

Amnesty International issues urgent appeal on behalf of Sri Lankan socialists

The WSWS Editorial Board
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Amnesty International has issued an “urgent action appeal” on behalf of the five members of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) of Sri Lanka who have been apprehended by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Titled “Fear of Torture,” the appeal was issued by Amnesty International’s research headquarters in London September 11 and has been disseminated through its Urgent Action Network—via e-mail, fax and telegram—to thousands of AI members, AI chapters and other concerned individuals and organizations worldwide. The Urgent Action Network mobilizes emergency support for those whom AI believes are in grave danger of being tortured, assaulted or killed.

The appeal lists the names of the five SEP members who are LTTE captives—Thirugnana Sambandan, Kasinathan Naguleswaran, Rajendran Sudarshan, A. Rasaratnam and E. Nayalvale—and emphasizes that none has been seen since their apprehension by LTTE security forces. The appeal documents the escalating campaign of repression the Tamil secessionist organization has mounted against the SEP in Killinochchi, an LTTE-controlled district just south of the Jaffna Peninsula, since last July. It also expresses fear “for the safety of other local members of the SEP.”

The AI appeal draws attention to the fact that because they are Tamils, the SEP members are especially liable to abuse by the LTTE: “Although the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross] is able to visit a small number of prisoners held by the LTTE, including members of the security forces and Sinhalese fishermen, it has not been able to gain access to Tamil prisoners held by the LTTE, on political grounds.”

The appeal concludes by calling for messages to be sent to the LTTE’s leadership-in-exile urging it to provide assurances the SEP members will not be ill-treated or tortured, to allow ICRC representatives and relatives to

visit its SEP captives, and to clarify the reasons for their detention.

Possibly, the best known international human rights advocacy group in the world, Amnesty International has done extensive work to expose and document the grave human rights abuses the Sri Lankan state has perpetrated in its war against the Tamils of the north and the east. It has publicized numerous cases of LTTE activists and other Tamils, including civilians, who were tortured or murdered by the Sri Lankan military and police. AI also played an important role in bringing to the world’s attention the murders of thousands of Sinhalese-speaking youth at the hands of Sri Lankan security forces between 1989 and 1992, when army and police mounted a reign of terror in rural areas of the south during a pacification campaign ostensibly aimed against the JVP, a petty-bourgeois communalist organization that had assassinated some government officials.

AI issued its urgent action appeal on behalf of the SEP members only after conducting its own inquiries to verify the information given it by representatives of the SEP in Sri Lanka and the *World Socialist Web Site*. Its appeal confirms the warnings of the SEP and WSWS that the lives of the five SEP members are in grave danger.

More than seven weeks have now passed since the LTTE arrested the first two SEP members. Yet neither the LTTE’s London-based leadership or LTTE officials in Killinochchi have responded to requests from the SEP, the ICRC, the detainees’ relatives and the many individuals and organizations who have supported the SEP-WSWS defense campaign for information concerning the whereabouts and well-being of the SEP members. In effect the SEP members have been “disappeared” by the LTTE.

That the LTTE has failed to lay charges or present any evidence against the SEP members underscores that this is a case of political repression. The SEP members have

been targeted because they uphold socialist political convictions and have counterposed to the LTTE's nationalist perspective of establishing a capitalist statelet in the north and east the fight to unite Tamil and Sinhalese workers and peasants in the struggle to establish the United Socialist States of Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam.

The SEP has a long and proud record of championing the democratic rights of the Tamils. Like its predecessor the Revolutionary Communist league, the SEP has always opposed the anti-Tamil legislation and policies of the Sri Lankan state, including the privileged status of the Sinhalese language and Buddhist faith under the Sri Lankan constitution. It is an indefatigable opponent of the racist war and demands the withdrawal of all government troops from the Tamil majority areas. For these principled stands, several of its members have been murdered by Sinhalese chauvinists.

The *World Socialist Web Site* urgently calls on all of its readers, all labor, human rights and Tamil organizations, and all those who defend basic democratic rights to send faxes and letters to the LTTE condemning the repression of the SEP and demanding the immediate and unconditional release of the five SEP members.

Letters should be faxed to the LTTE c/o Eelam House (London) at:

44-171-403-165

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 the text of the "Urgent Action Appeal" by Amnesty International



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact