Twitter Thread by Sarah Kellapatha



Sarah Kellapatha
@saararrr



This week marks 36 years since the Sri Lankan military carried out organized massacres and forced evictions of Tamils living in the Manal Aru region, for the sole purpose of seizing their lands in order to settle Sinhalese people there.

These massacres took place over the period of December 1 to December 15, 1984, and were targeted towards Tamils living in Manal Aru, Othiyamalai, Amarivayal, Thennamarawadi, Kokkilai and other neighbouring coastal villages.

On December 2, 1984, Tamil men from the Othiyamalai village were rounded up by the Sri Lankan military and were shot at and killed. Some were detained and were believed to have been killed too.

On December 3, 1984, the Sri Lankan military randomly fired at people in Manal Aru. Several were chased away by the military and their homes were set on fire. These were people who had lived in Manal Aru all their lives.

Amarivayal, an old Tamil village in the Trincomalee district - neglected by the state, was subject to repeated harassment by Sinhalese people who wanted to seize their farmland. They were threatened that they would be attacked if they didn't leave the village.

The villagers gathered a few of their items and ran towards the jungle where they spent the night there, hearing gunshots and then seeing flames. They walked through the jungle to Mullaitivu and joined refugee camps, later joining the LTTE to fight for their village they'd lost.

Another massacre which took place in December 1984 was in Thennamarawadi. Armed with various types of weapons and sharp objects, soldiers from the military and Sinhalese mobs invaded the village.

At the time, there were about 200 families living in the village. Some fled into the forest, while some were caught and shot dead. Various people were lined up and shot dead and women were raped. The mobs set fire to the villagers' homes and destroyed their properties.

This massacre continued for three days, and on the third day, the villagers who had managed to escape walked through the forest for a few days until they reached Mulliyavalai in the Mullaitivu district. This was their new settlement and they have lived here ever since.

On December 15, 1984, troops from the Sri Lankan military arrived in the coastal villages of Kokkilai, Kokkuthoduvai, Alampil, Nayaru and Kumulamunai, and ordered the people living there to vacate within 24 hours. After that, they began to kill people and destroy properties.

More than 2000 families were forced to relocate following the brutal attacks and violence by the Sri Lankan military.

The Sinhalese people who were settled into these Tamil-owned lands and villages were given money to build homes and security was provided to them by the STF. This drastically altered the demographics of the region, and a new division named Weli Oya was formed.

Manal Aru was a significantly Tamil region, and it was renamed as Weli Oya in Sinhala by an extra ordinary gazette notification in 1988.

These massacres were quite simply, state-aided Sinhalese colonization of Tamil areas. Throughout the 1980s, the government tried to seize lands in these areas owned and occupied by Tamils, and to settle Sinhalese people on them.

This significantly worsened after the 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom and riots, and the organized massacres and forced evictions were carried out in late 1984.

The Yan Oya settlement scheme is another example of Sinhala colonization, and this was organized by Lalith Athulathmudali, and supported by the President at the time J. R. Jayawardene.

Sri Lanka’s history has been predominantly racist, and the people responsible for carrying out these massacres haven’t been held accountable for their actions. Their actions were probably lauded by the state and the military itself.

The military and armed forces are hero-worshipped and celebrated at large. The current administration refuses to acknowledge that these events transpired, denying the rights of and experiences of lived horrors by Tamils over the years.