

Appeals for the release of the five SEP members in LTTE custody

A selection from Sri Lanka

19 September 1998

The World Socialist Web Site here publishes a representative selection of the appeals issued by working class and human rights organizations and concerned individuals in Sri Lanka for the release of the five Socialist Equality Party (SEP) members in the custody of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Some of the appeals are letters of protest to the LTTE, some are addressed to the SEP, others are press releases. Many pre-date the SEP learning of the August 31 arrest of two more of its members.

Dr. Carlo Fonseka Member, University Grants Commission 20, Ward Place Colombo 7

8.09.98

To the LTTE leadership,

The Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka has an unbroken 30-year record of principled support for the rights of the Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka. Perhaps it is the only political movement in Sri Lanka which has been uncompromisingly non-racist. In that context, it is extraordinarily disturbing to learn that the LTTE has been arbitrarily detaining five members of the Socialist Equality Party for periods of time. With reference to the LTTE leadership, I have had the occasion to say regretfully that “while fighting for the right of Tamils to self-determination, the guerrillas have ruthlessly violated the human rights of Tamils who have dared to disagree with their vision of a Tamil Eelam” (See *Towards a Peaceful Sri Lanka* p. 77). The present action of the LTTE in respect to the five Tamil members of the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka is further evidence reinforcing my judgment. One fervently hopes that the LTTE would, at least, in the interests of its international image, release the detainees without further ado.

Carlo Fonseka.

Ceylon Federation of Trade Unions Affiliated to the WFTU Reg. No. 2155 513-2/1 Elvitigala Mawatha, Colombo 5

10.09.1998.

To Wije Dias, General Secretary, Socialist Equality Party:

Dear Comrade,

The arrest of party members by the LTTE

We received your letter dated August 19, 1998, on the above-mentioned issue.

We strongly denounce the unjust arrest of three persons named Thirugnana Sambandan, Kasinadan Naguleshwaran and Rajendran Sudharshan, members of your party, by the LTTE, while they were engaged in propaganda work for your party in Killinochchi area and the detention of them in an anti-democratic way, as you mention. We would

like to inform you that we urge the LTTE to release these three persons immediately.

Yours fraternally,

D.W. Subasinghe, General Secretary.

Commercial and Industrial Workers Union 17, Barracks Lane, Colombo 02

21.08.1998

To the LTTE,

Dear Sir,

The arrest of three members of the Socialist Equality Party

It has been reported to us that three comrades of the Socialist Equality Party who were involved in political propaganda activities of their party have been arrested by your organization.

Thirugnana Sambandan and Kasinadan Naguleshwaran were arrested by your organization at Tharmapuram in the evening on July 26 and later on August 2, another SEP member, Rajendran Sudharshan was also arrested.

We were further informed that the reason for these arrests was their involvement in political activities of the Socialist Equality Party.

The arrest of cadres of an organization like Socialist Equality Party which has taken a stand specially against the war and national oppression cannot be justified any way.

So, our federation earnestly urge your organization to release these three leftist cadres immediately and assure their freedom to engage in any politics they believe as correct.

Yours faithfully,

Saranapala de Silva, General Secretary—Commercial and Industrial Workers Union, affiliated to the United Federation of Labour

Plantations and Industrial Workers Union No 90, 1st Maligakanda Lane, Colombo 10

19.08.98

To the LTTE Leadership,

I am writing this letter to you on behalf of the Plantations and Industrial Workers Union and as the Sri Lankan representative of the International Labour Defense committee.

I vehemently denounce the arrest and continued detention by your organization of three of the members of the Socialist Equality Party—Thirugnana Sambandhan, Kasinadan Naguleshwaran and Rajendran Sudarshan—in violation of the democratic rights of the SEP.

I would like to point out that these three persons that your organization is holding under arrest are members of the only socialist organization in Sri Lanka that is conducting a continuous and intransigent struggle against

the suppression of the democratic rights of, and the racist war conducted against, the oppressed Tamil nation. This struggle of the SEP is well known by the working class in Sri Lanka and internationally.

It is beyond doubt that your organization will find it impossible to justify before the international community the arrest and the continued detention of these comrades and any physical or mental harm perpetrated on them.

I demand that you release immediately the three said SEP members and hand them over to their relations.

We assure you that every single day that you fail to comply with our demand will be one which will be utilized by us to mobilize international public opinion against your anti-democratic act.

Yours sincerely,

W.A.Sunil, General Secretary, Plantations and Industrial Workers Union and Sri Lankan representative of the International Labour Defense Committee

Ceylon Teachers Union

90,Chithampalam Gadinar Mawatha GCSU Building Colombo 02

9.09.1998

To the LTTE leadership,

Secure the release of SEP members in custody

The Socialist Equality Party has informed us that three members of its Killinochchi branch—Paramu Thirugnana Sambandan, Rajendran Sudharshan and Kasinadan Naguleswaran—were arrested by the LTTE.

Our union, which upholds the democratic rights of the working class, strongly denounces these arrests.

I demand you to take necessary steps to release these three comrades unconditionally, accepting the democratic right for involvement in political and trade union activities.

Thanking you, yours faithfully,

Sarath Kahagalla General Secretary

Independent Worker's Inquiry Committee on Free Trade Zones No. 90, 1st Maligakanda Lane, Colombo 10

25.08.98

To the LTTE leadership,

I request that the three members of the Socialist Equality Party—Thirugnana Sambandan, Rajendran Sudharshan and Kasinadan Naguleswaran—who are being held by your organization against all rules of democracy and justice be released forthwith.

Almost a month has elapsed since the International Committee of the Fourth International, the Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* have placed this demand on you.

But your organization has failed to make any response to that request. On the contrary an LTTE communique on the Internet has declared that unless the campaign of the SEP to secure their release ceases, their lives are in danger. At the same time it has stated that the LTTE will start treating the SEP as a neo-Nazi Party.

It is a well known fact that the SEP in Sri Lanka and the Revolutionary Communist League, its predecessor, have carried on a continuous principled struggle to mobilize the working class for the defense of the democratic rights of the Tamil nation for over a period of 30 years. Its has consistently campaigned to withdraw the Sri Lankan army from the North and the East, to release the political prisoners including those of the LTTE and to secure the citizenship rights of the plantation workers.

The LTTE communique on the Internet declares that the SEP is working with the agents of the state machine. Is the SEP in an alliance with the agents of the Sri Lankan government when it is fighting continuously for

the democratic rights of the Tamil masses? Is not the SEP right now in the midst of a campaign for the release of its members and sympathizers amongst the plantation workers from the jails of the PA government? How can such an organization be a Nazi organization? Why should the SEP not fight to inform and mobilize the workers and all persons and organizations who claim that they stand for the democratic rights of the working people all over the world to secure the release of its members?

The strong response that the campaign to release the SEP members has received internationally demonstrates that all right thinking people feel that the three SEP members are held by your organization without any justification. Now the brutal threats of the LTTE demonstrate how utterly it hates the struggle to mobilize the working people internationally on a socialist program. Your organization is resorting to repression and threats of further repression because it fears that the workers and peasants in the Killinochchi area would rally to the program of international socialism.

I request that you to free these socialists without earning even greater opprobrium in the international community and hand them over to their relations without delay.

Yours Sincerely,

Vilani Pieris, Chairperson, Independent Worker's Inquiry Committee on the Free Trade Zones

Lanka Sama Samaja Party Press Release

The Lanka Sama Samaja Party understands that five persons belonging to the Samajawadi Samanatha Pakshaya [the Socialist Equality Party] have been abducted by the LTTE at Killinochchi on 26.07.1998, 02.08.1998 and 31.08.1998 and are being kept in its custody. These persons are:

1. Paramu Thirugnana Sambandan
2. Kasinadan Naguleswaran
3. Rajendran Sudharshan
4. Rasarathnam, and
5. E. Nayalvale.

The LSSP is aware that the Samajawadi Samanatha Pakshaya is a non-communal, non-racist organization and there is no question that these five persons could have been engaged in any work that can be understood as being against the aspirations of the Tamil people.

The LSSP condemns the act of abduction and forced custody and demands that these persons be released.

Batty Weerakoon, General Secretary, Lanka Sama Samaja Party
Vasudeva Nanayakkara, Member of Parliament—Ratnapura District, No. 103 C, Kappetipola Mawatha Colombo 05
07.08.98

I learned that the three persons named Kasinathan Naguleswaran, Sambandan and Rajendran, members of the Killinochchi branch of the Socialist Equality Party, have been arrested by LTTE recently. It has been reported further that no charges are leveled against these three persons.

I believe that they were openly and honestly working for political objectives of the Socialist Equality Party.

I request the LTTE to release them without any delay.

At least, the LTTE must issue an immediate statement about them.

Yours,

Vasudeva Nanayakkara

Peoples Student Front Faculty of Arts University of Colombo Colombo
11.09.98

To the LTTE leadership,

By now, it has been established that your organization has arrested and detained five members of the Socialist Equality Party, the Sri Lankan section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The SEP has a history of a firm struggle against the racist war which the bourgeois governments of Sri Lanka have been waging, suppressing the democratic rights of the Tamils. Because of that struggle, the SEP has suffered various type of repression and attacks by bourgeois governments and fascist organizations and suffered the loss of the lives of several of its own members. You have arrested five fighters of such a principled organization.

We would like to assure you that we, who have actively joined the international political campaign launched by the SEP for the release of its members, are involved in this struggle with highest possible dedication until the five SEP members are released.

Yours sincerely,

Nishanthi Priyangika. Secretary, Peoples Student Front

Roger Senevirathne, Roger Senevirathne Drama Creations 75/2, Polhengoda Road Colombo 05

I strongly protest against the arrest, the continued detention and the violation of human rights of the three members belonging to the Vanni Area of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), by the LTTE.

