

## Timeline of Sri Lanka's war against the Tamil Tigers

Sri Lanka's president has declared victory over the Tamil Tiger rebels after decades of bloodshed. Here are the key dates in the island's long-running civil war:



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1972: Armed with just a revolver, Velupillai Prabhakaran forms a Tamil militant group, which eventually morphs into the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

July 23, 1983: LTTE ambushes an army patrol, killing 13 soldiers in the Jaffna peninsula and sparking anti-Tamil riots elsewhere that leave about 600 people dead.

July 8, 1985: Sri Lanka opens first direct talks with Tamil guerrillas. They fail.

July 29, 1987: India and Sri Lanka reach agreement on deployment of Indian peace-keeping force.

March 24, 1990: India loses 1,200 troops at the hands of the LTTE, and withdraws to leave the Tigers in control of large swathes of northern Sri Lanka.

May 21, 1991: Former Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi killed, allegedly by an LTTE suicide bomber.

May 1, 1993: Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa killed by LTTE suicide bomber.

December 2, 1995: The Sri Lankan army captures the Jaffna peninsula.

July 18, 1996: The Tigers overrun an army camp in the northeastern town of Mullaitivu, killing 1,200 troops.

October 8, 1997: The United States declares the LTTE a foreign terrorist organisation.

January 25, 1998: An LTTE suicide bomb devastates Sri Lanka's holiest Buddhist shrine, the Temple of the Tooth, killing 17 people.

September 26, 1998: Tigers overrun Kilinochchi army camp, killing more than 1,000 government soldiers.

February 2001: Britain outlaws the LTTE as a terrorist organisation, followed swiftly by Canada and Australia.

July 2001: Suicide attack by Tamil Tigers on the international airport kills 14.

February 23, 2002: Government and Tamil Tiger rebels sign a Norwegian-brokered ceasefire agreement.

December 2002: At peace talks in Norway, the government and rebels agree to share power, with the minority Tamils enjoying autonomy in the mainly Tamil-speaking north and east.

March 3, 2004: Renegade Tamil Tiger commander, V. Muralitharan, known as Karuna, leads split from main rebel movement.

November 2, 2007: The head of the Tamil Tigers' political wing, S.P. Thamilselvan, is killed in a government air raid.

January 2, 2008: Sri Lanka withdraws from the ceasefire agreement and steps up attacks against the Tigers.

January 2, 2009: Sri Lankan forces capture Kilinochchi, leaving the Tigers only the jungle district of Mullaitivu.

January 25, 2009: Sri Lankan troops capture Mullaitivu town, confining the rebels to a stretch of jungle.

February 3, 2009: The Sri Lankan army says it has captured an elaborate underground bunker complex believed to have been the home of the leader of the Tamil Tigers, as well as the rebels' last jungle airstrip.

February 20, 2009: Tamil Tiger planes conduct suicide raids against the capital Colombo.

March 13, 2009: The United Nations' human rights chief says both sides could be guilty of war crimes.

April 14, 2009: The Tamil Tigers say they are ready to negotiate a ceasefire and restart peace talks. The government refuses, telling them to surrender.

April 20, 2009: Tens of thousands of trapped civilians manage to flee from the shrinking area under rebel control.

May 13, 2009: The United Nations Security Council for the first time asks warring parties to spare civilians as the world body describes fighting in the last remaining patch of Tiger territory as a "bloodbath" for civilians.

May 16, 2009: Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapakse says the rebels have been defeated.

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