

The Asian tsunami disaster: causes and consequences

WSWS and Socialist Equality Party public meeting in Colombo

25 January 2005

The Asian tsunami has claimed more than 200,000 lives in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and other countries, and left a trail of destruction in its wake. Although the tsunami had natural causes, the scale of the catastrophe was by no means inevitable.

Obvious questions are raised. Why was there no advance warning? Why are millions of people living in highly vulnerable positions with no protection against natural disasters? Why have the relief efforts for survivors been so chaotic and limited? Any serious probing of these questions leads to an examination of the underlying social and political roots of the disaster which lie in the nature of the profit system itself.

Having initially treated the calamity with indifference, governments around the world are now seeking to exploit it to pursue their own economic and strategic interests. Under the guise of “humanitarian relief”, the US now has the largest naval armada in the region since the Vietnam War. US troops have landed in Sri Lanka and Indonesia, where the Pentagon has had long-held ambitions for a strategic presence along key shipping routes.

In Colombo, the disaster has heightened the political crisis of the United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) government. Unable to offer any hope to ordinary people for a future free of civil war and social misery, President Chandrika Kumaratunga is using the tsunami to justify openly autocratic measures. As well as imposing a state of emergency and placing the military in charge of relief operations, she is now suggesting that the constitution be set aside and all elections postponed for five years.

The WSWS/SEP meeting in Colombo will discuss the historical and political issues underlying the tsunami disaster and advance the socialist alternative to

poverty, social inequality and war.

K. Ratnayake, a member of the WSWS International Editorial Board and the Socialist Equality Party Central Committee, will deliver the main report.

Date and time: February 1, 4.30 p.m.

Venue: Public Library Auditorium, Colombo.



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