They have taken repressive action against a party that has always stood by the Tamil people. The SEP has always opposed the war against the Tamils and calls for the withdrawal of the State armies from the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

This arrest shows that the LTTE fears its political opposition and it exposes the political disintegration of its leadership.

During the early phase of the struggle of the LTTE, I admired it, thinking that their policies are socialist and humanist and for the courage and the sacrifice of their cadres. But now it has become an organization with anti-humanistic policies. The LTTE is no longer a liberating force.

I request the LTTE release the three members of the SEP immediately.

Roger Senevirathne [performing artist]

Sudath Mahadivulwewa, Director/ Script Writer/Journalist/ Creative Copy Writer 50B 'Daa Cha', Yahampath Mawatha, Maharagama, Sri Lanka

To the LTTE leadership

Demand for the Release of Three Members of Socialist Equality Party

This is an appeal for the release of Thirugnana Sambandan, Kasinadan Naguleswaran and Rajendran Sudharshan, three active members of Socialist Equality Party who have fought against the racist war being waged in Sri Lanka.

I see this racist war, which has been continued through former and present governments, as an unbearable situation against the masses in general, whether they are Tamil or Sinhala. As a general citizen who suffers due to this situation and as a person who respects human dignity, and also as an artist who cherishes human tolerance, I request from your organization only one thing: that is to attempt as much as possible to prevent the situation in which those who have become innocent victims of this miserable environment suffer, by realizing correctly those who should be punished. Accordingly, I see the above mentioned three comrades as some of the innocent victims. And I believe that they are fighting for the same peace you, we and all of us expect.

Sudath Mahadivulwewa

Professor M. George A. Cooray Department of Modern History and Political Science University of Colombo P.O. Box 1490 Cumaratunga Munidasa Mawatha Colombo 3, Sri Lanka

5.09.98

Appeal to Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam:

It is a shock to learn that three members of the Socialist Equality Party have been detained by the LTTE. I have known the Socialist Equality Party as a political party continuously fighting for the rights of the Tamil people from the very beginning. I, therefore, thoroughly condemn this act and appeal for the immediate release of the three members of SEP

Prof. M. George A. Cooray. Head, Department of History and Political

Science and Coordinator, International Relations Programme

Dr. Nira Wickramasinghe Department of History University of Colombo.

To the leadership of the LTTE,

I am writing to express my dismay on hearing that three members of the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka were arrested by your cadres in Killinochchi for the harmless act of putting up posters. As this party has always maintained a non-communal line, I feel you should display your commitment to human rights by releasing them as soon as possible.

Dr. Nira Wickramasinghe

R.T. Jayawardena, Department of Sinhala University of Colombo P.O. Box 1490, Colombo

07.09.1998

To the leadership of the LTTE,

Detention of members of Socialist Equality Party—Sri Lanka

I have learned of the disheartening matter of your keeping some members of the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka) in your detention. My firm belief is that the members of this particular party are working continuously for communal amity. Further the party is working for the equality of every communal group and its commitment for that worthy cause is extremely commendable. Therefore, I hope the LTTE leadership will take steps to release those members without much delay.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

R.T. Jayawardena, Head Department of Sinhala, University of Colombo

Movement for Inter Racial Justice and Equality No. 4, Jayaratne Mawatha, Colombo 05, Sri Lanka Tel: 94-1-584380, 94-1-594229 Fax No. 94-1-580721, 94-1-502561 Attention: Mirje

PRESS RELEASE: 9.09.1998

The Movement For Inter Racial Justice And Equality (MIRJE) expresses its grave concern about the disappearances of Mr. Paramuthiruganam Sambandan, Mr. Kasinadan Naguleswaran and Mr. Rajendran Sudharshan, political activists who belong to the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka.

The manner these three activists disappeared is in direct contravention of the general protection of civilians against dangers arising from military operations as well as against acts or threats of violence as primary purposes to spread terror among civilian population.

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is well known for its steadfast stand on the Tamil people's right to self determination and constant critique of the ongoing racist war. The SEP alleges that these three activists were picked up by the LTTE members on July 26 and August 02 in the Killinochchi district which is situated in Northern Province of Sri Lanka.

The MIRJE recalls that the humanitarian principles enshrined in Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Protocol-11 additional to the Geneva Convention constitute the foundation of respect for the human person in case of armed conflicts not of an international character.

We appeal to the people who are responsible for these disappearances to ensure that the lives of the disappeared are protected and also ensure that they are protected from inhuman and degrading treatment.

We are appealing for the speedy release of these Tamil civilians who should remain under the protection of the principles of humanity and the dictates of public conscience.

The MIRJE urges all necessary parties to abide by the principles of the Geneva conventions and its Optional Protocol-11 in view of the incidents of indiscriminate restriction of civil liberties of people who are living in conflict areas as well as in the rest of the country, though they are

signatories or non-signatories to the Geneva Conventions.

Shirai Lakthilaka, Coordinator, Legal Education and Assistance Program



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact