

Political, Social and Economic Issues of the Rehabilitated Ex-Combatants in the Sri Lankan Northern Province

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Abstract

Politically, socially and economically, Tamils in multi-ethnic Sri Lanka struggled to win their self-determination due to external bias based upon an international perception of their organization. Initially, these struggles along the lines of non-violence were later transformed into armed conflicts; Those involved in armed conflicts have identified themselves as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In the early days, the afflicted Tamil people joined the protest in the name of their own choice. The escalating conflict between them and the Sri Lankan army in 1983 ended with the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009.

After the end of the 30-year war, the Sri Lankan government has taken a keen interest in the transition to conflict and has taken various steps in this regard. Most notably, the LTTE was rehabilitated and reintegrated into society from the rehabilitation camps by the Sri Lankan military. Some international studies have indicated that the rehabilitated ex-combatants are now facing various difficulties. Difficulties ranging from employment to daily sustenance and adjusting to the mainstream population of Sri Lanka. Most of the ex-combatants feel they do not belong or fit into mainstream Sri Lanka. Given the importance of good governance and national reconciliation today, it remains to be examined what political, social and economic issues the rehabilitated ex-combatants face after reintegration. This is an attempt to uncover the empirical evidence of the daily challenges faced by the rehabilitated ex-combatants. They are unable to make a living with their temporary livelihood and face their respective struggles just to survive every day. They live in fear perpetually and they are losing hope fast. Former women cadres of LTTE are increasingly ignored in society. Their political rights and independence are questionable, and the government has not taken any serious steps to reintegrate them into society. They also fear that their political, social and economic neglect will pose a social danger in the coming years. Their only aspirations moving forward is to have a peaceful life and contribute positively to the general society concerning Sri Lanka's plural landscape in terms of ethnicity and religious affiliation.

Keywords: Rehabilitated, Ex-combatants, Reconciliation

Introduction

Ethnic conflict is an unavoidable problem in modern states of various ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural contexts. As a country with a multiracial social structure; In Sri Lanka, ethnic conflict has developed in many forms since colonial rule. Political, social, economic and geographical factors underpin the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, which is labeled as cancer. The Tamil people of the North and East have armed themselves to demand self-determination. The conflict was ended by 2009. As the final battle ended, many of those who were incorporated into the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) surrendered to the army and the police. Likewise, many have been arrested and detained.

Most of them have been rehabilitated and reintegrated into society. Rehabilitated and released 11000 - 12000 persons. (By Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission Report) 'Reintegrated into society' based on the use of the term government. (Source: Ministry of Rehabilitation) Through this, many militants have become ex-combatants and reintegrated into society. After the rehabilitation, some were taken to the Social Security Department and some were provided with small-scale financial assistance.

The government of goodwill is placing greater emphasis on reintegrating them into society through national remittances. However, most of them are integrated into society without adequate guidance and amenities. Given the growing ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka's war crimes and international tensions, the attitude of the rehabilitated ex-combatants remains to be seen and the challenges they face in society.

Research Question

The inclusion of ex-combatants into the post-war social order is a complex process. Government information indicates that the post-war government has taken various steps to reintegrate them into society. However, several previous studies indicate that these rehabilitated ex-combatants are currently facing various difficulties. Particularly for the community in which they are striving to be the ones who are being left out today (by:https://www.ilo.org/employment/about/news/WCMS_116477/lang--en/index.htm). The current status of ex-combatants and what challenges they face in their daily lives is a major problem that needs to be scrutinized academically.

Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative and ethnography study. This study relies on two broad sources of data: primary such as interview and secondary. The interview was used as a data collection method in this research. The type of interview in this study is the semi-structured interview, in contrast to the structured and unstructured interview format. The selection of such an interview type is closely related to the argument, which has put forward in the Objective. For secondary sources, this study relies on related textbooks, reports, journals, and other written sources. All together the researcher conducted in leading the interviews with 27 people during these field visits. The data from the interviews formed the basis of much of the analysis. This was systematized by identifying and diagnosing through *Facts* as nature and causes of the issues and insecurity, *Feelings* as about the sense of insecurity and safety needs on the ground; and, *Forecasts* as an analysis of the results and the judgments about future, of the issues, selected. Given the semi-structured interviews along with other raw data, identified structural issues were easily extracted, categorized and interpreted by the author of this study.

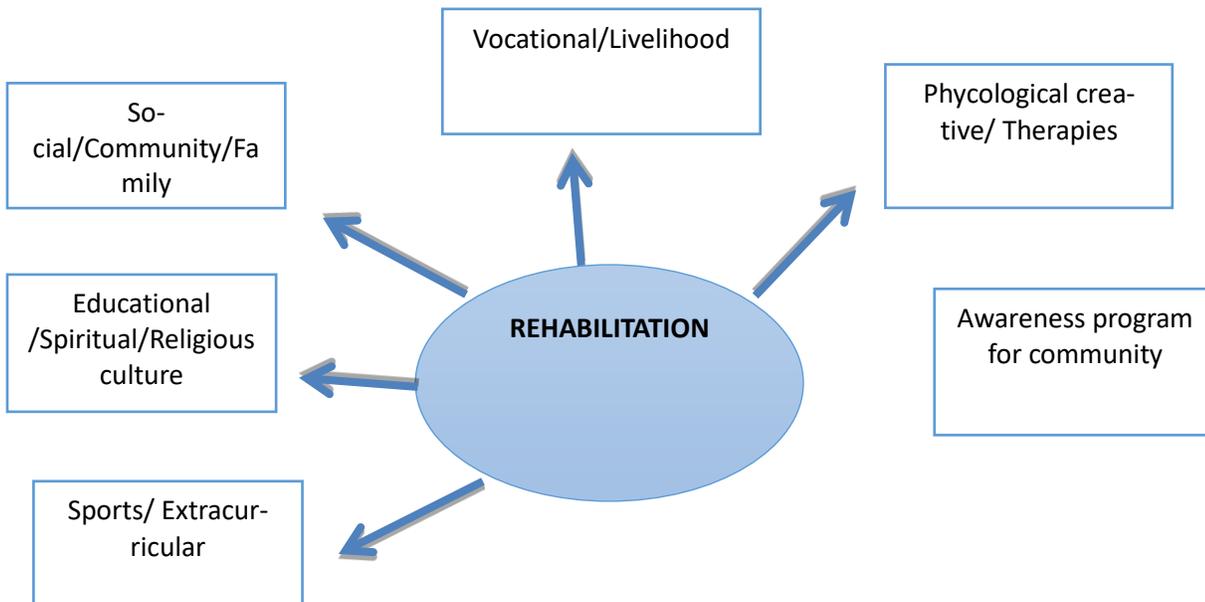
Introduction to the War Ex-Combatants

Due to political, economic and social neglect of Sri Lankan Tamils; Individual claims were made. Establishment of the Unique Language Act of 1956, Presentation of the Vaddukoddai Declaration, Buddhism Priority, Sri Lanka Citizenship Act The emergence of the ethnic Tamil ethnicity of Sri Lanka through them has become the basis for presenting the Individualism. (By LU Bhaskaran, E. Illangar) The gradual development of bitterness thus prompted feelings of nervousness to form their organization to win their rights. Thus, the Tamil Eelam Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was created by a group of young people who were frustrated by the policies of the Sri Lankan government on May 5, 1976. Although they initially identified themselves as small armed groups, they later struggled; Due to conflicts between the groups, they became separate entities. Gradually, they developed various regiments and organizations and received arms and military training from abroad. The civil war between them and the Sri Lankan government began in 1983 and ended in 2009 following the destruction of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

300,000 people were internally displaced during the final war. Of these, 10790 former militants surrendered to the army with the people and were interned in refugee camps. In the earliest years, more than 18 years of age were enlisted in the LTTE. Later in the final stages of the war, a few were forced into the LTTE based on a home. The former LTTE cadres are the people who fought for the rights of the Tamils and finally surrendered to the army as a people after the destruction of the LTTE. Then there was the change in the lives of the former fighters. There were 364 males and 230 females in the army rehabilitated (12 - 18) age group. There were 1823 women and 8373 men over the age of 18 years. Among them were 3658 persons, 7035 unmarrieds, widows and 97. (Source: Rehabilitation of Ex-Combatants: Government Report) The Government of Sri Lanka has provided vocational training and counseling opportunities in the rehabilitation centers. On weekdays, training courses, meditation training,

Hindu and Christian worship, vocational training and psychological support were also offered. Similarly, arrangements were made to visit relatives.

Rehabilitation Combatants



They have faced many inconveniences as the military has made efforts to select LTTE operatives. The event also featured a show of giving one-on-one to the poor to protect themselves and their relationships. Rehabilitation camps were isolated from the community, isolated from family members and functioned as strong security zones. It is worth noting that the rehabilitation process is not an independent accountability process and that the militants have been rehabilitated after being detained for several months and that there is no guarantee of complete transparency, security, and independence. It is noteworthy, however, that the former militant Thamilini, in her book "In the Shadow of a Crowd," noted that the army and many others, including the Major-grade officer in charge of the women's area, took a more polite approach than I had expected in the rehabilitation camp. Thus, the rehabilitated ex-combatants of society could be divided into a separate class.

Identify the Political, Social and economic challenge

Political Challenges

Also, another former militant has been arrested for allegedly rehabilitating former LTTE cadres in fear of intelligence and reporting to the LTTE during the local election period. Even the Northern Provincial Council, which promised a better future for them, has not taken any action regarding the arrest of former militants. The Northern Provincial Council registered the families of the militants but did not provide any assistance to them. Governmental and non-governmental organizations have registered them 3-4 times a month, thus giving them no government support. They say that they are ignored in political activities because they are ex-militant and monitored by government forces, and sometimes they feel inadequate to engage in political activities when they do not respect their views.

Political Incidence	Yes	No
You faced rights violations after the rehabilitation process.	100%	–
We Meet we are politicians about this matter.	84%	14%
Let’s face discrimination in village	81%	19%
Let’s face discrimination in political parties.	78%	54%

(Sources: Reacher)

According to the above data, 95 elders do not have a consistent relationship with their local politicians. In particular, the Tamil political parties that represent the former militants do not represent them properly. Wu NU is the main political party in the Northern Province. While the party is in talks mainly with the government, its main demand is not to solve the basic problem for the people, except for the federal authority. It is also evident that they are not in close contact with the people.

The Tamil political parties initially refused to recruit former militants, but now it is welcome to join them. Some former militants may be involved in political activities. Former militants have participated in the last local election; Based on the Northern Territory, ex-militants have won the local government elections in the Tamil National Alliance and the All Ceylon Congress and have been elected as members of the Pradeshiya Sabha. Other members of the party, however, say they see them as tigers and will be dropped when they make suggestions.

"Throw the boot you know the political system..."(Interview: Mr.N.Sivathasan, age 35, War Ex-combatants Mullidevu)

In such a situation, when separate political parties are trying to form, they are being arrested by the military, intelligence agencies and the community for spreading the Tuvalu policy. Lands, places of worship and places of cultural significance by the government, its agents and political lobbyists in areas where Tamil people have lived since the beginning of history; Some former militants have said they are carrying out adverse impacts. Sinhalese immigration, the construction of Buddhist temples, the neglect of the Tamil people in the state sector, the attempt to change the names of Tamil villages, disappearance, and increased militarization are all forms of oppositional behavior of the state. There are also occasions when ex-militants threaten to comment on music activities. Such actions appear to foster feelings of entitlement among former fighters.

Social Challenges

Socially ex-militants face various challenges. Outsiders confront the social challenges of the day, surrendering to the military in 2009, with the expectation that their society will continue to support them in the aftermath of a long period of liberation from the barrier of the Sinhala-militarized milieu, in stark contrast to what they have been living forever. (Ambassador: n Ihan Pero) These were during the time of the Duane system; The social esteem and respect that has been lost to the present day are gone. They claim that they are today discredited by society, used for politics and ignored in the name of caste. In rehabilitation and forgetting the bitter experiences of the community, they say that in some cases the community is reminding them to be ex-combatants. The actions of state investigators, information collectors, and the military reaffirm their former ex-combatants.

The fact that they are treated differently by the community, that they are not allowed to attend public events, and that neighbors and relatives are afraid to befriend them, socially neglects them. During the struggle, disabled men are left with family members and the community because they have no career opportunities. This causes them to think that their family is a burden to them and maybe "dead in the fight" (by age 35, Mulliyawalai).

Former militants are being questioned by the military on suspicion when there is an uproar in the community. For example, when a policeman was shot dead at midnight in Vavuniya, 20 ex-combatants (including women) were taken to the Batticaloa Regional Criminal Investigation Office for investigation. Sadly, so many ex-combatants are dying in a mysterious system. Of the former combatants released from state rehabilitation camps, more than 130 people have died of various diseases, including cancer and flu. Relatives say the cause of death of some of them has not yet been announced. At the same time, some former militants had reported that in the North during the Task Force on Reconciliation Mechanism, they had mounted spies in the camps under the name of vaccines. He said many rehabilitated militants are dying to be investigated and this has led to the daily fear of hijacking their lives, especially for women. Sometime when husband and wife are rehabilitated, they fear that they will take responsibility for their children when they are not. It is said that their relatives have been recruited by them as ex-militants, while others have not avoided introducing their brothers as ex-militants. They are unwilling to re-count the wartime memories of their lives, saying they are bitter experiences in their lives.

Economic Challenges

Many ex-combatants face so many financial challenges that they cannot move even with their daily living. They face great difficulties due to the lack of self-employment training and a lack of opportunities. During their time in the military, the military provided carpentry, mason industry and women's sewing jobs. However, they note that they are not good enough. At the same time, they did not have enough resources for self-employment. Some former militants are engaged in farming, poultry, and agriculture, with government-sponsored loan schemes.

Government and non-governmental organizations are providing loans and assistance to them. While aiding, there are occasional cases of people leaving the country due to the actions of the community and preventing them from receiving help. When they go to work for wage labor, the owners often claim that they are thieves because they are ex-combatants and consider themselves thieves. Disabled ex-militants claim that they have access to daily food with the help of NGOs.

They face difficulties in obtaining royalties when former state fighters are given state credit. Government officials refuse to sign them. Thus, most ex-combatants appear to be indifferent to receiving state debts. Former fighters who have received loans are living amidst the challenges of not being able to repay their loans due to inadequate income in the industry.

Pradeshiya Sabha has paid a sum of Rs. NGOs also provide free medical facilities for disabled ex-combatants. In this way, the role of state and non-governmental organizations is essential for the livelihood stability and economic development of former combatants. It stops the aid programs and aid agencies from escorting the militants and putting them in their organizations. There is no ongoing review or evaluation of the support provided. Many of the victims say that the programs are not sustainable and some of the employees who work in these programs are financed. Migrant ties offer a wide range of welfare programs for these fighters, but they do not reach them because they are provided as spare parts.

Conclusion

Some are affiliated with the pressure system, as well as those who are included in the name of compulsion, rather than those who are affiliated with the Tuvan system. In such a situation, denouncing them and refusing to enter society is seen as impractical. In today's climate, which seeks to remove war scars and create national unity and reconciliation, it is seen as anti-democratic. During the rehabilitation process, they forget about the past bitterness and are entitled to live in a society based on their daily life goals.

Former combatants have been psychologically affected by the rehabilitation process. Although they have returned to normalcy, the term 'rehabilitation' has isolated them from others and has given them a tendency to view them as a separate entity in society. The government undertook a rehabilitation process to link them to the social stream and transform them into ordinary citizens. But for the sole reason that they have been rehabilitated by the government, the ex-combatants are now being left in a state of neglect.

The reintegration of ex-combatants into the community must be a continuous process, not just a word. Recovery efforts should be undertaken with great interest. People and ex-combatants who suffered as a result of the civil conflict have been left with nothing to lose. Their political and economic needs should be fulfilled as quickly as possible and in their minds.

Reconciliation is seen as a psychological change. War-affected people and ex-combatants must be freed from fear. The government should work diligently to build confidence in them. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that they do what is needed so that they do not have to reappear. The government should provide psychiatric counseling to the isolated and disabled. At the same time, the diaspora Tamils should be prevented from addressing the feelings of the affected people while living a comfortable life. The road to the reconciliation of ex-combatants to the community is rough, but the determination and heartfelt desire to help make the trip a success.

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