

Third Sri Lankan socialist arrested by LTTE

The WSWs Editorial Board
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A third Tamil socialist in Kilinochchi has been arrested by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the separatist guerrilla group waging war in the north and east of Sri Lanka. Rajendran Sudarshan, like his two detained comrades a member of the Sri Lankan Socialist Equality Party, was seized at his home on August 2.

The two other SEP members, Thirugnana Sambandan and Kasinathan Naguleshwaran, were arrested July 26 while posting up SEP placards in Kilinochchi, an LTTE-controlled region in the north of the country.

These three men are in grave physical danger, and other supporters of the SEP in the Kilinochchi area are likely targets for further repression at the hands of the LTTE authorities. The arrest of Sudarshan was in all probability based on information extracted through the interrogation of the SEP members arrested earlier. The LTTE is notorious for using violence, including murder, against its political opponents.

According to reports received by the *World Socialist Web Site*, the influence of the SEP has grown considerably in the Kilinochchi region, and the local residents are deeply concerned about the fate of the SEP members who have been taken into custody. No doubt their arrest was the response of the LTTE leadership to the growing political support in the Tamil population for the SEP's socialist and internationalist policies.

On July 28 relatives of Sambandan and Kasinathan spoke with the LTTE official in charge of the area, Theepan. He said he had ordered their arrest because the SEP's politics had become an obstacle to the LTTE's activities. Theepan added he had handed the two SEP members over to Pottu Amman, the head of the LTTE police in the area. Amman is well-known for his brutal treatment of LTTE opponents.

Theepan told Sambandan's and Kasinathan's relatives that the two would be released after two days

of interrogation. Instead, the LTTE has stepped up its repression with the arrest of Rajendran Sudarshan. Neither the relatives nor comrades of the arrested men have been allowed to see them, or been told where they are being held.

When the SEP in Sri Lanka learned of the arrests, on August 4, it immediately sent a letter of protest to the LTTE's head offices, located in London, England. Similar messages have been sent by the SEP's sister parties in Europe, North America and Australia, by human rights organizations and concerned individuals. Yet the LTTE has not acknowledged these letters, let alone provided evidence that the SEP members are not being mistreated.

The arrest of the SEP members is a clear case of a politically motivated attack on basic democratic rights. The SEP, the Trotskyist party in Sri Lanka, has unconditionally defended the democratic rights of the Tamil people. It has consistently opposed the war being carried out by the Sri Lankan government against the Tamil population in the north and east of the island, and demanded the withdrawal of government troops. The SEP members were arrested because of their principled advocacy of working class internationalism.

The World Socialist Web Site has launched an international campaign, calling on human rights and civil rights organizations, labor groups and all individuals committed to the defense of democratic rights to demand the immediate release of the SEP members. Press releases have been sent to news organizations around the world.

The arrest of the Tamil socialists has been reported on one of the television channels in Sri Lanka, and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has carried interviews in Sinhala and Tamil with leaders of the Sri Lankan SEP.

On 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 Sambandan, Naguleshwaran and Sudarshan, and the political struggle of the SEP to unify the Sinhalese and Tamil masses in the struggle for socialism not only in Sri Lanka, but throughout the Indian subcontinent. Among those 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



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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