



The heart of the struggle: Tamil women leading the fight for justice

Washington D.C.; October 10, 2025 - On Eelam Tamil Women's Day, PEARL honors the resilience, courage, and sacrifices of Tamil women who have long stood at the forefront of the Tamil people's struggle for justice and self-determination.

Tamil women continue to bear the brunt of systemic violence, harassment and intimidation by the Sri Lankan state, yet they remain at the forefront of the struggle for justice and self-determination. For over 3,155 days, Tamil Families of the Disappeared have protested, demanding answers about their loved ones taken by the Sri Lankan state. In that time, over 350 family members have died without ever learning the fate of their loved ones. Following a seven-day hunger strike in early October, the families burnt a copy of an early draft UN resolution, reiterating their call for Sri Lanka to be referred to the International Criminal Court and for an international, independent mechanism to investigate genocide and other grave crimes. While the resolution "[recognizes] that many cases of enforced disappearance remain unresolved in Sri Lanka, and the prolonged suffering this has caused to the families of the disappeared," the international community continues to endorse failed domestic processes that the Tamil families themselves have repeatedly rejected. The families' persistence underscores the state's ongoing lack of political will for meaningful justice and accountability, and member states' overly cautious approach toward the Sri Lankan government.

Across the North-East, Tamil women remain on the frontlines of resistance to state-sponsored land grabs, militarization, and cultural erasure. They endure surveillance and intimidation simply for exercising their right to protest, to mourn, and to remember. Yet Tamil women have also taken on leadership roles in civic spaces, often at great personal risk, despite facing systemic exclusion and underrepresentation. Their persistence highlights both their resilience and the urgent need to ensure Tamil women are meaningfully included in political decision-making spaces. Despite decades of impunity and continued state repression, Tamil women have refused to be silenced.

This year marks the 38th death anniversary of 2nd Lt. Malathy, the first female LTTE fighter to die in combat. Her legacy reminds us that the Tamil struggle for justice and self-determination must center women's voices and leadership. This year, as we mark PEARL's 20th anniversary, we also pay tribute to the courageous women who founded and shaped PEARL, who came together in the face of injustice and global silence to demand justice and self-determination for the Tamil people. Their vision laid the foundation for what PEARL has become today: a women-led movement for justice, rooted in community and the belief that every Eelam Tamil deserves dignity and self-determination. We honor the legacy of the Tamil women whose unwavering resilience continues to embody the spirit of the Tamil struggle and inspire our mission.