### SRI LANKA

## **Muslims**

Activity: 1981-2012

#### **General notes**

NA

#### Movement start and end dates

- Founded in 1981, the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress (SLMC) is the main Muslim self-determination organization in Sri Lanka. While remaining committed to a united Sri Lanka state, the SLMC campaigned for regional autonomy and a separate administrative entity for the Muslims living in southeastern Ceylon (Keesing's; Lexis Nexis; Marshall & Gurr 2003; Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, n.d). We therefore peg the start date of the movement at 1981.
- The SLMC lost some of its drive and stature after the death of its long-time leader in 2000 (MRGI). The SLMC remains active as of 2020 but it no longer makes self-rule claims. The last evidence for a self-rule claim we could find is in the context of the 2002 peace talks between the LTTE (Uyangoda 2007). Based on the ten-year rule, we code an end to the movement in 2012. [start date: 1981; end date: 2012]

#### Dominant claim

- The main demand of the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress has been territorial autonomy through the establishment of separate administrative entities (regional councils) for Muslims in the north and east of Sri Lanka (Minority Rights Group International). This is supported by Uyangoda (2007), who also mentions the demand for a separate Muslim unit "that would combine administrative divisions with the Muslim majority in Amparai and Batticaloa districts". [1981-2012: autonomy claim]

# **Independence claims**

NA

## Irredentist claims

NA

### **Claimed territory**

- The Sri Lankan Muslims have demanded separate regional councils for Muslims in the north and east of Sri Lanka, in particular in the Amparai and Batticaloa districts. We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database

## **Sovereignty declarations**

NA

## Separatist armed conflict

- We found no reports of separatist violence, hence a NVIOLSD classification. [NVIOLSD]

#### Historical context

Muslims make up approximately seven percent of the population of Sri Lanka and are divided into three sections: Sri Lankan Moors (93%), Indian Moors and Malays (Nubin 2002). In the eraly twentieth century, the previously peaceful Sinhalese-Muslim relationship suffered a heavy setback when rising Sinhalese nationalism and anti-minority sentiments targeted non-Sinhalese and non-Buddhists. The 1915 anti-Muslim riots by Sinhalese nationalists mainly targeted Indian Moors (Svanberg and Westerlund 1999; Zackariya Shanmugaratnam 1999). Following the Donoughmore Commission (1927/28), universal suffrage and joint electorates were introduced in 1931. The new system disadvantaged the Muslims - who demanded separate electorates – as they only managed to get one Muslim candidate elected in the first election to the assembly (Zackariya & Shanmugaratnam 1999). After the country gained independence in 1948, nationalist politics gained momentum. The 1950s saw the Sinhalese-dominated government implement public policies that institutionalized the Sinhalese dominance. The most prominent policy was the Official Language Act No. 33 of 1956 that made Sinhala the 'one official language of Ceylon'. Since the 'Sinhala Only Act' was (counterintuitively) supported by many Muslims, and in particular its Colombo-based leadership, it is somewhat ambiguous to consider this a restriction, despite the fact that Muslims are predominantly Tamil-speaking (Svanberg and Westerlund 1999).

#### **Concessions and restrictions**

- Muslims opposed the Tamil claims in fear of becoming a minority within a Tamil-dominated autonomous entity (Minority Rights Group International). They were thus often trapped between the two warring factions and were particularly targeted by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The 1987 "Indo-Sri Lanka accord" provided for the devolution of power through the establishment of a regional provincial council in the Tamil areas (Hennayake 1989); the Muslims were left out. Hence, the 1987 accord does not constitute a concession to the Muslims. It could even be considered a restriction, given the Muslim opposition to Tamil claims for more autonomy in the northern and eastern part of the island, but we consider this too ambiguous to be coded.
- Although the Muslims have been severly affected by the civil war, their role in the peace talks was at best marginal. Officially, they were not considered party to the 2002 process and were exluded from the negotiations (Minority Rights Group International). Hence, there was no concession.
- The 2010s saw intercommunal violence, attacks on mosques, Muslims businesses and Muslim populated villages (Amnesty International 2021). The Sri Lankan state was accused of complicity, i.e., standing idly by while Muslims were targeted (Abdul Razak & Mohamed Saleem 2022). This was complemented by two hardline Buddhist nationalist governments of Rajapaksa, which imposed cultural and religious restrictions on Muslims, such as the 2020 requirement to immediately burn the deceased, ostensibly a response to COVID-19 pandemic, but at the same time a direct attack on Muslim burial practices (Haniffa 2021).
- Bans of the burqa and Muslim schools were discussed in 2020, but not implemented (Amnesty International 2021).

Dogional	lautonomy
Kegional	i autonomy

NA

## De facto independence

NA

# Major territorial changes

NA

#### **EPR2SDM**

Movement	Muslims
Scenario	1:1
EPR group(s)	Moors (Muslims)
Gwgroupid(s)	78002000

#### Power access

- We follow EPR. [1981-1987: discriminated; 1988-2005: junior partner; 2006-2012: powerless]

## **Group size**

- We follow EPR. [1981-1983: 0.06; 1984-2012: 0.08]

# **Regional concentration**

- The Sri Lankan Muslims are concentrated in the north and east of the country. However, in none of the provinces do Muslims constitute a majority (de Mel et al. 2012: 113; also see this map (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Sadalmelik#/media/File:Sri\_Lanka\_Islam.svg). The Muslims do not form a majority in any larger area (also see GeoEPR). [not concentrated]

#### Kin

- According to EPR (scenario 1:1) there are numerous kin groups in neighboring and nonneighboring states. These are located in India (Other Muslims), Pakistan (Punjabi), Bangladesh (Bengali Muslims), Nepal (Muslims) and Mauritius (Muslims). [kin in neighboring country]

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### **Tamils**

Activity: 1949-2020

### **General notes**

NA

#### Movement start and end dates

- The first Tamil self-determination movement, the Tamil Federal Party was formally established in December 1949 as the competitor of the more conciliatory Tamil Congress. We therefore peg the start date of the movement at 1949. The Tamil Federal Party desired a federal system of government. It was renamed the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) in 1971.
- A new constitution approved in 1972 changed the island's name to Sri Lanka and institutionalized Buddhism as the state religion, despite Tamil protests. In response, Tamil separatists formed rebel organizations and additional nonviolent political parties. Specifically, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the strongest of Tamil separatist groups, was founded in 1972 when Tamil youth espousing a Marxist ideology and an independent Tamil state established a group called the Tamil New Tigers. The name changed to the LTTE in 1976. In addition, Tamil United Front was founded in May 1972 as a reaction against the 1972 constitution. It was a coalition of Tamil interest groups and legal parties including the Tamil Congress and the Federal Party, which were united by the goal of Tamil autonomy and espousing nonviolent means. This coalition was renamed the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) in 1976 (De Votta 2005; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 174f, 289ff; Hewitt et al. 2008; Marshall & Gurr 2003; Minahan 1996: 552ff, 2002: 1843ff; MAR; Samarasinghe 1990; UCDP/PRIO).
- Major civil war broke out in 1983 (Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl 2019). In 2009, the main rebel group the LTTE was defeated. The LTTE subsequently collapsed (UCDP). However, another organization the Tamil National Alliance (formed in 2001), which had links with the LTTE continued to make self-rule claims, with the focus switching from secession to autonomy (Burke 2010; Keethaponcalan 2020). [start date: 1949; end date: ongoing]

## Dominant claim

In 1972, and in response to the discriminatory constitution, numerous organizations came together to form the Tamil United Front (later Tamil United Liberation Front TULF). Militancy emerged within Tamil community, eventually leading to the 1976 issuing of the Vaddukoddai resolution that for the first time publicly demanded for a separate Tamil state called Eelam (Kearney 1985; UCDP). According to DeVotta (2005), there were however only "a few dozen Tamil rebels" who demanded outright secession in the late 1970s and early 1980s, whereas the vast majority was seeking more autonomy for their homeland within the Sri Lankan state. This claim is not supported by Kearney (1985), who saw a clear shift to separation already in the 1970s (also see Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 290). In light of the fact that the TULF, which issued another manifesto for independence in 1977, won all but one constituency with a Tamil majority in parliamentary elections in 1977, we go along with Kearney (1985) and code secession as the dominant claim from 1977 onwards (first of January rule). This is also in line with information from the Minority Rights Group International. The 1983 anti-Tamil riots brought along an increase in the number of rebels and a further radicalization of the separatists that eventually led to the Sri Lankan Civil War. The most radical organization, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which also aimed at secession, not only fought the Sri Lankans army but also other Tamil separatist groups such as the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) or the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and established itself as the most prominent actor on the Tamil side. [1949-1976: autonomy claim] [1977-2002: independence claim]

- In 2002, as a part of the Memorandum of Cessation of Hostilities, the LTTE dropped its demand for a separate state and accepted a less radical solution in the form of far-reaching autonomy within a unitary Sri Lanka (UCDP; Minorities at Risk Project). We thus code devolution as the dominant claim as of 2003 (first of January rule), in line with the set of proposals put forward by the LTTE in 2003, which outlined the group's vision of an autonomous, but not separate, north and eastern region in Sri Lanka. [2003-2005: autonomy claim]
- Renewed fighting broke out in 2005, making the ceasefire collapse and civil war re-erupt in 2006. While most moderate Tamil groups continue to seek autonomy, the LTTE does not accept a political solution short of an independent state. According to Minorities at Risk, the "LTTE has been the dominant force" and also backs the Tamil National Alliance, the largest Tamil group in Sri Lanka's parliament. We thus change the claim to secession for this last period until 2009. [2006-2009: independence claim]
- In 2009, the LTTE was defeated and subsequently collapsed (UCDP). The main organization making self-rule claims became the Tamil National Alliance, an alliance founded in 2001 and previously linked to the LTTE. It includes political parties but does not take ministerial positions in government (Keethaponcalan 2020). Their claim explicitly switched from secession to regional autonomy (Burke 2010). [2010-2020: autonomy claim]

# **Independence claims**

- The secessionist LTTE was formed in 1972 and independence became the dominant demand in 1976. In 2002, LTTE accepted a solution short of independence (see above); however, it is not sufficiently clear that this ended all agitation for independence. The independence claim reemerged in 2005. In 2009, LTTE was defeated, and the dominant claim switched to autonomy (see above). Yet, some smaller organizations continued to make independence demands (Roth 2015: 324). [start date: 1972; end date: ongoing]

#### **Irredentist claims**

NA

### **Claimed territory**

- The territory claimed by the LTTE is the independent Tamil state called "Tamil Eelam", which lies in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka (CISAC 2015). We code this claim based on the map included in Roth (2015: 316) using data on admin units from the Global Administrative Areas database for polygon definition.

### **Sovereignty declarations**

NA

## Separatist armed conflict

- Marshall & Gurr (2003) suggest that armed conflict started in 1975. This date is broadly corroborated by Hewitt & Cheetham (2000: 290), who report that the LTTE and other smaller rebel groups launched a separatist insurgency in the early 1970s. Yet, it is questionable whether the annual 25-deaths threshold was met before the early 1980s. According to the University of Central Arkansas conflict database, significant violence emerged in the 1970s, but it was largely inter-ethnic between Tamils and Sinhala, without direct state involvement. The most significant event reported was in 1977, when around 300 people are said to have died in such inter-ethnic

clashes. The same source reports several attacks on government forces as well, but the casualties do not add up to 25 in any year. Hewitt & Cheetham (2000: 290) similarly point to large-scale inter-ethnic violence, in particular in 1958, 1977, and 1981. According to UCDP, "[r]egular fighting did [...] not erupt until 1983." SATP notes that the LTTE began its armed campaign only in 1983. MAR's quinquennial rebellion score is only 2 (out of 7) in 1975-1979. We do not code separatist violence before 1983.

- The HVIOLSD coding for 1983-2002 and 2005-2009 follow Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl 2019).
- 2003 is coded as LVIOLSD as UCDP/PRIO codes a low-level intensity armed conflict over
- 2004 is coded as LVIOLSD based on SATP, which associates a total of 54 dead with the LTTE in that year, (7 security forces, 28 insurgents, and 18 civilians).
- 2010-2020 is coded as NVIOLSD, as no source reports separatist violence. [1949-1982: NVIOLSD; 1983-2002: HVIOLSD; 2003-2004: LVIOLSD; 2005-2009: HVIOLSD; 2010-2020: NVIOLSD]

#### **Historical context**

- Sri Lanka came under British control in 1796 and remained so until the island's independence in 1948. The British colonial rule integrated previously separated parts of the island in a centralized state and followed an essentialist approach that considered the ethnic groups as "inherently separate" (Bandarage 2008: 29).
- The minority Tamils benefited disproportionately from British colonialism: Tamils were enabled to access Christian missionary schools and learn English, whereas the Buddhist religion, which most of the majority Sinhalese adhere to, was marginalized. As a consequence of the Tamils' alacrity to learn the English language and in line with British practice to promote minorities as a source of support against majorities, Tamils constituted a disproportionately high percentage of the civil service and the colonial administration. This intrinsic advantage put the Tamils, particularly the vellala caste, in a position of social and economic superiority over the Sinhalese majority (Bandarage 2008; DeVotta 2005; Hewitt and Cheetham 2000).
- The island moved towards democracy in the early twentieth century. First elections to the Legislative Council took place in 1921 and were based on territorial representation. This favoured the majority Sinhalese and threatened the colonial privileges of the Tamils, leading to growing Tamil nationalism and the creation of the Ceylon Tamil League in 1923.
- The Donoughmore Commission introduced a constitutional reform as a basis for the elections that same year. The reform foresaw universal franchise and signified "the beginning of what came to be seen as a 'reconquest' of power by the Sinhalese Buddhist majority[...] and a diminution of the power of minorities, especially the Sri Lankan Tamils" (Bandarage 2008: 36). The Tamil proposal of a 'fifty-fifty' system, according to which the Sinhalese majority's representation would be restricted to 50% of the seats, was turned down by the British and the Soulbury Commission and thus did not figure in the Soulbury Constitution, which was adopted by the State Council and which constituted the basis for independence.

#### **Concessions and restrictions**

- After the country gained independence in 1948, nationalist politics gained momentum. The 1950s saw the Sinhalese-dominated government implement public policies that institutionalized Sinhalese dominance. The most prominent policy was the Official Language Act No. 33 of 1956 that made Sinhala the 'one official language of Ceylon' (DeVotta 2005; Minorities at Risk Project, UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia). [1956: cultural rights restriction]
- The Bandaranaike—Chelvanayakam Pact of 1957 recognized Tamil as a national language for administrative purposes in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. In addition, the pact stipulated the creation of several regional councils in order to grant some autonomy to the Tamil minority. In return, the Tamils agreed to abandon their demand for linguistic parity and the protest

- campaign (DeVotta 2005, 2002). There initial steps towards implementation as the legislators of the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna agreed on a draft of the Regional Councils Bill, which would combine the 22 districts of the country into regions. [1957: cultural rights & autonomy concession]
- The Bandaranaike–Chelvanayakam Pact was highly controversial among Sinhalese nationalists (and some Tamil extremists), who feared that autonomy would be the first step towards dismemberment and racial division. Increased protests, ethnic outbidding and defamation of the Prime Minister made the latter abrogate the Pact in March 1958 (DeVotta 2005, 2002). [1958: cultural rights & autonomy restriction]
- The constitution of 1972, promulgated in May, stipulated the primacy of Sinhala and Buddhism, thereby further downgrading minority languages and religious beliefs (DeVotta 2005; UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 290). [1972: cultural rights restriction]
- When the United National Party (UNP) came to power in 1977, the relationship between the center and the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) was cordial at first, as "Tamil was recognized in the constitution as a national language" in the 1978 constitution (Devotta 2005; Minority Rights Group International). Although Sinhalese remained the higher-status 'official language' and the constitution ignored Tamil claims for autonomy, this constitutes a cultural rights concession. [1978: cultural rights concession]
- A 1987 agreement (also with India participating; "Indo-Sri Lanka accord") provided for the devolution of power through the establishment of a regional provincial council in the Tamil areas. Furthermore, the thirteenth amendment to the constitution upgraded Tamil from a national language to an official language (Hennayake 1989; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 291). As part of the accord and in order to safeguard peace, around 50,000 Indian peacekeepers (IPKF) were deployed to Sri Lanka (Minorities at Risk Project). [1987: cultural rights & autonomy concession]
- The 2009 defeat of the LTTE resulted in heavy militarization of Tamil-populated areas by the Sri Lankan military (International Crisis Group, 2011). The local Tamil population was suppressed.
- In 2010, the Sri Lankan government considered outlawing the Tamil version of the national anthem despite the constitution making special provisions for it. While the government did not adopt a formal ban, several sources report that this resulted in an unofficial ban on the Tamil version at official events (Ameen 2016; Farook 2015). [2010: cultural rights restriction]
  - The unofficial ban on the singing of the national anthem in Tamil language was lifted in 2016 (Ameen 2016). [2016: cultural rights concession]
  - There was a second cultural rights restriction in 2010 because a ban was instated on Tamils celebrating their war dead. More specifically, there were restrictions and bans on the erection of memorials (People for Equality and Relief in Lanka (PEARL) 2016).
- In 2015, the ban on Tamils celebrating their war dead was lifted (France 24, 2020). [2015: cultural rights concession]
- In 2020, the hardline Rajapaksa government reinstated the ban on Tamils celebrating their war dead (France 24, 2020.) [2020: cultural rights restriction]

### Regional autonomy

- The explicit granting of such autonomy did not happen until 1987, when the Indo-Sri Lanka accord (see above) provided for regional autonomy and the creation of a regional provincial council in the Tamil areas (Hennayake 1989; Minority Rights Group International). However, at this point, civil war had already been going on for three years and had resulted in Tamil de-facto independence as of 1986. We thus code regional autonomy along the lines of the coding of defacto independence, which was set up one year prior to the regional autonomy concession. [1987-2009: regional autonomy]
- The regional council granted in 1987 continues to operate, but is meaningless due to strong military presence. Hence, we do not code regional autonomy beyond 2009.

## De facto independence

- Caspersen (2012) defines Eelam as a de facto state from 1986 to the military defeat of the LTTE in 2009, when the civil war was officially declared terminated after the LTTE had to give up its remaining territory and all of its leaders were killed. During the period from 1986 to 2009, many characteristics of a de facto independent state were present. McConell (2008) mentions an own police force, legal system, education and health systems, law school, courts as well as welfare organizations, which made the LTTE a 'de facto administration' in the controlled areas. We code de facto independence from 1987-2009 in accordance with the first of January rule. [1987-2009: de facto independence]

### Major territorial changes

- Sri Lanka attained independence in 1948, implying a host change. However, this was before the start date in 1949, and thus this is not coded.
- Following what has been lined out in the part on de facto independence and regional autonomy, we code two major territorial changes: The establishment of de-facto independence in 1986 and its dissolution in 2009. [1986: establishment de facto state] [2009: abolishment of de facto state]

#### **EPR2SDM**

Movement	Tamils
Scenario	1:1
EPR group(s)	Sri Lankan Tamils
Gwgroupid(s)	78004000

#### Power access

- EPR codes the Tamils as self-excluded in 1984-1986 (with autonomy), then powerless (with autonomy) in 1987-2005. Case evidence we have collected suggests different start and end dates for de facto independence (1987-2009), so we extend the 1983 discriminated code to 1986 (see above). For all other years, we rely on EPR. [1949-1955: powerless; 1956-1986: discriminated; 1987-2005: powerless; 2006-2020: discriminated]

# **Group size**

- We follow EPR. [1949-1986: 0.11; 1987: 0.1; 1988-2012: 0.09; 2013-2020: 0.11]

## **Regional concentration**

- The Tamils are concentrated in Eelam, where they make up 83% of the population (Minahan 2002: 1846). This amounts to 2,195,000 Tamils (in 2002), which is more than 50% of the 3.5 million Tamils in the whole of Sri Lanka in that same year. [concentrated]

## Kin

- According to EPR (scenario 1:1) there are numerous kin groups in neighboring and nonneighboring states that are large enough to be coded here. These are the Tamils in India, the Asians in South Africa, the East Indians in Malaysia, the Indians in Singapore, and the Tamils and Telugus in Mauritius. The Minorities at Risk data confirm the presence of ethnic kin but only code the Indian Tamils in the state of Tamil Nadu in India. Minahan (2002: 1843) lists the same countries as EPR and adds a few more (Canada, United States, United Kingdom). [kin in neighboring country]

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