

Sri Lankan police forced to begin inquiry into murder of SEP supporter

Our reporter

26 October 2006

Amid a growing campaign to demand the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the murder of Sivapragasam Mariyadas, a supporter of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), the Inspector General of Police in Sri Lanka has been compelled to commence an investigation into his death.

Mariyadas was killed at his home in the eastern rural town of Mullipothana on August 7. He was shot through the head and neck after being called to the door at about 9.30 pm. The gunman fled on a waiting motorbike. The most likely suspects are the security forces or associated Tamil paramilitaries. There was a heavy military presence throughout the area following bitter fighting between the army and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in neighbouring Muttur and Mavilaru.

In the wake of the killing, the military spread false rumours that Mariyadas was a LTTE supporter, including at his funeral in his hometown of Selvanayagapuram. Mariyadas's murder is part of a broader campaign by the military, particularly in the North and East of the island, to intimidate and silence any opposition to the government's renewed civil war.

On October 14, more than two months after the murder, a police inspector from Kantalai, A.C. Rodrigo, informed Mariyadas's wife, Stela Krishanthi Mariyadas, that he had been assigned by the Inspector General of Police's office to investigate the murder. Krishanthi and Mariyadas's younger brother, Jesudas, were told to come to Kantalai police station, but refused, pointing to the dangers posed by the country's civil war.

On October 17, Rodrigo visited Krishanthi and Jesudas in Trincomalee to take statements. They spoke with the police inspector at the offices of a lawyer and a human rights worker. Rodrigo showed them several letters sent to the Inspector General of Police by WSWs readers demanding a full investigation.

Krishanthi gave a statement explaining that the SEP and WSWs had initiated the campaign and providing details of the murder. She and her four-year-old son were present when the killing took place. She also explained that the home guards on duty at Mullipothana had made death threats against her husband on April 11. Mariyadas had told his brother Jesudas about the incident. Krishanthi said the home guards were known by Jayaweera, the owner of the premises in which Mariyadas ran his photographic studio and communication centre.

The home guards operate as an auxiliary force to the military and police in the East and North of the country. Earlier this year the government announced the reorganisation of the home guards,

previously affiliated to the police, under a separate command. Like the security forces, the home guards, who are mainly Sinhalese, are deeply imbued with anti-Tamil chauvinism.

While an inquiry has finally begun, the SEP warns that every effort will be made by authorities to cover up the role of security forces in Mariyadas's killing. The police are notorious for their failure to properly investigate and prosecute cases of murder and abduction in which the military and their allied paramilitaries are implicated. The number of attacks, particularly on Tamils, has dramatically risen this year as President Mahinda Rajapakse has escalated the conflict with the LTTE.

We call on WSWs readers and supporters to continue to demand the arrest and prosecution of Mariyadas's killers. This campaign is an essential part of the broader struggle to defend the basic democratic rights of working people—Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim alike.

Protest letters and statements should send to:

Inspector General of Police, Victor Perera,
Police Headquarters, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka.

Fax: 0094 11 2446174

Email: igp@police.lk

Attorney General K.C. Kamalabayson,
Attorney General's Department, Colombo 12, Sri Lanka.

Fax: 0094 11 2436 421

Copies should be sent to the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka) and the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Socialist Equality Party,
P.O. Box 1270, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Email: wsWSCMB@sltnet.lk

To send letters to the WSWs editorial board please use this online form.

Below we publish some of the letters sent to Sri Lanka authorities.

Dear Sir,

Demand for a proper inquiry into the murder of Sivapragasam Mariyadas

I vehemently condemn the assassination of Sivapragasam Mariyadas on August 7, 2006 at Mullipotana in the Trincomalee district. I perceive it as a part of an assault on democratic rights, now rampant in Sri Lanka.

I am informed that Mariyadas was a supporter of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and worked to publicly explain the party's progressive policies against the war and terrorism amongst the

oppressed people of the area. Mariyadas's murder has engendered the repugnance of all those who seriously uphold democratic rights.

I am also informed that no dependable inquiry has been carried out into this heinous murder and moreover that whatever has been done in the name of an inquiry, has been in breach of the mandatory legal procedure in regard to such cases.

I insist that a proper investigation be held with no further loss of time so vital to an effective outcome. The culprits must be brought to justice.

Jinadasa Danansuriya,
Associate Professor,
Sinhala Department, University of Kelaniya,
Sri Lanka

To the Inspector General of Police,

This letter is a follow up to a letter that I sent last week to you expressing my disgust at the murder of Sivapragasam Mariyadas. What makes this whole situation much worse is the fact that there is still no investigation in sight to determine the circumstances behind his death and to bring those responsible to justice.

One may be presumptuous and conclude that the fact that no investigation has been conducted is because those who are responsible for his murder may just be those forces of the state that would ordinarily carry out criminal investigations.

It is clear from this situation that Mariyadas's murder is no aberration but part of a conscious plot on the part of the Sri Lankan government and their security forces to crush all opposition to their attacks on the Tamil people on the island. Mariyadas was a supporter of the Socialist Equality Party and the latter's principled stand for the unity of both Sinhala and Tamil workers on the island stands in complete contradiction to the divisions generated by the Sri Lankan government.

I once again demand that an investigation be held and that those who conspired to murder and executed the murder be held accountable. This event may further stain the reputation of the Sri Lankan government throughout the world.

Yours,

Pietro Mascetti,
Sydney, Australia

To Inspector General Perera,

I write to urge you to launch a full independent inquiry into the death of SEP supporter Sivapragasam Mariyadas. He was shot at his home on August 7 in an area which was controlled by a strong government force of soldiers. The suspicion currently lies with government forces for the killing.

This would fit in well with the attempts to block freedom of speech, since Sivapragasam Mariyadas was well known in his area for his opposition to the war. He was also opposed strongly to the communal politics of the LTTE, which, at his funeral, security forces attempted to accuse him of supporting.

At present, I consider that the government is attempting, yet again, to cover up the murder of an innocent person in the war zones of Sri Lanka. Only three days before this murder, 17 aid workers were killed in Muttur in circumstances yet to be explained. As a socialist and a defender of democratic rights, I demand that you seek to bring the killers of Sivapragasam

Mariyadas to justice.

Sincerely,
Jordan Smith,
Dundee, UK

Dear Sir,

I condemn the murder of Sivapragasam Mariyadas, a public-spirited social worker in the Trincomalee district and a supporter of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), and demand that a prompt and proper inquiry be conducted to expose the criminals.

I am deeply concerned not only at the sluggishness of the inquiry, but also the fact that mandatory procedures have been breached even in the few steps that have been taken in the inquiry.

The murder of Sivapragasam Mariyadas has sinister implications for the all working people. The contest of the war has caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and terror, often sponsored by the state. The murder of this well-known social worker demonstrates the degree to which democratic rights are under threat in this country.

T H Ismail,
Committee member,
Postal Workers Union,
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Attorney General K.P. Kamalabayson,

In relation to the murder of a supporter of the Socialist Equality Party in Sri Lanka.

I strongly condemn the murder of comrade Sivapragasam Mariyadas, a supporter of Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka, by a gunman at his home in Mullipothana on the night of August 7. I also urge you to hold a full investigation into this murder and bring the assassins to book.

Moreover, I urge that members and supporters of Sri Lankan SEP not be subject to further pressure or harassment.

S. Perera,
A WSWWS reader



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact