

WSWS calls for protests against Australian government's exclusion of Tamil socialist

14 January 1999

The *World Socialist Web Site* is appealing to readers and supporters to protest the decision of the Australian authorities on December 30, 1998 to bar Tamil socialist Rajendiram Sutharsan from attending the educational school of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) of Australia. The decision has far-reaching implications for the democratic right of workers and their organisations to engage in political discussion in Australia and internationally.

Sutharsan is 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 through the *WSWS* by the Sri Lankan SEP and its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The SEP of Australia invited Sutharsan to attend its educational school so he could thank his co-thinkers for their support and speak about his experiences, as well as the more general political issues facing the working class in Sri Lanka.

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.

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, point 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, 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) 61-2-9790-3501



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact