

Sri Lanka's six decades of independence

■ **1948:** Ceylon gains full independence from Britain

■ **1956:** **Solomon Bandaranaike** elected on wave of Sinhalese nationalism. Sinhala made sole official language. Minority Tamils alienated



■ **1972:** Ceylon changes its name to **Sri Lanka**. Buddhism made country's primary religion, further antagonising Tamil minority

■ **1976:** **Velupillai Prabhakaran** forms **Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam**

■ **1983:** Tiger attack in north triggers vast riots. Hundreds of Tamils killed. Start of so-called **First Eelam War**

■ **1987-90:** Government forces push Tigers back into northern city of Jaffna. Tigers renege on Indian-brokered truce. Start of **Second Eelam War**



1 **1991:** Former Indian prime minister **Rajiv Gandhi** killed by suspect Tiger suicide bomber in Indian state of Tamil Nadu



2 **1993:** Sri Lankan President **Ranasinghe Premadasa** killed by suicide bomber

■ **1995-2001:** Civil war rages across north and east. Tigers bomb Sri Lanka's holiest Buddhist site. Attack on Colombo airport destroys half of Sri Lankan Airlines fleet. Economy crippled

■ **2002:** Government and Tamil Tigers sign Norwegian-mediated ceasefire

■ **2003:** Tigers pull out of peace talks. Ceasefire holds

Chennai (Madras) ○

Sriperumpudur ○

The civil war in Sri Lanka has claimed 80,000 lives since 1983



INDIAN OCEAN

160km

100 miles

INDIA

Jaffna

SRI LANKA

Trincomalee

Area claimed as Tamil homeland

Anuradhapura

3 **2004:** First suicide bomb in capital since ceasefire

Dambulla

Colombo

Buttala



4 **2005:** Tiger attacks on military rise. Foreign minister assassinated. Hardline anti-Tiger prime minister **Mahinda Rajapaksa** (above) wins presidency

5 **2006:** Despite peace talks heavy fighting resumes in Jaffna and east

6 **2007:** Tigers launch their first air raid

7 **Oct:** Tigers mount their biggest air and ground assault since civil war began on air base in Anuradhapura

8 9 10 **2008:** Government ends 2002 ceasefire. Upsurge in Tiger attacks