalition — a ground of shared subordination to Sinhala-Buddhist majoritarianism, not of shared ethnonational identity or

shared support for a single Tamil homeland claim. [Tier-A: synthesis of cited sources]

3. Separate agency must be respected as a matter of principle, not merely tactics. Both Muslims and Malaiyaha Tamils have exercised, and continue to exercise, independent political agency — the SLMC's "third nation" positioning, and the CWC/Thondaman trade-union-and-coalition strategy — that were rational, self-directed responses to their specific structural position, not failures of solidarity or false consciousness to be corrected by inclusion in someone else's national project. A mature self-determination case treats these communities as parties with their own legitimate constitutional claims requiring independent accommodation, not as constituencies to be absorbed, spoken for, or claimed retroactively as having "really" supported the Tamil nationalist project all along.

§6 PART D — COMPARATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL LITERATURE: ACCOMMODATING THREE-PLUS COMMUNITIES

- India's linguistic states model (States Reorganisation Act, 1956, and subsequent reorganizations) demonstrates that federal units can be drawn to protect specific linguistic-cultural communities' self-government without requiring that every unit correspond to a single "national" claim, and that the number of federal units can expand over time (from 14 to 28 states plus union territories) to accommodate previously-unrepresented sub-communities — a precedent relevant to arguments for a district- or sub-regional-level Muslim autonomous unit within or alongside a Tamil-majority Northeast unit, rather than forcing a binary Sinhala-state/Tamil-unit structure. However, India's model has also been criticized (including by scholars of Indian federalism) for sometimes freezing linguistic-majoritarian dominance within states against internal minorities — a caution directly relevant to Muslim concerns about a Tamil-majority Northeast unit. [Tier-A: general comparative federalism literature on Indian linguistic reorganization; apply with appropriate specificity if a named source is required for publication]

- Bosnia's "constituent peoples" framework (Dayton Constitution, 1995), recognizing Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats as three constituent peoples with guaranteed representation and veto mechanisms at the state level, offers a model for formal multi-communal constitutional recognition beyond a binary majority-minority framework, but is also widely criticized in the comparative-constitutional literature for entrenching ethnic categories rigidly, producing governmental paralysis, and marginalizing those who do not identify with any of the three constituent categories (notably Bosnia's "Others," including Roma and Jews, who successfully challenged their exclusion from presidency eligibility at the European Court of Human Rights in *Sejdi-Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2009) — a directly relevant cautionary precedent for any Sri Lankan settlement that formally recognizes Sinhala, Tamil, and Muslim as constituent categories, since it risks marginalizing Malaiyaha Tamils, Burghers, Veddas, and other groups if not carefully designed. [Tier-A: Bosnia's constitutional structure and the *Sejdi-Finci* precedent are well-documented in comparative constitutional and ECtHR literature]

- Belgium's communities/regions model — separating linguistic communities (Flemish, French, German-speaking) from territorial regions (Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels), with distinct competences for each axis — offers a structurally sophisticated precedent potentially applicable to Sri Lanka's problem of communities whose political claims are not perfectly territorially congruent (as with the Muslim East and the geographically dispersed Malaiyaha Tamils): a settlement could, in principle, separate territorial devolution (a Northeast provincial unit with Tamil-majority self-government) from non-territorial or asymmetric community-based mechanisms (statutory Muslim representation guarantees; Hill Country-specific socioeconomic and citizenship-completion mechanisms) rather than requiring every community's claim to be resolved through the same territorial-federal instrument. Belgium's model is also criticized for chronic institutional complexity and periodic governmental deadlock, a real cost to weigh against its accommodation benefits. [Tier-A: Belgian federalism is extensively documented in comparative federalism scholarship]

Overall comparative conclusion: the literature supports the proposition that a durable Sri Lankan constitutional settlement addressing the Northeast question would need to move beyond a Sinhala-Tamil binary and beyond even a Sinhala-Tamil-Muslim triangular framing, incorporating asymmetric, multi-track mechanisms (territorial

devolution for Tamil-majority areas; distinct statutory or sub-regional protections for Eastern Muslims; distinct citizenship-completion, land, and socioeconomic mechanisms — not necessarily territorial autonomy — for Malaiyaha Tamils; and open, non-exhaustive categories to avoid the Bosnian "Others" problem for Burghers, Veddas, and other small communities) rather than a single federal-unit solution modeled only on the Tamil nationalist homeland claim.

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- Precise current (post-2015) legal/administrative status of individually confiscated Northern Muslim properties from 1990 — thin Tier-A documentation.
 - Comprehensive Tier-A dossier of state/Home Guard-attributed violence against Muslims, comparable in evidentiary density to the LTTE-attributed dossier.
 - Full verified expansion and mandate of "PARL" among Malaiyaha civil-society organizations (name requires direct verification against the organization's own materials).
 - Current (most recent year) UNHCR statelessness figures specific to residual Hill Country Tamil caseload.
 - Systematic, ethnically-disaggregated survey data on Malaiyaha Tamil public opinion (as opposed to civil-society leadership statements) regarding Northeast Tamil federalism/self-determination.

What this is not

- A research deposit from the vault, published for reading. Human review of every claim continues; figures are the cited sources' own, never TLTE's.
- Does not name serving personnel, survivors, or families; does not publish verdicts or forecasts.
- Not a statement on behalf of all Tamils, and not a call for any unlawful act.