

New information indicates lives of Tamil socialists in grave peril

A New Zealand Correspondent
6 August 1998

The *World Socialist Web Site* urges all its readers to join with it in demanding the immediate and unconditional release of two members of the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka who have been detained by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam since the evening of July 28.

Information the WSWs has received in the last 24 hours underscores that the lives of Thirugnana Sambandan and Kasinathan Naguleshwaran are in grave danger. According to a leading LTTE official, who was interviewed by relatives of the captives shortly after they were apprehended, the Tamil socialists were to be released after two days of interrogation. A week has now passed since July 30, yet the SEP members have not resurfaced, and their relatives have not been allowed to see them. Meanwhile, the leadership of the LTTE, based in London, England, has not replied to demands for information and for guarantees of the socialists' safety from the SEP of Sri Lanka and its sister parties round the world. The LTTE, it must be added, is notorious for eliminating its Tamil political opponents.

The SEP members were arrested in Kilinochchi, an LTTE-controlled region in the north of the island, while posting SEP placards. When relatives of Thirugnana Sambandan and Kasinathan Naguleshwaran demanded information as to their whereabouts from the LTTE official in charge of the area, Theepan, he said that they had been handed over to the head of the LTTE police, Pottu Amman. Theepan then suggested, ominously, that the LTTE police might already have carried out retribution against them. Pottu Amman is known for using brutal methods against opponents of the LTTE.

Theepan said he knew the detainees were members of the SEP, the Trotskyist party in Sri Lanka, and said that the SEP's politics had become an obstruction to the

LTTE's activities.

Theepan's comments underscore that the SEP members have been arrested for their socialist and internationalist principles. The SEP and its forerunner the Revolutionary Communist League have an unbroken and unparalleled record of unconditionally defending the democratic rights of all Tamil-speakers in Sri Lanka—the Tamil plantation workers and Tamils of Colombo, as well as the Tamils of the north and east of the island. The SEP has opposed the racist war that the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie has waged against the Tamils of the north and east since 1983 and demanded the unconditional withdrawal of the Sri Lankan army.

The LTTE's persecution of the SEP members indicates its leadership's fear that the SEP's principled struggle against the national oppression of the Tamils and for the unity of Sinhalese and Tamil workers and peasants in the struggle for a socialist republic of Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam is winning a hearing among Tamils, despite the LTTE's refusal to allow the circulation of political materials and public debate in the areas that it controls.

The WSWs and the International Committee of the Fourth International will use every available forum to press for the release of the Tamil socialists and urges all its readers to do likewise. Wije Dias, the national secretary of the SEP of Sri Lanka, was interviewed about the plight of his comrades on the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) Sinhalese-language service yesterday evening. He explained that the SEP members had been arrested for opposing the LTTE's bankrupt perspective of a capitalist statelet in the north and the east and for fighting to unite the workers and peasants of the island, Sinhalese and Tamil, against bourgeois rule. Another SEP leader will be interviewed tonight by the BBC's Tamil-language service. Chris

Marsden, national secretary of the SEP of Britain, will speak out against the persecution of the Tamil socialists in an interview to be carried by the BBC's world service at 4:30 PM British time today.

The WSWs urgently calls on all its readers, all labor and human rights organizations, and all those who defend basic democratic rights to send letters, faxes and e-mail messages to the LTTE condemning the arrest of the SEP members in Kilinochchi and demanding their immediate and unconditional release.

Letters should be faxed to the LTTE at:
44-181-470-8593.

The mailing address is:

211 Katherine Road
London E6 1BU
United Kingdom

Phone: 44-181-503-4294

Please send copies of all statements of protest to the WSWs at:

Email: editor@wsws.org

Mail: PO Box 48377

Oak Park, MI 48237, USA

Fax: 248-967-3023



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact