

State of emergency issued as Tamil rebels accused of mass killing.  
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WORLD

SRI LANKA



—AP photo

**RAMPAGE:** A young mother and her six-day-old infant were among 24 people killed by Tamil rebels

## State of emergency issued as Tamil rebels accused of mass killing

Update

By Amal Jayasinghe  
The Guardian

**The issue:** Sri Lanka was placed on full military alert on Thursday after suspected Tamil rebels carried out a fifth massacre.

**What it means:** The Tamil Tigers are waging a campaign for an independent homeland in the island's northern and eastern regions, and Jaffna is their psychologically important symbol of Tamil separatism.

**What's next:** Security forces were deployed to guard schools and key government installations amid fears of more bombings.

**What's new:** The country's defence ministry has responded to the massacre by arming villagers to defend themselves against future attacks.

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka was placed on a "war footing" Thursday, after suspected Tamil rebels carried out their fifth massacre in as many days, killing 24 Sinhalese and raising communal tensions throughout the country.

The industries minister, Clement Gooneratne, said the cabinet had approved a proposal to place the whole country on full military alert to tackle the rapidly deteriorating security situation.

"A proposal moved by me to place the country on a war footing was approved by cabinet last night," Mr Gooneratne said. "A subcommittee to do the job has been set up."

Security forces were deployed in the capital to guard schools and key government installations such as state radio and television, power stations and irrigation dams amid fears that rebels of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) would carry out more bombings.

The implications for the move were not spelt out immediately, but officials said that all of Sri Lanka was likely to be placed under a state of emergency.

More than 770 Tamil rebels, security personnel and civilians have died in the latest wave of violence, which erupted when the army launched its anti-rebel drive in the northern Jaffna peninsula on October 17, according to the military.

The government decision to declare a virtual state of war came as the Tamil rebels were accused of carrying out another massacre of Sinhalese in the north central district of Anuradhapura yesterday Thursday.

Survivors said two groups of LTTE women rebels armed with guns, swords and machetes emerged out of the surrounding jungles early Thursday and shot and hacked their way through the cluster of hamlets.

An 18-year-old mother and her seven-day-old infant were among the dead in the village of Herath Halmillewa, they said. The rebels set fire to several huts before fleeing.

The defence ministry responded to the massacre by arming the villagers to defend themselves against future attacks, but local officials said most villagers were fleeing to safer areas.

The road out of the village, which is situated in the Welioya district lodged between government and Tamil controlled areas, was jammed with vans, buses and tractors as peasants fled.

The military said the massacres were aimed at forcing security forces to withdraw troops from the north of the country, and deploy them instead to protect