

Tamil party decides to join national vote. (1988, December 27). The globe and nail.

Tamil party decides to join national vote

New York Times Service

NEW DELHI

A major ethnic Tamil political party in Sri Lanka that has been out of politics for more than 10 years has decided to take part in national parliamentary elections scheduled for Feb. 15.

Reports from Sri Lanka say the decision was made by the leaders of the Tamil United Liberation Front at a meeting on Saturday.

The return to the Sri Lanka's political arena by the front means that Tamil voters in the country's north and east will have a mainstream alternative to the militant Tamil parties.

The front, led by Appapillai Amirthalingam, rejected the use of arms in the struggle for the rights of the country's Tamils, who form 18 per cent of the population, two-thirds of them in the north and east, where a separatist struggle began in the late 1970s. The majority population is Sinhalese.

Mr. Amirthalingam and some prominent colleagues went into exile in the Indian city of Madras, where they have remained for most of the past five years.

The front decided in November not to take part in Indian-supported elections for a new northeastern provincial council because of the dangers involved.

This resulted in the election of a council led by the leftist Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front, which most Sri Lankans, including many Tamils, regard as a creation of New Delhi.