

Sri Lanka:

Top LTTE leaders remain silent as SEP defence campaign gathers support

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The leadership of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has remained silent in the face of growing support for the campaign by the *World Socialist Web Site* to demand that it call a halt to threats and physical violence against members of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) on the northern Sri Lankan island of Kayts.

The only LTTE response has come from a local official who was contacted by the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) after it received letters and emails supporting the WSWs campaign. The SLMM told the SEP on October 16 that the deputy head of the LTTE's Jaffna office, Papa, had simply denied that LTTE officials on Kayts had made any threats against the SEP.

Neither Papa nor any other LTTE official has provided any evidence contradicting the detailed accounts provided by the SEP. The death threats were first made on September 6 by Kayts LTTE leader, Semmanan, who warned the LTTE would provide the "proper medicine" to SEP members in the manner meted out to Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Gandhi was assassinated in 1991. Semmanan's deputy Arunthavan repeated the warning on September 27.

Less than two weeks later, on October 8, a well-known LTTE member Karthikesu Amirthalingam assaulted SEP member Nagarajah Kodeeswaran with a sharp knife, causing serious injuries to his head, neck and shoulders. According to the SLMM, the Kayts police reported that they had been to the village of Ampihainagar, where the assault occurred, but could not locate the attacker. The official told the SEP that the SLMM would continue with its inquiries.

LTTE officials in Jaffna are certainly aware of the attack on Kodeeswaran. Many protest letters and faxes have been sent to their offices during the past two weeks, and they work closely with their counterparts on Kayts. On October 11, for instance, Papa and Semmanan were blocked by the Sri Lankan navy from returning to Jaffna after a visit to nearby Nainathivu island. The two complained to the SLMM about the denial of their rights and were allowed to proceed.

If the Kayts police have indeed attempted to find Amirthalingam, their search has been extraordinarily limited. SEP members and sympathisers have observed the assailant openly walking around the island. Moreover, inquiries by SEP members at the local police station on October 15 were met with a response by constable Deepal, spokesman for the officer-in charge, that action could only be taken after "orders from the higher-ups".

A phone call by SEP General Secretary Wije Dias to the office of the Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) for the northern province received a similar response. Dias was told that the DIG had handed the inquiry over to a higher officer. From these comments, it appears that the failure of the local police to apprehend Kodeeswaran's assailant involves the top levels of the Sri Lankan state.

After a formal request by the SEP to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka—a government body—its Jaffna coordinator R. P. Chandrasekara wrote to the Kayts police on October 17 asking for a report within two weeks on the matters raised. The commission reminded the police that they were legally bound to present a report on complaints made to them.

The WSWs campaign has received significant coverage in major Sri Lankan newspapers. The *Island* published an article on the assault on Kodeeswaran entitled "LTTE intensifies attacks on SEP members, supporters" which quoted sections of the WSWs Editorial Board statement of October 11. The *Daily Mirror*, another daily newspaper published in Colombo, and the popular weekly, the *Sunday Times*, have also reported the WSWs campaign.

The General Secretary of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka, Dew Gunasekera, issued a statement condemning the attack, declaring: "It is shocking the LTTE has not spared even those elements who champion the cause of the national minorities. This clearly reflects the fascistic and chauvinist nature of the LTTE's politics, which objectively harm the cause of the national minorities and jeopardise the interests

of peace-loving people at large.”

Likewise, the United Socialist Party in Sri Lanka issued a statement saying: “We condemn this attack on democratic rights and we uphold the right of every organisation to carry out their own politics.”

DD, a lecturer at the University of Colombo, wrote: “I strongly denounce the death threats made by the LTTE against the member of the Socialist Equality Party in Kayts in Sri Lanka. This incident has confirmed that the LTTE is still utilising violence as a political tactic and has no concern for the democratic rights of the Tamil people or any other movement. The Socialist Equality Party is the advanced and thinking political movement, which has been fighting to defend the democratic rights of the Tamil masses against the war conducted by successive Sri Lankan governments... Your organisation must immediately act to confirm the democratic rights of the SEP. Any obstacle directed against it reveals only the political nakedness of your movement.”

KA, also from the University of Colombo, stated: “I strongly condemn the death threat made by the LTTE against the members of the Socialist Equality Party recently. The Revolutionary Communist League and the Socialist Equality Party have carried out a strong campaign for the defence of the democratic rights of the Tamil masses since the beginning of the ethnic problem in this country. But recently the LTTE has banned the right of the SEP to be politically active in the North and East areas and issued death threats against those SEP members who are active. This is completely contrary to democracy. Moreover, it is a deprivation of the political rights of the SEP’s activists. Therefore, I denounce with contempt these activities of the LTTE and call on it to confirm the right of all SEP members to be active in the North and East.”

A Trotskyist study group in France has sent a protest note to the LTTE declaring: “The threat of violence by LTTE officials against SEP members who belong to the Kayts Island fishermen’s union, followed by an assassination attempt by stabbing, in line with previous terrorist acts by the LTTE, represent an attack on the entire Sri Lankan working class...We demand the LTTE instruct its members to cease their attack on democratic rights and recognise the full right of the SEP to go about its rightful business.”

The Socialist Labour League, a Trotskyist organisation in India in solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International, condemned the attack on SEP members, declaring: “ This clearly exposes the class hostility of the LTTE towards the socialists of the SEP who are internationally well known and respected for their decades-long courageous and principled struggle against the racist war of the Sri Lankan state and in defence of the oppressed Tamil people of the Eelam.”

The refusal of the LTTE leadership to denounce the actions of its representatives in Kayts and the failure of the police to take any action against Kodeeswaran’s assailant underscores the ongoing dangers facing SEP members in northern Sri Lanka and the continuing attack on their fundamental democratic rights. We call on all those committed to the defence of democratic rights to support and participate in the WSWs campaign. The LTTE must call its members to order and publicly repudiate their assault on the SEP, while the Sri Lankan authorities must be prevailed upon to immediately organise the arrest and criminal charging of Amirthalingam.

Letters and statements should be posted or emailed to:

Jaffna

Ilamparithi
LTTE Jaffna Office
Potpathy Road, Kokuvil
Jaffna

Colombo

LTTE
c/- Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission
PO Box 1930
Galle Road
Colombo 3
Email: slmm-hq@mfa.no

They can also be posted or faxed to:

London

The LTTE
c/- Eelam House
202 Long Lane
London SE1 4QB
United Kingdom
Telephone: 44-171-403-4554
Fax: 44-201-403-1653

Please send copies of all statements to the WSWs at:

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To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact