

LTTE communiqué threatens Tamil socialists with execution

19 August 1998

The International Committee of the Fourth International and the *World Socialist Web Site* urge all those who uphold democratic rights to demand that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) immediately release the three members of the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka it has apprehended in Kilinochchi, an LTTE-controlled region in the north of the island.

Officially, the LTTE has said nothing about the whereabouts or well-being of Thirugnana Sambandan, Kasinathan Naguleswaran and Rajendran Sudarshan, although it is now almost a month since they were detained. Nor has the LTTE revealed what charges, if any, it has laid against the SEP members.

'WSWS puts lives of 3 Tamils in jeopardy'--a statement being circulated through internet readers' groups--however, bears all the hallmarks of an LTTE communiqué. The anonymous statement defends the arrests of the SEP members, claims insight into the thinking of the LTTE leadership and urges that a counter-campaign be mounted to induce the International Committee (ICFI) and WSWs to abandon their efforts to mobilize support for the Tamil socialists among labor, human rights and Tamil organizations.

The communiqué's message is blunt: should the ICFI and the WSWs not desist in their international defense campaign, the three SEP members will be harshly dealt with, and most likely killed.

The communiqué argues that if the ICFI and WSWs do not fall silent about the Kilinochchi arrests and abandon the arrested SEP members to the mercy of the LTTE, then they will be responsible should the LTTE abuse, torture or execute them. 'The WSWs and Socialist Party,' states the communiqué, 'have certainly gained the focus and attention that they set out to achieve as a result of publicizing this issue to such a grand level. But who is to blame if their propaganda ploy has put the lives of the three members in danger?'

This is a perverse argument that turns reality on its head and makes the victims of repression responsible for the acts of their persecutors. In seeking to rally international opinion

to pressure the LTTE to release the Tamil socialists, the SEP and ICFI are only carrying out the obligations of any political leadership to its members.

The LTTE itself protests the repressive actions of the Sri Lankan regime, and publicly calls upon and receives the support of international human rights organizations like Amnesty International. Were the Sri Lankan government to assert that its murder of arrested Tamil militants is justified by LTTE efforts to rally public opposition to Sinhala state repression, how would the LTTE leadership respond to such an absurd and outrageous argument?

There is in fact a striking parallel between the LTTE's attempts to justify possible outrages against the three SEP members on the grounds that they have been the object of a defense campaign and the arguments invoked by the Sri Lankan government against the Tamils. The People's Alliance regime, like the UNP government that preceded it, justifies its systematic violation of the democratic rights of the Tamil population and its war against the LTTE on the ground that Tamils do not meekly accept the status of second class citizens in Sri Lanka.

If the LTTE leadership is concerned about its international reputation, it should not have arrested the Tamil socialists, whose only 'crime' is to fight for a socialist and internationalist program. If the LTTE wants to rectify this situation there is a simple answer--unconditionally release the SEP members.

Corroboration of the central tenets of the defense campaign

The LTTE communiqué substantiates the two central points that the ICFI and WSWs have made since learning of the SEP members' arrest: they are in grave peril and the sole reason for their arrests is that they are political opponents of the LTTE.

In seven short paragraphs, the communiqué makes six separate references to the lives of the three SEP members being 'in jeopardy,' 'at risk' or 'in grave danger.'

It attributes Sambandan's, Naguleswaran's and Sudarshan's arrest to 'suspicion that they were engaged in

illegal activities,' but provides no explanation as to what these illegal activities were. To do so, would draw attention to the fact that the LTTE, in the areas under its control, ruthlessly suppresses all non-LTTE approved political activity--meetings, demonstrations or even the circulation of political literature.

Unable to explain the SEP members' arrest, the LTTE resorts to innuendo and slander. The communiqué begins with a purported account of the facts surrounding their arrests and ends in a crescendo of vitriol, affirming that the SEP 'needs to be treated according to its true characteristics--that of a neo-Nazi party or that of a suppressive regime.'

The communiqué accuses the SEP of doing 'nothing' to oppose 'the terror tactics of the Sri Lankan government' and of working 'with Sri Lankan government agents.' (These charges have since been amplified by LTTE supporters. Another internet posting, titled 'Foreign Spy Agents arrested in Tamil Eelam,' says Sambandan and Naguleswaran 'work for a foreign country' and 'were paid by foreign agents to collect information about the LTTE.')

These are vile and libelous slanders. The SEP of Sri Lanka, as the LTTE well knows, is an intransigent opponent of the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie and has vigorously opposed the 15-year-long war the Sri Lankan state has waged against the Tamils of the north and east. The SEP and its predecessor, the Revolutionary Communist League, have a proud and extensively-documented record of defending the democratic rights of all Tamils in Sri Lanka--the Tamils of Colombo and the plantation workers, as well as those living in the Tamil-majority areas of the north and east. The SEP-RCL's struggle against the national oppression of the Tamils in fact predates the founding of the LTTE by almost a decade.

Despite deep and irreconcilable differences with the politics of the LTTE, and its perspective of establishing a capitalist statelet in the north and east of the island, the SEP has defended the LTTE from the repression of the Sri Lankan and Indian governments and will continue to do so. When the LTTE's leader Prabhakaran was detained by the Indian government, the RCL demanded his release and, unlike the LTTE leadership, it opposed the 1987 Indo-Sri Lankan Accord from its very signing, warning it would be used to bolster the Sri Lankan state against the Tamil masses.

Even more preposterous are the claims that the arrested SEP members are working as agents of a foreign power. The first tenet of the SEP's program is that the liberation of the working class and oppressed masses depends on the working class breaking with all parties and institutions of the bourgeoisie.

The LTTE will not be able to extricate itself from the growing international opposition to its repression of the SEP through slanders and still less through violence. It must release the three SEP members.

We urge WSWs readers to redouble their efforts to secure the release of the three SEP members. Not only has the LTTE now conceded that their lives are in grave danger. According to its own account, this is entirely for political reasons--because it feels threatened by the ICFI's and WSWs's political exposure of the repressive character of LTTE rule.

Support should be solicited from civil rights and labor organizations, Tamil associations and all those concerned with democratic rights. We especially call on those who support the struggle of the Tamil masses against the Sri Lankan state. The repression of the SEP by the LTTE can only strengthen the hand of the People's Alliance government and the military. Indeed, in recent weeks the Sri Lankan state has stepped up its harassment of SEP members and supporters in the south.

Letters of protest, calling for the unconditional release of the SEP members should be faxed to the LTTE leadership as soon as possible. These letters should be directed to:

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

telephone messages to 44-171-403-4554, and faxes to 44-171-403-1653.

Copies of all messages should be sent to the WSWs by e-mail at editor@wsws.org, by fax at 248-967-3023 or by mail c/o SEP, PO Box 48377, Oak Park, Michigan, USA 48237.

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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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact