



Statement on Tamil Protests against Sri Lankan Independence Day and the Continued Call for Self-Determination

Washington D.C.; February 7, 2023 – PEARL stands in solidarity with the Tamil protestors who have been marching over the past few days, in the face of intimidation and surveillance from security forces, to reject the commemoration of the 75th Sri Lankan Independence Day. Students, civil society activists, relatives of the disappeared, and other members of the community marched for four days from the North to the East of the island, symbolically marking the homeland of the Tamil nation. Additionally, these protests were echoed internationally by solidarity protests within the Tamil diaspora. Amongst their comprehensive declaration of [demands](#), the protestors have called for the end of the military occupation and state-sponsored Sinhalaization of the Tamil homeland, justice for the Tamil genocide, the truth about the whereabouts of the forcibly disappeared, and the recognition of the Tamil nation and its inherent right to self-determination.

Tamils have firmly rejected Sri Lankan Independence Day, instead declaring it a 'Black Day' for the Tamil nation in response to 75 years of state-led oppression and violence. After receiving independence from the British colonial powers, rising chauvinist Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism has animated successive Sri Lankan governments to this day, entrenching this racist ideology within every aspect of the unitary state. In response, Tamils have consistently demanded equality, self-rule, freedom, and the abolishment of discriminatory laws and unitary state structures. Tamil resistance to the Sinhala-Buddhist nation-building exercise was met with state-sanctioned and state-sponsored violence during the anti-Tamil pogroms of 1956, 1958, 1977, 1981, and 1983. The armed Tamil resistance to state violence was brutally crushed in 2009, when the Sri Lankan government committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide against the Tamil people, killing tens of thousands. The exact number of Tamil people unaccounted for and presumed dead range from 40,000 to 169,796. Tamils continue to experience ongoing human rights violations at the hands of the Sri Lankan state and are the target of aggressive Sinhalaization and militarization efforts, a deliberate strategy by the Sri Lankan state to change the ethnic composition of the traditional Tamil homeland. Reflecting on Sri Lanka's last 75 years as an independent state, it is apparent that the country has failed to provide security, peace, and a long-term political solution to the ethnic conflict on the island. Faced with ongoing violence and the political and economic failures of the Sri Lankan state, Eelam Tamils call for international justice, the recognition of the Tamil genocide, and demand self-determination as the only remaining option to provide sustainable security, stability and prosperity for the Tamil people.

The Sri Lankan government's denial and criminalization of the Tamil people's demands for self-determination since the time of independence reflects the ethnocentric nature of the state and the failure across generations to meaningfully address the needs of the Tamil people. PEARL stands with the Tamil protestors in their demands and calls on the international community to not only deliver justice and accountability to the Tamil nation for the mass atrocities committed against them, but to recognize the Tamil people's legitimate right to self-determination. Sustainable peace and stability for all communities on the island can only be ensured by addressing the Tamil nation's long-standing grievances and demands.