

LTTE hunting down socialists

Redouble efforts to secure release of SEP members

Our Reporters
2 September 1998

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have intensified their campaign of repression against the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) of Sri Lanka. From Killinochchi, the LTTE-controlled area in the north of the island where three SEP members are in LTTE custody, word has come that the secessionist guerrilla group has launched a manhunt for all SEP members.

“I got information that the LTTE is searching for the other members of the SEP in this area,” reads a letter written by an SEP member in Killinochchi August 17, but received by the party leadership in Colombo only on August 29. “The LTTE set a plan to get me from my wife’s house,” reports the SEP member. “I managed to avoid getting into their hands and now frequently change my place of stay.”

The SEP member adds that he is confident the LTTE’s repression will not succeed. “The worldwide campaign waged by the International Committee of the Fourth International for the release of our three comrades gives us courage to withstand the witch-hunt of the LTTE and fight for our socialist perspective.”

Thirugnana Sambandan and Kasinathan Naguleswaran were arrested while they posted SEP handbills on the evening of July 26. Rajendran Sudarshan was seized from his home by the LTTE August 2.

Although it is now more than five weeks since the first arrests, the LTTE leadership still refuses to make any public comment on the whereabouts or well being of the three SEP members. This refusal, the LTTE’s widening repression against the SEP, and its infamous record of using violence against its Tamil political opponents are cause for grave concern about the safety of the SEP members. These concerns are amplified by an unofficial LTTE communiqué, circulated through Internet reader groups, that explicitly warns that the

lives of the SEP members are at risk.

The unofficial LTTE communiqué suggested that the SEP and the families of the LTTE detainees might obtain information pertaining to their condition through the intercession of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Yet the ICRC, which, at the request of Sudarshan’s mother, raised the fate of the three SEP members with the LTTE in mid-August, reports that the LTTE has not replied to its queries.

Similarly, the LTTE is refusing to provide any explanation for the SEP members’ arrests. This silence only underscores that the SEP members were apprehended solely because of their socialist-internationalist opposition to the LTTE.

The SEP and its forerunner, the Revolutionary Communist League, have a long and proud record of upholding the democratic rights of the Tamils. Since its eruption in 1983, the SEP has opposed the Sri Lankan state’s 15 year-long war against the Tamils of the north and the east and has resolutely defended the LTTE and its cadres from government repression. At the same time, the SEP has opposed the LTTE’s national-communist perspective of establishing a capitalist statelet in the north and east of the island, fighting instead to unite the workers and peasants of Sri Lanka—Sinhalese and Tamil—with their class brothers throughout the Indian subcontinent in a common struggle against the reactionary nation-state system that was erected in South Asia when British imperialism “decolonized” and ceded political control to various bourgeois cliques.

The international campaign to win the release of the SEP members is winning increasing support. Hundreds of WSWs readers and labor and human rights organizations have sent messages to the LTTE leadership in London, England, demanding the

unconditional release of the Tamil socialists and a halt to the repression of the SEP.

On August 22, the Socialist Labour League of India staged a successful picket in support of the arrested SEP members in Madras, the largest Tamil-speaking city in the world. Among the more than 40 picketers were workers from the Madras Export Zone and Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka.

Within Sri Lanka itself, the SEP has been able to mobilize broad support. Last week public meetings in defense of the SEP detainees were held at Colombo University and in the cities of Kalutara and Bandarawela.

Statements denouncing the LTTE's actions have been issued by two Sri Lankan parties that purport to represent the traditions of socialism. The Nava Sama Samaja Party, which is represented in Sri Lanka's parliament, issued a statement to the LTTE leadership August 21. It read: "We are informed by the Socialist Equality Party that your organization has taken several members of this party into custody and refused to release them. We request these people are released immediately as there is no reason to believe that they have committed any offence against the liberation struggle of the Tamil people."

A statement issued by the United Socialist Party August 27 said the SEP members' arrest is a "flagrant violation on the part of the LTTE of the right of the SEP members to engage in political activity ... and it is all the more serious because the SEP is campaigning against Sinhala communalists. Therefore, we urge you to release these arrested—namely Thirugnana Sambandan, Kasinathan Naguleshwarab and Rajendran Sudarshan and [to] respect their democratic rights."

The WSWS urgently calls on all of its readers, all labor and human rights organizations, and all those who defend basic democratic rights to send faxes and letters to the LTTE condemning the arrests of the SEP members in Killinochchi 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:

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