

Canada bans LTTE under draconian anti-terrorist legislation

Keith Jones
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Canada's Conservative government announced Monday that it has proscribed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) under the country's draconian anti-terrorist laws.

Henceforth, anyone who knowingly provides financial support to the LTTE could be jailed for up to 10 years, while persons who fundraise or otherwise "facilitate" the work of the LTTE face 14 years' imprisonment.

That the government intends to use these provisions to imprison and deport LTTE supporters was underscored by Public Security Minister Stockwell Day's announcement that the government has established an anti-LTTE "snitch-line." Day urged members of Canada's large Sri Lankan Tamil exile/immigrant community to denounce LTTE activists to state authorities using a special, dedicated telephone line.

In justifying the ban, Day claimed that LTTE activists have used threats of violence to coerce Canadian Tamils into making financial contributions. But such threats are already illegal under Canadian criminal law.

The Canadian government's banning of the LTTE, which governs much of Sri Lanka's northern and eastern provinces, must be opposed by the working class and all those interested in defending basic democratic rights.

Canada's anti-terrorist laws constitute a flagrant assault on democratic rights and civil liberties. Under them, the state has created a new order of crime, subject to harsher penalties than normal criminal acts and to which basic judicial principles, like the full disclosure of evidence and public trials, no longer apply.

Through these anti-terrorist laws, the state is seeking to criminalize political movements deemed inimical to the interests of the Canadian ruling class, movements

that in many cases arose in reaction against the state terror practiced by governments with which Canada is allied. Not only do these laws fail to distinguish between attacks on civilians and actions directed against security forces of repressive regimes, persons can be found guilty of terrorism who have never participated in or planned any violent act. Facilitating any part of the activities undertaken by an organization labelled terrorist—be it raising funds or distributing political propaganda or doing relief work—makes one liable to be imprisoned for a decade or more.

Moreover, the invocation of these laws goes hand in hand with Canada's support for and participation in a purported worldwide war on terrorism that is being used to justify the expansion and rearmament of the Canadian Armed Forces and Canadian participation in wars and military interventions aimed at establishing or supporting regimes more in keeping with the interests of the North American and international bourgeoisie.

At Monday's press conference, Day took a jab at the previous Liberal government, which the Conservatives long denounced as "soft" on terrorism and insufficiently supportive of the Bush administration. "The decision to list the LTTE [as a terrorist organization] is long overdue and something the previous government did not take seriously enough to act upon. Our government," continued Day, "is clearly determined to take decisive steps to ensure the safety of Canadians against terrorism."

The *World Socialist Web Site* has made clear on countless occasions its opposition to the LTTE's perspective of carving out a new capitalist nation-state on ethnic lines and its tactics, which have included indiscriminate violence against Sinhalese workers and peasants.

Responsibility for the civil that has convulsed Sri

Lanka for the past 23 years, however, falls squarely on the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie and its imperialist backers. At the birth of an independent Sri Lanka in 1948, the parties of the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie stripped the Tamil plantation workers (the so-called Indian Tamils) of citizenship rights. In the 1950s, Sinhalese was made the country's sole official language. Fifteen years later, further steps were taken to reduce the minority Tamil population to second-class status, with the passing of a constitution that proclaimed Buddhism, the majority religion of the Sinhalese, the state religion, and the enacting of quotas to limit Tamils' access to higher education. Civil war ultimately erupted in 1983 shortly after a state-orchestrated anti-Tamil pogrom.

At Monday's press conference, Day and Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay rejected criticisms from Canadian Tamils that their proscribing of the LTTE will impede the effort to reach a permanent peace settlement between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan political establishment.

But there is no question that the Sri Lankan ruling elite and the Sinhalese chauvinists have enthusiastically welcomed the Canadian government's decision, which they believe strengthens their hand against the LTTE by lending credence to their claims that the LTTE is not a suitable peace partner, and threatening the LTTE's ability to raise funds in Canada, the country with the largest Sri Lankan Tamil population outside South Asia.

The state-run Daily News crowed that the Canadian ban will "place the Government delegation" at coming peace talks on "a sounder footing" knowing "that at last the world community is gradually coming to its assistance vis-a-vis the LTTE."

The Island, a right-wing and aggressively communal newspaper, urged the European Union to follow the lead of Canada's Conservative government: "Canada has realized the danger of giving a terror group a free hand and told it where to get off at long last. It is now up to EU to follow the suit, without further prevarication...."

The Buddhist monk-led National Heritage party (JHU), one of the most militant voices of Sinhala chauvinism, coupled praise for the Canadian government decision with criticism of the Sri Lankan government for not taking an even more aggressive stand against the LTTE.

The Norwegian-led Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) has warned repeatedly that the truce that has been in effect since February 2002 is on the verge of collapse and that the country will soon plunge back into all-out civil war.

The Canadian ban on the LTTE encourages those forces in the Sri Lankan elite and their Sinhalese chauvinist petty bourgeois allies who prefer ratcheting up the pressure on the LTTE and risking plunging the country anew into civil war to ceding significant power to the LTTE in a federal or confederal state. It thus abets those who would lead the people of Sri Lanka into a new abyss of violence and terror.

The Conservative government's ban on the LTTE is the latest in a series of actions the new government has taken to shift Canada's foreign policy and geo-political posture sharply to the right. Canada was one of the first governments in the world to announce that it was cutting off funding to the Palestinian Authority after Hamas took over the reins of government. Last month, Prime Minister Stephen Harper made a three-day visit to Afghanistan to underline his government's commitment to a long-term Canadian Armed Forces intervention there and his intention to pursue a more "robust" foreign and military policy that will make, to use his words, the great powers of the world take notice.



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