

# Fourth Tamil socialist reportedly released by LTTE

**Our Reporter**  
**25 September 1998**

The Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka has received word that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have released a fourth SEP member from detention in Killinochchi, an LTTE-controlled district south of the Jaffna Peninsula.

Rasarapnam Rajavale was released September 16, according to a letter from Killinochchi received by the SEP leadership in Colombo yesterday. The letter adds that like the three SEP members released September 13, Rajavale is in good health. He apparently was not tortured or otherwise physically abused during his 17 days of detention and interrogation by the LTTE.

The latest communication from Killinochchi also indicates that the LTTE has no further SEP members in its custody. But this information—and indeed the reports of the release of the four SEP members—has yet to be independently verified.

On September 22 the SEP called a press conference in Colombo to announce it had received reports of the release of three Tamil SEP members after more than six weeks of detention. SEP General Secretary Wije Dias said, “The SEP views this as a very encouraging development. If the facts reported in these letters are true, it should be possible to bring this sorry episode—in which the LTTE has persecuted members of the socialist party that has spearheaded the struggle against Sinhalese chauvinism and the 15-year racist war against the Tamil population in the north and east of Sri Lanka—to a speedy and just conclusion.”

The SEP leader called on the LTTE to publicly confirm the releases, allow SEP representatives to establish direct contact with its newly-freed members so it could verify their condition and well-being, and release any and all SEP members still in its custody.

The fact that the LTTE has never publicly acknowledged its detention of SEP members has been

among the most troubling aspects of this case. All over the world it is recognized that a regime’s admission that it has persons in its custody is a minimum, if inadequate, guarantee of their safety. The LTTE’s refusal to respect this elementary civil right, its campaign of repression against the SEP, and the civil war conditions that prevail in the north have made it exceedingly difficult for the SEP to obtain information from Killinochchi. This accounts for the uncertainty over the number of SEP members seized by the LTTE. It now appears that the total was four, rather than five, as had been reported previously.

Pending confirmation that the four comrades have in fact been freed, and that no others remain in LTTE custody, the SEP and the *World Socialist Web Site* are continuing their campaign to force the LTTE to cease its repression and release all SEP members.

The apparent release of the Tamil socialists is the product of an international campaign conducted by the Sri Lankan SEP, the International Committee of the Fourth International and the *World Socialist Web Site*. This campaign has evoked widespread support around the world, with many human rights organizations, trade union bodies and officials, political figures and concerned individuals protesting the arrest of the SEP members and demanding their release. Among the organizations that have sent messages of protest to the LTTE are Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

The powerful support for the defense campaign and public concern over the fate of the SEP members was reflected in the prominent coverage given to the SEP’s September 22 press conference. The ITN television network carried a report, as did Reuters. Both of Colombo’s two major non-government, Tamil-language dailies, *Thinakkural* and *Veerakesari*, placed

their reports on the SEP press conference on their front pages. The *Island*, Sri Lanka's largest English-language daily, also carried an extensive report.

The Tamil socialists were arrested in Killinochchi, just south of the Jaffna Peninsula, an area controlled by the LTTE, a secessionist guerrilla organization. Thirugnana Sambandan and Kasinathan Naguleshwaran were apprehended by LTTE security forces on the evening of July 26, while they were posting SEP handbills. Rajendran Sudharshan was seized from his home August 1. Rasarapnam Rajavale was taken into LTTE custody August 31, shortly after the SEP leadership in Colombo received a report from Killinochchi that the LTTE was systematically hunting down all SEP members in the area.

The arrest and detention of the SEP members is a clear case of political repression. Relatives of Samabandan and Naguleshwaran, the two members seized July 26, were told by an LTTE official that the arrests had taken place because the SEP's political work, i.e., its fight for a socialist and internationalist program, was an obstacle to the LTTE. To this day the LTTE leadership-in-exile in London has failed to acknowledge the arrests of the SEP members, give any explanation for their detention or report on their condition.

The *World Socialist Web Site* urges all labor and human rights organizations, and those groups and individuals concerned with upholding democratic rights, to continue to press the LTTE for the immediate and unconditional release of all SEP members in its custody. We are also calling on the LTTE to publicly confirm the release of the SEP members and allow the Sri Lankan SEP to establish direct contact with its comrades by allowing an SEP representative to visit Killinochchi, or permitting one of the newly liberated detainees to travel to Colombo.

Letters of protest should be faxed to the LTTE c/o Eelam House (London) at: 44-171-403-1653 Tel.: 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:

E-mail: [editor@wsws.org](mailto:editor@wsws.org)

Fax: (US) 248-967-3023



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**