

# EPRLF

**Eelam Peoples Revolutionary  
Liberation Front**

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PUBLISHED JAN. 1984

CORRECTIONS:

	PAGE	PARAGRAPH	LINE
SERVING - SEVERING	2	3	9
DEVASTED - DEVASTATED	5	3	1

## EPRLF - ORIGIN, IDEOLOGICAL POSITION, PROGRAMME AND STRUCTURE

Every national liberation struggle has a history of its own, depending on the specific socio-economic, political and cultural conditions in which a given oppressed nation finds itself. It is not the objective of this booklet to dwell into the deepening and the widening of national oppression against Tamil speaking people or the specificity of the Eelam National Question. A detailed study of the above would soon be published by EPRLF's Department of Information. What we propose to do in this booklet, however, is to provide an overview of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) which has now emerged as a major politico-military force within the Eelam National Liberation Movement.

### ORIGIN:

The inability of the Tamil political leadership in combating Sinhala chauvinism and national oppression backed by state terrorism, gave birth to new tendencies among the progressive sections of the petit-bourgeoisie, the radical intelligentsia and, in particular, the youth and students. These tendencies were based on the realization of the inadequacy of passive forms of resistance against national oppression and grew out of extreme discontent and frustration with the impotence of the traditional parliamentary leadership in providing a viable programme for the emancipation of the oppressed Tamil Speaking People.

One such manifestation of this tendency was the emergence of the Tamil Students Federation in 1970. Despite the display of immense courage and determination, the emerging tendency was still incoherent, in content and programme, and spontaneous, in nature. As a result, the thrust of resistance against national oppression was, to a large extent, individualized, fragmented and adventurist. Yet another limitation of this phase of the resistance movement was its narrow social base, comprising entirely of youth and students, who had been badly affected by institutionalized discrimination in the field of education and employment. However, with the increasing intensity of national oppression, pogroms and massacres, it became clear that all social classes, including the rural workers and peasants of Eelam and the Tamil plantation proletariat, were exposed to the full fury of Sinhala chauvinism and state terrorism. The conditions were now ripe for the emergence of a mass-based national liberation struggle and the radical intelligentsia responded accordingly. The Eelam Liberation Movement was formed in 1975 with the objective of building a mass base and preparing the masses for an armed

struggle, while a similar tendency within the Tamil expatriate intelligentsia led to the formation of the Eelam Revolutionary Organizers (EROS). Although, the youth character was still dominant, the students were designated the specific task of providing a vital supportive role, and not the leadership, in the struggle of the Tamil Speaking People in their homeland. Based on this ideological position the General Union of Eelam Students (GUES) was formed in August 1977. The first issue of the *Progressive Voice* which was published by the Department of Information of GUES, presented the ideological position on the role of students in the following manner:

“Student militancy and courage are great virtues; and so is their readiness to challenge the shibboleths of capitalist society. But the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois origin of most of them, their upbringing, their function in society in the future, result in the constant danger of sections of students submitting to confused ideas, fluctuating between extreme militancy on the one hand and deep depression and disillusionment on the other. It is only in close association with the working class movement and peasant movement... that students can overcome the built-in dangers that arise from their particular position in the society.”

At this stage, a debate was in progress within EROS, which had provided an arena to progressive intellectuals and future freedom fighters, pertaining to its organizational structure. The radical tendency within EROS took a firm stand against extreme centralization and personalization of leadership that was present within EROS and in other sections of the liberation movement. This tendency gained acceptance with the majority and steps were taken to form a revolutionary party organization, based on-democratic-centralism. Thus, the seeds for the growth of EPRLF was planted with GUES deciding to identify itself with this tendency, thereby, serving its links with EROS. It is also important to note that it was during this phase of the national liberation struggle that one could discern the genesis of a revolutionary thinking among the freedom fighters and the acceptance of Marxism-Leninism as the ideological weapon. The message was carried to the people at all levels and the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) was proclaimed as the movement that would provide the vanguard organization and take forward the national liberation struggle of the oppressed people of Eelam.

## THE IDEOLOGICAL POSITION AND PROGRAMME OF EPRLF

The EPRLF is of the firm conviction that the true liberation of Eelam, from national oppression by the neo-fascist state of Sri Lanka, can only take place with the complete social, economic and political emancipation of all oppressed sections of the Eelam social formation. The EPRLF is, therefore, committed to the revolutionary transformation of the Eelam national liberation struggle through the building of a mass base and preparing the masses for an armed struggle. Based on this ideological position, the EPRLF at its First Congress held between the 4th and 10th of October, 1981 presented its political programme and declared its ends and means as follows:

1. To establish complete liberation of Eelam, the motherland of the Tamil speaking People.
2. To found a socialist society to complete the political liberation by continuing to struggle for social, economic and cultural liberation.
3. To fight against Imperialism, Zionism and Racism, since the Eelam liberation struggle cannot be separated from the international progressive struggles.
4. To accept Historical and Dialectical Materialism as our philosophy and guiding light.

As a means of carrying out its Programme, the EPRLF embarked on fulfilling the following tasks:

- (i) The organizing of the radical intelligentsia, progressive sections of the petit-bourgeoisie and students under one unitary organizational framework towards the building of a vanguard of the oppressed masses of Eelam.
- (ii) The mobilizing of all working people of Eelam, in particular, agricultural workers, poor peasants, fishermen and the plantation proletariat, for the struggle against national oppression and class exploitation and towards the raising of political consciousness.
- (iii) The developing of the people's social and cultural ideals in tune with the national liberation struggle and the new socialist society to be created. In this regard, emphasis is given to the following:

- the raising of social consciousness against caste oppression and to smash the atrocities perpetrated in the name of casteism through all means and to indicate clearly that only the economic liberation will guarantee a permanent solution to the problem.
- the raising of social and cultural consciousness against male chauvinism and the economic, political and cultural oppression against women and the eradication of the dowry system which is degrading to, both, men and women.
- the eradication of ideas and superstitions not conducive to social and spiritual upliftment and to replace it with a culture that fulfill the national class struggles and the needs of the poor working class.
- Giving positive assurance to the people having faith in the religions of Eelam and safeguarding their fundamental right to prayer and worship.

(iv) The establishing of an economic base for the creation of socialist Eelam and to propogate to the People that economic development is inseparably bound with the total liberation of Eelam. The EPRLF is committed to the ownership of the means of production by the direct producers by creating the conditions for the eradication of the relations of production based on the exploitation of man by man. The specific nature of relations between the state sector, cooperatives and the private sector and the pace of socialist transition will be determined by the concrete conditions under which Eelam gains political independence and the nation state is established. Under the present existing conditions, we emphasise that it is the duty of the Eelam People to encourage indigenous production on priority basis and strengthen the home market. The Department of Development Planning of the EPRLF is currently engaged in drawing up blue prints for developmental projects based on the needs and resources of Eelam.

(v) The forging of fraternal links with the socialist countries, nations in the forefront of the struggle against Imperialism and the various progressive national liberation movements and to support to the proletarian parties and democratic forces in the capitalist countries and to establish cordial relations with them.

(vi) The formation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

## THE FRONTAL ORGANIZATIONS OF THE EPRLF AND THEIR ACTIVITIES

The EPRLF is now a full-fledged party organization based on Marxist - Leninist ideology and the principles of collective leadership and democratic-centralism. At the outset, the General Union of Eelam Students (GUES) affiliated itself with the EPRLF and provided it with a mass network that GUES had built during the earlier period. After the First Congress of the EPRLF, the frontal organizations were further expanded with the formations of the Rural Workers and Peasants Front, (RWPF), Plantation Proletariat Front (PPF), Eelam Youth Front (EYF), Eelam Women's Liberation Front (EWLF) and the Fishermen's Front (FF). These organizations have jointly or independently engaged in propaganda work, political activities and revolutionary education. The frontal organizations were also entrusted with the task of recruiting cadres from among the people and to give them training for working among the people. To further consolidate the revolutionary upsurge of the Eelam People, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was formed, choosing the most dedicated cadres among the various frontal organizations of the EPRLF.

We give below some of the activities and struggles launched by our frontal organizations:

1. When Batticaloa was devastated by a cyclone in 1978, GUES organized and ran many refugee camps carrying out rehabilitation work. In addition, when the government refused to postpone the April Public examinations, GUES conducted classes in preparing the students affected by the cyclone to sit for their examinations. Further, GUES exposed the malpractices and corruption by government officials in relation to the sale of foodstuffs and other essentials which had come in as relief aid, and brought it to the attention of the international community.
2. When the government of Sri Lanka unleashed terror in the Batticaloa District starting on 4/7/81 with the intention of driving out the Tamils in the electorate of Paddirupu to make way for forced colonization, a poster campaign was launched by GUES all over the island. This campaign was successful in halting the racist design of the Sri Lankan Government.

3. When the reactionary leadership of the Tamil speaking people in collusion with the ruling UNP regime indulged in corrupt practices at the Jaffna Co-operative Stores, GUES organized a hunger strike along with the workers on 7/1/82 and exposed the true nature of the TULF leadership.
4. On 24/1/82, GUES organized a massive protest meeting in Jaffna against the introduction of a new variant of discrimination in education. More than 5,000 students participated at this meeting which was addressed by many professors, head teachers, parents and students. The meeting exposed the discriminatory nature of the Sri Lankan Educational System and brought hundreds of students into the fold of GUES. This was followed by a meeting in Colombo on 14/3/82 to protest against, both, standardization and the White Paper on education making close contacts with the Sri Lankan progressives.
5. In 1982, GUES organized the May Day Celebrations in the Jaffna District and thousands of workers, peasants and students gathered for this occasion from all parts of Eelam. This created the conditions for the formation of workers and peasant organizations as a front of the EPRLF. Further, soon after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, GUES organized an exhibition on the struggle of the Palestinian People at Manipay Town Hall on 23/7/82, where a mass meeting was held to condemn zionism and U.S. Imperialism and express solidarity with the heroic struggle of the Palestinian People.
6. Based on the initiative taken by GUES, the Rural Workers and Peasant Front (RWPF) was founded by the EPRLF in order to mobilize the revolutionary potentials of workers, peasants and labourers at village levels. In the village of Siruppidy, the RWPF organized the farm labourers in putting forward many demands in relation to wages, working conditions and the human degradation of the caste system. When the landowners refused to accept these demands, the struggle continued boosted by a 10 mile long march organized by the RWPF. Further, in order to sustain the struggle and maintain the striking workers, the RWPF set up a co-operative factory to manufacture soap at Siruppidy. Through this project, the RWPF made close contacts with progressive intellectuals and radical sections within the Church. The victory of the Siruppidy struggle made the people have confidence in the leadership of the RWPF. Yet another struggle was waged in a village in the Jaffna Peninsula when a local politician claimed the ownership of a land occupied by members of the oppressed castes for many years, when attempts were made by the political figure to drive the people out,

RWPF organized a long protest march on 10/5/83 to his house. His attempt to bring the Sri Lankan Police was foiled by the firmness of the people. The struggle was further intensified through poster campaign and other means of publicity ending in victory.

In addition to the above, the EPRLF through its frontal organizations embarked on the following activities based on mass mobilisation:

1. In 1981 when the inhabitants in the village of Vadamunai and in the surrounding areas were forcibly evicted with the intention of settling Sinhalese settlers, EPRLF guarded the villagers and drove out the Sinhalese hoodlums, who were organised by the local Buddhist monks with the backing of the police. The resistance by the EPRLF made possible the continued living of the people. However in August 1983 the Buddhist monks with the backing of the armed forces succeeded in settling about 35,000 Sinhalese at Vadamunai.
2. EPRLF called for the boycott of the Presidential Election through GUES which along with the other frontal organisations led the struggle firmly and resolutely. The fear that gripped the government led to the arrest of the General Secretary of GUES, Comrade Davidson who was subjected to cruel and inhuman torture. At that point the boycott struggle took a different turn demanding the release of Comrade Davidson. The struggle was taken internationally and the pressure forced the Sri Lankan government to release Comrade Davidson.
3. When the Sri Lankan fascist state intensified its repression against the progressive Tamil intelligentsia comprising of Priests, Lecturers, Students and Women under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, GUES called for a satyagraha bringing together more than twenty organisations. More than 5,000 people participated in the joint-action programme and the participation of women in large numbers was a notable achievement in the struggle. In this regard the Womens front of the EPRLF played an active role.
4. When death sentences were passed on Eelam Patriots, Kuttimani and Jegan, the frontal organisations of EPRLF led by GUES organised a series of protest meetings along with other movements in Eelam. The foreign branches of GUES, similarly organised protest meetings in Tamil Nadu and other parts of the world.

5. Long March of April 1983: The EPRLF decided to launch a long march commencing 4th April 1983 in protest against state terrorism and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Although the armed forces resorted to violence to break up the march, the twin objectives behind Long March was achieved. Firstly the organisational work done by the EPRLF cadets in preparing for the march took them to every village within the Jaffna Peninsula, bringing them into close contact with all oppressed sections of Eelam People who in turn Expressed their solidarity by offering food and shelter for the participants of the long march. Secondly the EPRLF provoked the state into exposing its fascist tendencies when brutal force was employed by the armed forces against the innocent and unarmed participants.

## THE PEOPLES LIBERATION ARMY (PLA)

Under conditions of oppressive fascist regime, such as that exist in Sri Lanka, the struggle to capture power and emancipate the people of Eelam cannot be achieved without an armed struggle based on politically organised masses. Ideological preparation and instilling in the minds of the people definite directions and aims, is a precondition for the further strengthening of an armed revolutionary struggle. This is important even at the village level.

In taking the Eelam national liberation struggle to a higher level, the EPRLF formed the People's Liberation Army (PLA) as its Military Organization. When all forms of non-violent struggles were subjected to state repression, the people accepted military operations to be essential for the total defeat of the enemy, and the liberation of the Eelam People. However, it is to the credit of the EPRLF to have taken into special consideration the nature of the enemy who always carry out massive retaliations to terrorize the people into submission and drive them away from the struggle. The activities of the PLA, hitherto, were carried out in such a way so as to demoralize the armed forces to the maximum, without giving cause for retaliations. Some of the details are:

1. When the frontal organizations of the EPRLF launched a struggle in April 1983, against the death sentence of Eelam patriots, it was subjected to repression by the armed forces. In retaliation, the premises of the Law Courts in Jaffna were damaged with explosives planted by PLA as a challenge against the hollowness of Sri Lankan justice.
2. In June 1983, when the Trincomalee City was attacked by Sinhala thugs and the Sri Lankan armed forces, the PLA resorted to armed operations to strike terror into the armed forces and the gundas. This led to a decline in state terrorism within the city.
3. In July, 1983, fifty-three Eelam patriots were massacred at the Welikada Prison by the agents of the Sri Lankan government. The international outcry against this killing forced the Sri Lankan government to transfer the surviving prisoners to the Batticaloa prison. The EPRLF decided to show that barbarism of this sort would not deter the liberation struggle of the oppressed people of Eelam. The Batticaloa jailbreak was planned and executed by the PLA in close co-ordination with patriots within the prison belonging to various sections of the national liberation

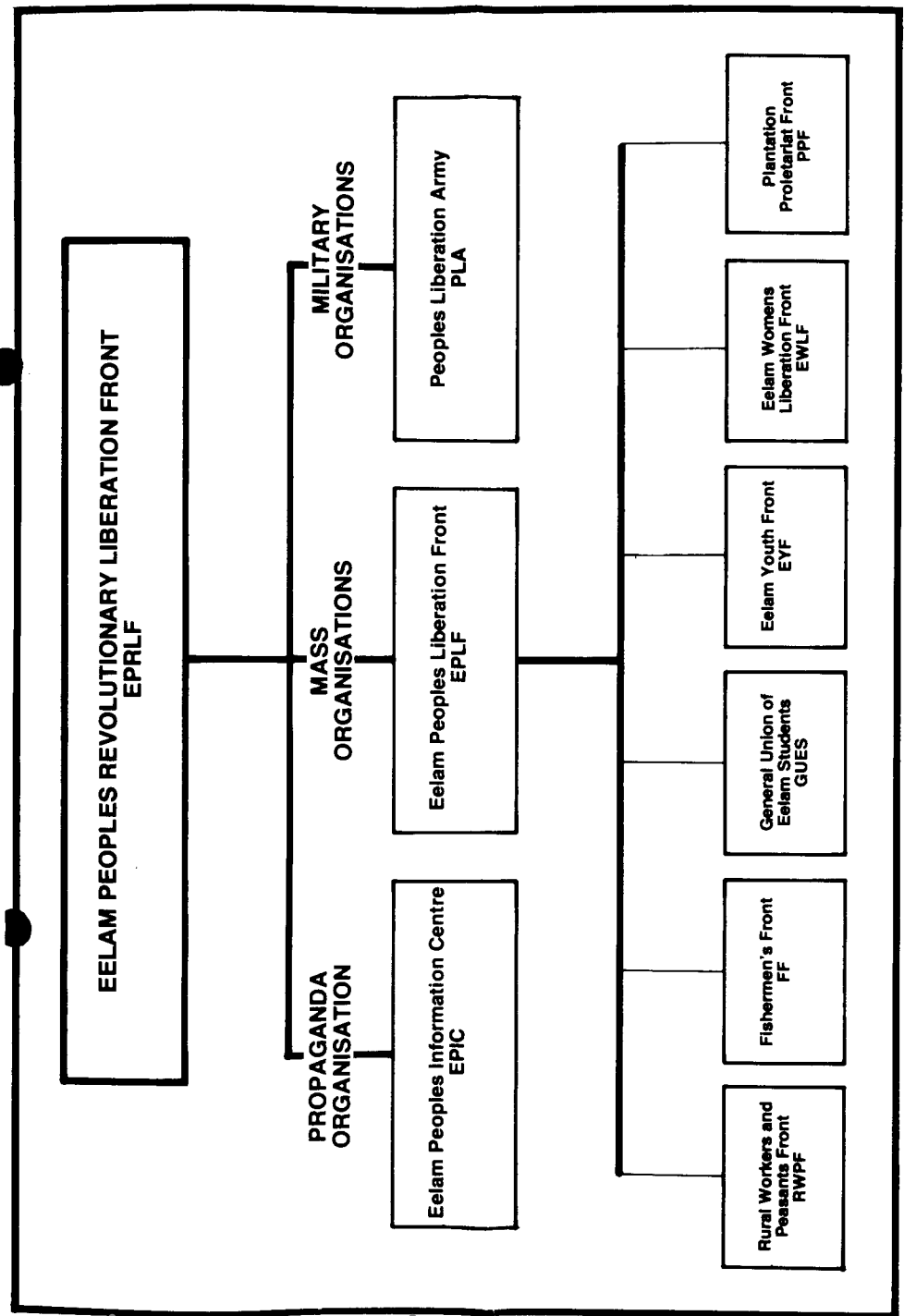
movement. It should be noted that not a single political prisoner who escaped from the jail had been arrested by the Sri Lankan security forces. This is not only a tribute to the tactics and planning of the PLA but also to the mass network that the EPRLF had established all over Eelam. Which enabled the political prisoners to evade arrest and escape to Tamil Nadu. This operation is a classic example of the inseparable link between military operations and mass politicization and mobilization which is a precondition for the ultimate success of the Eelam national liberation struggle.

## WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

If the national liberation struggle is to proceed to a higher level of not merely challenging the Sri Lankan neo - fascist State, but actually capturing power and establishing a socialist State of Eelam, then a popular unity of all the progressive forces within the movement is of prime importance. The immediate programmatic task of the EPRLF is precisely this. In this regard, the EPRLF while engaged in broadening its social base to include all working people, the progressive sections of the petite - bourgeoisie and the radical intelligentsia of Eelam, will strive to forge popular unity with other liberation groups with similar political orientation. However, the EPRLF is opposed to the idea of unity for the sake of unity, particularly with the forces of reaction and opportunism.

At the same time, the people of Eelam must realise that the sacrifices and the heroic struggles of the freedom fighters alone is not enough to bring about liberation. We place before the people of Eelam, including the expatriate community not directly engaged in mass mobilisation and armed struggle, what we consider to be their specific tasks at the present juncture of our struggle.

- Provide food, clothing and shelter to the freedom fighters.
- Increase production of food and other essential commodities for the sustenance of liberated zones when they emerge.
- Engage in propegranda work based on actual facts to highlight the intensity of National Oppression and to expose the fascist character of the Sri Lankan state.
- Respond readily to call for funds to finance the various activities of the National liberation movement.
- Be vigilant against betrayals and oppertunism by factions within the liberation movement and work towards the forging of a popular unity on the basis that there is no other viable alternative to Eelam.



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**EELAM IS NOT NEGOTIABLE**

**Published by the Department of Propaganda & Information  
of Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front**

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