

LTTE makes further threats against SEP members in Sri Lanka

Nanda Wickramasinghe
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Local officials of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have intensified their campaign of harassment and threats against members of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) on Kayts Island in northern Sri Lanka over the last week. The latest threats were issued at a meeting on January 3 of what the LTTE falsely claimed to be Ampihainagar fishermen's union.

Last September, LTTE area leader Semmanan made death threats against the SEP after the union, which the SEP was instrumental in forming, refused to hand over funds for the construction of an LTTE office in the area. On October 8, LTTE member Karthikesu Amirthalingam carried out an unprovoked attack on SEP member Nagaraja Kodeeswaran, causing serious injuries to his head, neck and shoulders.

Having failed to intimidate the SEP, the LTTE is seeking to hijack the fishermen's union using anti-democratic methods. The January 3 meeting was a gathering mainly of LTTE members and supporters. The LTTE called the meeting despite being advised by police not to proceed until the cooperative commissioner had settled the dispute.

In an attempt to obtain official recognition, the LTTE invited two government officials—the area fisheries inspector and the village service officer. Prominent on the platform was Thevan, who is considered to be the third-ranking LTTE official on Kayts Island.

Those on the stage were asked what had gone wrong with the union's old leaders. LTTE member Sinniah Sihada Sundaralingam (Sundaran) launched into a verbal attack on the SEP. He denounced SEP member Thiruchelvam Chandrasekaran as a "bad element," who was "working behind" four of the union leaders, who belong to the SEP, to confuse the union.

In another provocative statement, former union president and LTTE supporter Muththiah Velmurugan falsely accused two SEP members, Chandrasekaran and Rasendran Sudarshan, of threatening him with court action. "I want to bring to the notice of this meeting that if anything happens to me these two people are responsible," he said.

Sundaran, together with other LTTE members, called on those present to raze the houses of the four SEP members and to push their fishing boats out to sea if they refused to hand over the union's books.

On December 23, SEP member Nadarajah Vimalleshwaran had his fishing net stolen. On January 1, some of the fishing nets belonging to another SEP member, Muththulingam Muruhananthan, were stolen and the remainder slashed. The loss amounted to thousands of rupees. On the day of the meeting, his boat was missing. It had been pulled from its moorings at night, set adrift, and only recovered with difficulty.

The SEP and the *World Socialist Web Site* have been waging an international campaign since September to demand that the LTTE leadership repudiate the death threats against the SEP and guarantee the party's right to conduct its legitimate political work in the area.

As a result, the police were forced to charge LTTE member Amirthalingam with assaulting SEP member Kodeeswaran. The next hearing in the Kayts magistrate's court is due on January 14. At the request of Kodeeswaran's lawyer, the magistrate ordered the police at the first hearing to obtain a comprehensive medical report from the Judicial Medical Officer (JMO) to determine the seriousness of the attack.

Nearly four months after the SEP registered a formal complaint, the police have finally filed a case against LTTE area leader Semmanan over his death threats against SEP members. Semmanan failed to appear in court on January 3 when the matter was heard. The magistrate postponed the case to February 7 and ordered police to notify Semmanan.

The new LTTE threats appear to be in response to the growing impact of the WSW campaign. The LTTE's so-called union meeting on January 3 coincided with the filing of a case against Semmanan in the local courts. At stake is not simply control of the Ampihainagar fishermen's union but the broader democratic rights of the SEP and the working class as a whole.

The LTTE is currently engaged in peace negotiations with the Sri Lankan government to end the country's protracted civil war. Any power-sharing arrangement will involve the LTTE in implementing the austerity measures demanded by the World Bank and IMF, which will, in turn, provoke opposition from workers and the poor. The threats against SEP members on Kayts are a sharp warning of the methods that the LTTE intends to use in dealing with any opposition to these policies.

We urge all our readers to support the WSW campaign by

sending letters of protest to the LTTE leadership, demanding that it repudiate its threats and guarantee the SEP's right to conduct its political work, free of harassment, intimidation and physical assault. The SEP also urgently requires donations to its 50,000-rupee (\$US500) defence fund to cover legal and other campaign costs.

Some of the most recent letters of support include:

Four young plantation workers from the Hatton area, S. Udayakumar, P. Chandran, P. Saravana Kumar and T. Savarimuttu, wrote: "We call upon the LTTE leadership to condemn the attack on Socialist Equality Party members in the island of Kayts in the northern province of Sri Lanka. The right of the SEP to conduct political work in those areas should be defended.

The four were detained by the security forces as "LTTE suspects" and held without trial for three and a half years before being released last year after a protracted campaign by the WSWS and the SEP. The Attorney General was finally forced to concede that their confessions, the only evidence against them, were obtained by torture.

"The SEP and WSWS have fought internationally for the freedom of political prisoners consistently over a long period. We were under arrest for a long period in the Kalutara prison in Sri Lanka as suspected supporters of the Tamil liberation organisation. We were released as a result of the SEP campaign. The SEP provided us with legal aid. We request that all attacks on the SEP cease," their letter stated.

A letter of protest has also been sent from West Bengal in India to the LTTE's Jaffna Office. Those who signed were DPS, on behalf of workers of the Kharda and Titagar Jute Mills; NS, a veteran educationist in Calcutta and an office bearer of the All Bengal Teachers Association; Mrs GS from the WB Parents and Teachers Association and GD, a retired government clerical servant who has been active in the workers movement since the 1940s when he was a member of the Trotskyist Bolshevik Leninist Party of India (BLPI).

"We, of the different walks of life of West Bengal, condemn the death threat by the LTTE's Kayts representative, Semmanan at a meeting of the Ampihainagar Fishermen's Co-operative union [when he said] that the LTTE would not allow this type of party of the workers and demanded the fishermen's co-operative hand over to the LTTE a substantial sum [of money]... We condemn such an undemocratic death threat against the fishermen and the SEP members and [call on the LTTE] to guarantee the democratic rights of the SEP to engage in their work, free from harassment and intimidation," they stated.

DAS, a worker from the Bata shoe company, wrote: "The SEP fights to unite the Sinhala and Tamil speaking workers in the struggle for a socialist republic. The LTTE should take the responsibility if any danger befalls the SEP members' lives." He insisted that the SEP be allowed to conduct its political work without hindrance. "The attack on the SEP members on

the island of Kayts is an attack not only on the SEP but on the working class."

Further 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:

Email: editor@wsws.org

Fax:

United States: 248 967 3023

Britain: 0114 244 0224

Australia: 02 9790 3501

Donations can be sent to:

Account Number 1472834301 at the Kirullapona Branch of the Commercial Bank of Ceylon
94A Pamankada Road
Kirullapona
Colombo
Sri Lanka



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact