

LTTE remains silent: International protests mount against arrest of Tamil socialists in Sri Lanka

The WSWs Editorial Board
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Statements and letters from around the world have been faxed to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) protesting the July 28 arrest of two Tamil socialists in an LTTE-controlled region in the north of Sri Lanka. The LTTE has failed, however, to respond to these protests, nor have the relatives or comrades of the two men seized by LTTE police been informed of their condition or whereabouts, or the charges, if any, levied against them.

Thirugnana Sambandan and Kasinathan Naguleshwaran, members of the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka, were seized on the evening of July 28 as they were posting SEP placards in the northern town of Kilinochchi. A leading official of the LTTE in the region told relatives of the detainees that they would be released after two days of interrogation. However after ten days, they have not reappeared.

These two socialists are in grave danger. Their arrest was a flagrant act of repression, and the LTTE is notorious for eliminating its political opponents. The LTTE official, Theepan, acknowledged to the relatives of the arrested men that he was aware of their political affiliation. He virtually admitted that their seizure was for political reasons, saying the SEP's politics were obstructing LTTE activities. Ominously, he suggested that the LTTE police might have already carried out retribution against them.

Because of the acute political and military situation in Sri Lanka, it is impossible for SEP leaders in Colombo to travel to Kilinochchi, which is cut off from the capital by military roadblocks manned at different points by the Sri Lankan military and the LTTE.

The SEP of Sri Lanka and its fraternal parties in North America, Europe and Asia have sent urgent

letters to the LTTE leadership, based in London, demanding information on the location and condition of the two comrades, as well as guarantees of their safety. The *World Socialist Web Site* has launched an international campaign, calling on human rights and civil rights organizations, labor organizations and all individuals committed to the defense of democratic rights to demand the immediate release of Sambandan and Naguleshwaran. Press releases have been sent to news organizations around the world.

In the first two days, copies of letters and statements of protest have been sent to the WSWs from the US, Europe, Australia and Japan. A WSWs reader from Kumamoto, Japan wrote to the LTTE to demand "the quick release of the SEP members without any harm." The Australian Council for Overseas Aid has likewise contacted the LTTE in London to demand the immediate release of the SEP members.

The Sinhalese-language service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) carried an interview on Tuesday with SEP (Sri Lanka) General Secretary Wije Dias about the plight of his comrades and the reactionary communalist politics that underlie the LTTE's attempt to silence the SEP. A similar broadcast took place the following day with a Tamil-speaking representative of the Sri Lankan SEP.

This coming Tuesday, August 11, between 4:15 and 4:45 PM, London time, the BBC World Service will broadcast a program focusing on the arrest of comrades Thirugnana Sambandan and Kasinathan Naguleshwaran, and the political struggle of the

SEP, the Trotskyist movement in Sri Lanka, to unify the Sinhala and Tamil masses on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program. Among those who have been interviewed for the program are members of the Sri Lankan party's exile organizations in France and Germany, and Chris Marsden, leader of the SEP of Britain.

The WSWS urgently calls on all of its readers, all labor and human rights organizations, and all who defend basic democratic rights to send faxes and letters 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 c/o Eelam House (London) at: 44-171-403-1653

Telephone: 44-171-403-4554

Statements can also be mailed to:

The LTTE
c/o Eelam House
202 Long Lane
London SE1 4QB
United Kingdom

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

Email: editor@wsws.org

Fax: (US) 248-967-3023



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact