

# The Tamils in Sri Lanka: From Tigers Into Lambs

---

/EINPresswire.com/ - March 4, 2013:

The Tamils in Sri Lanka: From Tigers Into Lambs

By: Jack Healey. Founder, Human Rights Action Center.

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jack-healey/the-tamils-in-sri-lanka-f b 2806610.html>

"The Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam ([TGTE](#)) had an inaugural meeting in Philadelphia in 2009 after preparing with the assistance of a diverse advisory committee....This article is about the yearning of a people for basic human and political rights from an armed struggle to a nonviolent and democratic one. The world awaits your response."

Imagine a global nation of people stretched into a diaspora that numbers perhaps 80 million people, more than five times the global Jewish population. Have you heard of the Tamils? They are in South India, Malaysia, Canada, Sri Lanka and around the world. Mostly Hindu, there is a substantial Christian and Muslim population.

You're probably familiar with the work of A.R. Rahman from *Slumdog Millionaire* and M.I.A. from *Paper Planes*. You've likely been entranced by the work of film director M. Night Shyamalan and have laughed at the comic timing of Aziz Ansari on *Parks and Recreation*. You may not be aware of the groundbreaking work of Navi Pillay, as United Nations officials hardly get name-checked in pop culture, but she has expanded the recognition of human rights into long-overdue areas. In short, you may never have heard of the Tamils, but you have certainly come into contact with their work in arts, politics, and sciences. But this article is not about Tamil culture.

After decades of being systematically marginalized in Sri Lanka since independence from the British, Black July in 1983 saw the slaughter of an unknown number of Tamils. Estimates range between 400 and 3000 Tamils killed and perhaps 25,000 injured. This was the onset of large-scale civil war. Continuing for decades in fits and starts, the armed conflict ended with a massive military operation by the Sri Lankan government forces against Tamils struggling for an independent state. In an unfortunate chapter of the war's closing days, in May of 2009, the White Flag Incident saw the killing of Tamils who thought they'd arranged for a surrender. The "resolution" of the conflict has left a diaspora increased by refugees, perhaps 90,000 Tamil war widows, and has attracted the attention of international officials concerned about the ongoing

strife faced by Tamils in Sri Lanka. But this article is not about civilian strife or poor conduct in a rather "uncivil" war.

Tamils have continued to suffer with the systematic rape of women, men, and children. A report issued by Human Rights Watch this past week documents rape and sexual violence committed against Tamils in custody and is a deeply disturbing read. An earlier piece discussed the "capture" of a 12-year-old Tamil boy who was given a snack and began to relax before he was shot and executed at point blank range for the crime of being a family member of a Tamil soldier. There are reams of documentation of this violence, committed by a government that has been bending its peculiar Buddhist mythology to serve its rather un-Buddhist pogrom against those deemed ethnically different. But this article is not about the violence inflicted on children or the use of sexual violence by the state.

The government of Sri Lanka has been an item of concern to the international community and that concern grows. In the past month, they have refused human rights monitors from the United Nations and the UK has determined that the threat of torture faced by returning Tamils is enough to preclude their deportation back to the island nation. It is vital that international teams are given access to the Tamil areas in both the east and the north to assess the extent of the suffering and to try to alleviate the gap in basic human needs there. The Sri Lankan government must act in accordance with human rights standards and the principles of common civility. But this article is not about the failure of the government in Colombo to live up to international standards in human rights.

What it is about is the transformation of the "Tigers" into Lambs. In 2009, the LTTE suffered military defeat at the hands of the government. The wide expectation was that what was to come was perhaps decades of lower intensity conflict as arms caches might be rebuilt and an organization recovered. What happened instead was that the Tamil struggle reoriented as a nonviolent campaign, one that has been inclusive and international for elements of the community from around the world.

The Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) had an inaugural meeting in Philadelphia in 2009 after preparing with the assistance of a diverse advisory committee. They have taken referendums of their community sentiment, have held elections about priorities and principles, and are continuing to strive for their right to basic human rights and basic political rights in accordance with the wishes of their community. This is revolutionary, and not in the old-school militancy that makes for soundbites and copy.

This is a revolution of spirit for basic rights that has transformed an armed group into an exemplar of civil society participation and with a commitment to nonviolence. If only the Sri Lankan government would rise to meet this challenge and opportunity. This article is a call to recognize and appreciate and acknowledge that the Tigers have become Lambs and that the commitment to the principles enshrined in common decency and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is worth working for in the Tamil community and for all peoples. This article is

about the Tigers that have become Lambs and who deserve the world's attention and work so that their commitment to nonviolence matches the world's commitment to their human and political rights. Wake up, world. A diaspora of 80 million is waiting for your attention. This article is about the yearning of a people for basic human and political rights from an armed struggled to a nonviolent and democratic one. The world awaits your response.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jack-healey/the-tamils-in-sri-lanka-f\\_b\\_2806610.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jack-healey/the-tamils-in-sri-lanka-f_b_2806610.html)

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/139944667>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2024 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.