

LTTE arrests two more Tamil socialists

Labor and civil rights organizations must demand halt to repression of SEP

Editorial Board
9 September 1998

Two more members of the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka have been apprehended by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the Killinochchi area.

The August 31 arrest of A. Rasaratnam and E. Nayalvale brings to five the number of SEP members in the hands of the Tamil secessionist organization and provides disturbing confirmation of a report, sent from Killinochchi in mid-August, that the LTTE is hunting down all SEP members in the area.

The lives of the five Tamil socialists are in grave danger. Thirugnana Sambandan and Kasinadan Naguleswaran were arrested by the LTTE on July 26. Rajendran Sudharshan was taken from his home on August 2. Yet the London-based leadership of the LTTE refuses to acknowledge these arrests, let alone give any explanation for why the SEP members are being detained or any guarantees of their well-being.

This refusal mirrors the practices of the worst police-state regimes, like that which waged Argentina's 'dirty war' against militant workers and other socialists in the 1970s. The cardinal right of a detainee is public acknowledgment by the authorities of his or her arrest. Such acknowledgment constitutes a minimal, although utterly inadequate, guarantee that the authorities can be held to account for a captive's well-being. Without it, the detainee is lost in the void of the disappeared.

No less ominous is the declaration by an LTTE cadre to the parents of one of the newly-arrested SEP members: 'If your sons are not TELO (Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization) members why [do] you get so excited? The LTTE will investigate and release them.'

There is absolutely no possibility of confusing the politics of TELO, an organization which is allied with Sri Lanka's People's Alliance regime, and thus party to

the war the Sri Lankan state is waging against the Tamils of the north and the east, with those of the SEP. The SEP, and its predecessor, the Revolutionary Communist League, have a long and proud history of defending the democratic rights of the Tamils and opposing the 15-year anti-Tamil war--a record of which the LTTE leadership is fully cognizant.

That after more than six weeks of the LTTE 'investigating' the SEP, one of its cadres could suggest that it might be connected to TELO, an organization with which the LTTE is locked in bloody struggle, indicates that the LTTE leadership has decided to intensify its repression of the SEP. Unable to explain before the Tamil masses its suppression of its socialist political opponents, the LTTE is trying to provide a pretext for its actions through innuendo and slander, by associating the SEP with a discredited pro-government party.

The SEP is waging a powerful campaign in Sri Lanka to mobilize popular support to demand the LTTE leadership immediately and unconditionally release the five SEP members and cease its campaign of repression against the SEP. Well-attended public meetings have been held in Colombo and other centers in the south. Reports on the defence campaign have been featured prominently on Sri Lankan radio and television.

Scores of artists, intellectuals, and representatives of labor organizations have issued statements calling for the LTTE to stop persecuting the SEP. Vasudeva Nanayakkara, a Member of Parliament for the Lanka Samaja Sama Party, the largest and oldest political party on the island claiming to be socialist, was among those who issued a statement last week condemning the repression of the SEP.

Professor Amal Jayawardane of Colombo University wrote to the LTTE leadership deploring the arrests. 'It is of common knowledge that the SEP has consistently and unreservedly stood for the democratic rights of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka, and it should be able to continue the campaign without any hindrance.

'The protection of persons from enforced disappearances is a cardinal principle of human rights and the rule of law. As advocates of human rights, we call upon both the government and opposition groups to put an end to the violation of democratic rights of political activists. In this context, we urge the leadership of the LTTE to release unconditionally those SEP members in its custody.'

The *World Socialist Web Site* urgently calls on all 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:

44-171-403-1653

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:

LTTE hunting down socialists: Redouble efforts to secure release of SEP members

[2 September 1998]

LTTE communiqué threatens Tamil socialists with execution

[19 August 1998]



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