

LTTE calls for SEP members in northern Sri Lanka to be “wiped out”

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7 February 2003

On the eve of two court cases involving its members, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has intensified its threats against Socialist Equality Party (SEP) members on Kayts Island in northern Sri Lanka. On Monday night, copies of a notice appeared in several places on the island calling on “all people to wipe them and their party’s work from the island areas.”

The notice specifically named four SEP members and sympathisers—Muthulingham Muruganathan, Nadaraja Vimalaswaran, Nagaraja Kodeeswaran, Rasalingam Thilakeswaran and Kirushnapillai Sithirakumar—and denounced them for “making statements against the LTTE” and “acting against the executive members, members and activities of the Velanai west Ampihainagar Fishermen Co-operative Union.”

The notice was prepared on a computer and signed “Residents of Velanai west, Ampihainagar”. There is no doubt, however, that the LTTE authorised the threat. The organisation is notorious for its use of physical violence against its political opponents.

Last September, Semmanan, the LTTE area leader for Kayts made death threats against the SEP after the Ampihainagar Fishermen’s Co-operative 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.

The SEP and *World Socialist Web Site* have been waging an international campaign to demand that the LTTE leadership call its officials on Kayts into line and guarantee the party’s democratic right to carry out its legitimate political activities. The LTTE has responded by escalating its threats against the SEP. The latest notice was circulated just prior to two court cases due to be heard today in the Kayts magistrate’s court—the first against Semmanan for making the initial death threat, and the second against Amirthalingam for assault.

In both cases, the police only laid the charges after the WSWs campaign began to attract support in the form of letters of protest from around the world. At an initial hearing of the case against Amirthalingam, the lawyer for SEP member Kodeeswaran challenged the relatively minor charges brought

by the police. At his request, the presiding judge ordered the police to present a full Judicial Medical Officer (JMO) report to determine the seriousness of Kodeeswaran’s injuries.

Two brazen lies are contained in the threatening notice posted this week on Kayts. Its heading read: “Chase the people who don’t like peace and who are stealing workers’ money”.

To insinuate the SEP is “stealing workers’ money” or “acting against” the Ampihainagar Fishermen’s Co-operative Union stands reality on its head. The union was formed at the initiative of SEP members and is well known for its campaigns in defence of the rights of fishermen, in particular against their harassment by the Sri Lankan navy.

All four SEP members and sympathisers named in the notice are democratically elected members of the union’s committee. After the committee refused the LTTE’s demand to hand over money for the construction of its office, the LTTE attempted to hijack the union. It undemocratically appointed a committee of LTTE supporters, forcibly kept the union office under its custody, and made it impossible for the SEP members to carry out their legitimate activities as officials of the union.

Now the LTTE is attempting to pressure the local authorities into recognising its bogus union, to bully and threaten local fishermen into joining and to demand that the SEP committee members hand over the union books and money. And, to top it off, the outfit has the temerity to accuse the SEP of “stealing workers’ money”!

The second accusation that SEP members “don’t like the peace” is equally fraudulent. The SEP (and its predecessor the Revolutionary Communist League) is well known throughout Sri Lanka for its principled and courageous stand against the brutal war waged by successive Colombo regimes to suppress the democratic rights of the country’s Tamil minority. Throughout the 19-year war, the Sri Lankan Trotskyists have intransigently demanded the unconditional withdrawal of the Sri Lankan army from the north and east of the island and campaigned vigorously against the repression of Tamils.

The SEP is not against peace, but against the rotten deal being negotiated by the LTTE with the Sri Lankan government in closed door “peace talks” sponsored by the major powers and big business. Both sides are exploiting the legitimate yearnings of ordinary working people for an end to the war in order to

establish a powersharing agreement between the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim ruling elites.

The SEP has consistently warned that such an arrangement will be directed against the working class and oppressed masses—Sinhala and Tamil alike. At the first round of peace talks in Thailand, the chief LTTE negotiator Anton Balasingham expressed the willingness of the LTTE to become equal partners with the Sri Lankan government in “transforming the island into a successful Tiger economy”. The comment was a deliberate signal to international investors that the LTTE will support to the hilt Colombo’s efforts to impose the IMF’s economic restructuring demands.

But to implement the IMF’s austerity measures, the Sri Lankan government will have to suppress the opposition of workers to the destruction of their jobs, conditions and living standards. The LTTE has already indicated its willingness to act alongside the Sri Lankan security forces as the policeman of Colombo’s policies. As Balasingham explained in an interview with *Sunday Leader* last month: “We are not asking for the dismantling of the armed forces, army camps or military complexes.... We are not asking the army to withdraw.” Yet these same armed forces have maintained a regime of terror and intimidation in the north and east for nearly two decades, driven tens of thousands from their homes, and are responsible for the death and injury of many others.

The SEP has fundamental, principled differences with the LTTE’s political perspective, which are widely known. But just as the LTTE cannot openly present its agenda before the fishermen of Kayts, so it is incapable of answering the SEP’s objections to its broader pro-capitalist program. Instead it resorts to thuggery and lies.

For three months since the WSWs launched its campaign, the top leadership of the LTTE has failed to issue a statement or reply to the many letters from around the world calling on them to haul their subordinates into line and to guarantee the SEP’s right to conduct political work free of threats.

Last month the LTTE made its response by rewarding its officials on Kayts. Semmanan, who made the initial death threats, has been promoted to the post of deputy political leader of Jaffna district. His deputy Arunthavan and another leading member Thevan have been elevated to area leader and deputy area leader of Kayts, respectively.

The LTTE’s attempts to “wipe out” the SEP on Kayts are the sharpest warning to the Sri Lankan working class of the methods it will use to enforce its powersharing arrangement with Colombo. Indeed, there are many indications that the LTTE is determined to suppress the SEP because it fears the party will win a significant following among Tamils who are increasingly resentful and hostile to the LTTE. The organisation uses the same standover methods to “recruit” school children as fighters and to gather taxes from small businesses, sending prices skyrocketing.

The SEP is in no doubt about the meaning of the latest LTTE

threat: the lives of our members on Kayts are in serious danger. We call upon workers, intellectuals and youth to renew their efforts to support our campaign and to send letters of protest condemning the LTTE’s actions. We appeal to our readers to help us pay our campaign and legal costs by donating to our 50,000-rupee (\$US500) defence fund.

Protest letters should be sent to following addresses:

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