

Campaign to free Tamil socialists reaches Indian, Sri Lankan immigrant audiences

Editorial Board
14 August 1998

The campaign led by the *World Socialist Web Site* to win the release of the three Tamil socialists arrested by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has been widely publicized on the Indian sub-continent and in the Sri Lankan émigré communities in Canada and Europe. On August 12 the *Hindu*, a major newspaper in India with 3 million readers, published an article on the arrests which included an interview with Sri Lankan SEP General Secretary Wije Dias. On the same day, Keith Jones, the national secretary of the SEP of Canada, was interviewed on a Toronto, Ontario radio station directed toward the 150,000 Sri Lankan Tamil and Sinhalese immigrants who live in the area.

Thirugnana Sambandan, Kasinathan Naguleswaran and Rajendran Sudarshan, all members of the Sri Lankan Socialist Equality Party, were arrested in Kilinochchi, a district in the north of the country which is under the control of the LTTE, the separatist guerrilla group waging war in the north and east of Sri Lanka. Sambandan and Naguleswaran were taken into custody on July 26 as they were posting SEP placards in the area. Sudarshan was arrested August 2 in his home.

The LTTE is notorious for using violence, including murder, against its political opponents. On July 28, when relatives of Sambandan and Naguleswaran spoke with the LTTE official in charge of the area, Theepan, he said he had ordered the arrests 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.

Sri Lankan SEP general secretary Wije Dias told the *Hindu* newspaper that Sambandan, Naguleswaran and Sudarshan had been active SEP members for the

past five years. The SEP and its predecessor, the Revolutionary Communist League, Dias said, 'has unconditionally defended the democratic rights of the Tamil masses and has campaigned consistently against the war in the North and the East and for the withdrawal of Government troops from the region.'

On Wednesday night, Keith Jones, the national secretary of the SEP in Canada, was interviewed for 15 minutes on Radio Shanti in Toronto. The program was carried in English, Sinhalese and Tamil and directed to the one of the largest Sri Lankan immigrant communities in the world.

Jones explained the danger that the Sri Lankan SEP members faced from their LTTE captors. He also reviewed the record of the SEP-RCL in fighting for the unity of the Tamil and Sinhalese working class and rural masses and the party's opposition to the LTTE's communalist and separatist perspective.

When the SEP in Sri Lanka first 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 fraternal parties in India, Europe, North America and Australia. Scores of protests have been sent by individuals in the US, Canada, Britain, Germany, Japan, New Zealand and Australia. An organization of Indian textile workers, Australian fertilizer workers, London bus drivers and US telephone workers also sent protests.

Despite this outpouring of letters and faxes protesting the arrests, the LTTE to date has failed to issue any statement on the whereabouts or condition of the detainees. On Wednesday a representative from the LTTE in London informed the *World Socialist Web Site* that the messages and letters were relayed to the LTTE in Sri Lanka and he was awaiting a response.

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

See Also:

Letter from Sri Lankan SEP general secretary to the LTTE

[13 August 1998]

WSWS editorial board chairman demands release of Sri Lankan socialists

[8 August 1998]



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