

Demand for release of Sri Lankan detainees

31 July 1998

On behalf of International Labor Defence in Australia, Terry Cook has sent the following letter to the Sri Lankan government.

The Defence Secretary, Minister of Defence

15/5, Baladaksa Mawattha

Colombo03

Sri Lanka

July 28, 1998

Dear Sir,

I am writing to protest in the strongest terms the recent arrest and detention of eight young Tamil plantation workers and unemployed youth in Hatton on fraudulent charges that they were involved in a factory bombing on June 1 at the Shannon tea estate. The authorities also claim that the eight were supporters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam.

Let me assure you that we intend to make this attack on democratic rights known to the working class in Australia and internationally.

Those detained include Uday Kumar, a supporter and previous local election candidate of the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka. It is well known that the SEP has no agreement with the separatist nationalism of the LTTE and moreover opposes acts of individual terror as being counterproductive to the development of a broad socialist movement in the working class.

It is also inconceivable that the SEP or its supporters would be involved in any incident that would endanger the lives or well being of workers.

It is significant that those accused were detained in 1994-96 on similar charges that were dropped when the authorities failed to produce a shred of evidence to support the accusations.

Those arrested all played a prominent role in the defence of the conditions of workers in the Hatton-Maskelya area in the 600,000-strong plantation workers strike in April. The arrests are a crude attempt to frame-up these class fighters.

Workers here are outraged by the repressive measures

adopted by the Peoples Alliance government and its predecessors. We are aware of the most recent revelations concerning the massacre of 400 Tamils by the military in 1996.

We demand the dropping of all charges and the immediate release of the detainees. Further, we demand that you cease all interference in the activity of the SEP. International Labor Defence also calls for the release of all political prisoners in Sri Lanka.

Yours sincerely,

Terry Cook

International Labor Defence

Copies to: The Attorney General and to The Inspector General of Police.

See Also:

Sri Lanka: Tamil youth and SEP supporters arrested
[14 July 1998]

Sri Lankan military hid bodies of its Tamil victims in mass graves
[24 July 1998]



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