

WSWS appeal

Protest Australian government exclusion of Tamil socialist

7 January 1999

The *World Socialist Web Site* is appealing to readers and supporters to protest the decision of the Australian authorities to bar Tamil socialist Rajendiram Sutharsan from attending the summer educational school of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) of Australia. The decision has far-reaching implications for the democratic rights of workers and their organisations to engage in political discussion in Australia and internationally.

Sutharsan was one of four members of the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka who were arrested and detained for almost two months last year by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The four Tamil socialists were held in the Kilinochichi area in the North of the country. The LTTE only released them after an extensive international campaign for their freedom waged by the SEP and its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International.

In initially turning down Sutharsan's visa application the Australian High Commission in Colombo cited as the sole basis for the rejection Sutharsan's alleged failure to prove that the intended visit was genuine.

Twenty-five pages of documents were faxed to Colombo by the Australian SEP detailing Sutharsan's arrest by the LTTE and the broad support won by the international campaign for his release from human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, as well as parliamentarians, trade union officials and numerous individuals in Sri Lanka and around the world.

Even though the High Commission now had more than adequate information about the background and purpose of the trip, it refused to reverse the decision. In a phone conversation with a leading member of the Australian SEP on December 31, a High Commission

representative dismissed the letter and the extensive documentation as having no bearing on the "legal framework" of the case. She reiterated that Sutharsan posed "an unacceptably high risk" to the Australian community in that he might not return to Sri Lanka after his visa expired.

The barring of Sutharsan was not simply the result of the routine operation of racist Australian immigration policies. The government's refusal to reverse its initial ruling, and its inability to provide any cogent arguments in the face of ample evidence that Sutharsan would not remain in Australia, points to a political motivation for the decision.

The *World Socialist Web Site* calls on labour and human rights organisations, and all groups and individuals concerned with the defence of democratic rights--in Australia, Sri Lanka and internationally--to protest in the strongest terms the Australian government's decision to refuse a visa to Sutharsan, and to demand that he be allowed to enter Australia and exercise his political and democratic rights.

Letters and faxes should be sent to:

Letters, faxes and e-mails should be sent to:

Philip Ruddock

Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
Suite MF40

Parliament House

Canberra 2600, Australia

Fax: 61-2-6273-4144

Alexander Downer

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

Parliament House

Canberra 2600, Australia

E-mail: minister.downer@dfat.gov.au

Fax: 61-2-6273-4112

Australian High Commission
PO Box 742
Colombo, Sri Lanka
E-mail: austcom@sri.lanka.net
Fax: 94-1-682-311

Please send copies of all statements of protest to the
World Socialist Web Site at:

E-mail: editor@wsws.org
Fax: (Australia) 02-9790-3501



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact