

July 1619 — The First Black July: The Month Tamils Lost Their Sovereignty

Tamil Diaspora urges July 1619 to be remembered alongside July 1983 as a Black July — when the Portuguese conquered the Jaffna Kingdom and ended Tamil self-rule

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, October 16, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For Tamils across the world, July 1983 is remembered as Black July, the month of massacres, destruction, and displacement. But history reminds us that another Black July occurred more than 350 years earlier — in July 1619 — when the Portuguese captured the sovereign Tamil Kingdom of Jaffna, executing King Cankili II and ending centuries of Tamil self-rule.

The Jaffna Kingdom, ruled by the Arya Chakravarti dynasty from the 13th century onward, stood as a symbol of Tamil administration, culture, and independence. After resisting two earlier Portuguese invasions (1560 and 1591), the kingdom finally fell in July 1619 when the Portuguese commander Philippe de Oliveira defeated Cankili II and annexed Jaffna into colonial rule. The king was taken to Goa and executed, and the Tamil homeland lost its sovereignty for the first time in history.

“This was not only the fall of a kingdom — it was the erasure of Tamil sovereignty,” said a spokesperson for Tamil Diaspora News. “From 1619 onward, Tamils faced forced conversions, temple destruction, and cultural displacement — the beginning of centuries of oppression that culminated again in Black July 1983.”

A Call to Remember Both Black Julys

Tamil Diaspora News calls on Tamils worldwide to observe July 1619 as a National Black Day of Tamil Sovereignty Loss, alongside July 1983.

Both dates mark turning points:

1619 — the end of independence.

1983 — the attempt to erase the Tamil people themselves.





July 1619 was the first Black July—Tamil sovereignty buried by colonial conquest. July 1983 echoed it, as Tamil lives burned under racism.

Remembering both demands justice, history, and a future. Now.”

Editor, Tamil Diaspora News

“History repeats when it is not remembered,” the statement reads. “By acknowledging July 1619 as the First Black July, we recognize how long the Tamil nation has suffered under external domination — and reaffirm our commitment to reclaim self-determination through peaceful, lawful means.”

Historical Background

1560: Portuguese first invasion — defeated by King Cankili I.

1591: Second invasion — Puviraja Pandaram killed;

Ethirimanna Cinkam installed as puppet ruler.

1619 (July): Final conquest — Cankili II defeated; Jaffna annexed; sovereignty lost.

1658: Dutch captured Jaffna from the Portuguese.

From that loss of independence in 1619, foreign powers — Portuguese, Dutch, and British — successively ruled Tamil lands until 1948. After independence, Tamil political rights continued to be denied, leading to the tragic Black July 1983 riots that forced hundreds of thousands into exile.

Quote

“July 1619 was the first Black July — the day Tamil sovereignty was buried under colonial conquest. July 1983 was its echo, when Tamil lives were burned under racism. Remembering both is not about grief alone, but about justice, history, and the future.”

— Tamil Diaspora News Statement

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