

Sri Lanka president appeals for an end of killing. (1989, February 05). *The New York times*.

Sri Lanka President Appeals for an End of Killing

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COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, Feb. 4 — President Ranasinghe Premadasa appealed today for an end to campaign-related violence that has killed hundreds of people and threatens Sri Lanka's first parliamentary elections in 11 years.

The appeal came during Sri Lanka's 41st Independence Day celebrations, a week and a half before the elections, which are scheduled for Feb. 15.

Since the election campaign began more than three weeks ago, 10 candidates and nearly 300 supporters of various parties have been killed.

The authorities have blamed much of

the violence on two ethnic extremist groups, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the main Tamil separatist group still fighting Indian troops in the north and east, and the People's Liberation Front, a Sinhalese group most active in the south.

Both groups have called the elections a fraud and called on voters to boycott them.

"The extremists want a low voter turnout so that they can question the moral legitimacy of the election and prepare for another round of political agitation," one Western diplomat said.

The 10 slain candidates were from opposition parties, mainly the Sri

Lanka Freedom Party of former Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, who was defeated in the Dec. 19 presidential election. The Freedom Party is challenging in court Mr. Premadasa's election.

The Freedom Party's major campaign is to start Monday with public rallies amid fears of attempts at violent disruption.

In other recent violence, Tamil guerrillas attacked a Sinhalese village on Friday, killing 11 and wounding several others, the authorities said.

The Tamils, who are mainly Hindu, make up 18 percent of the population. They claim discrimination by the

mainly Buddhist Sinhalese, who are 75 percent of the population and dominate the Government and military. Under an Indian-Sri Lankan agreement signed in July 1987, the Tamils have limited autonomy. At the same time Indian troops have been disarming Tamil militants while the Sri Lankan Government has been passing legislation meeting many Tamil demands.

Sinhalese extremists contend that the Government is giving too many concessions to the Tamils.

The Liberation Tigers have continued raids against both Indian and Sri Lankan troops and have clashed with a former rebel group, the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front, which is now in office in the elected northeast provincial council.