

Sri Lankan Attorney General replies on SEP supporter's murder

Our correspondent
25 November 2006

For weeks the Sri Lankan attorney general has remained silent on the international campaign waged by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) demanding the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the murder of SEP supporter Sivapragasam Mariyadas. Now, the Attorney General's department has belatedly informed the SEP that the case is receiving its attention.

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 most likely suspects are the security forces or associated Tamil paramilitaries.

The gunman was able to flee on a waiting motorbike despite 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. With the government stepping up its offensive against the LTTE and seeking to terrorise Tamil people, Mariyadas was a particular target because of his opposition to the war.

On September 19, SEP general secretary Wije Dias sent a letter to Attorney General S.C. Kamalasabeyson, pointing out that the local police had broken basic procedures from the outset. The Thambalamuwa police removed Mariyadas's body from the scene without proper authority and also advised the investigating magistrate not to visit the scene, citing security concerns.

It was not until last week that Dias received an acknowledgement from the Attorney General's department, dated October 12. Written on a routine cyclostyled form, the letter says, "your [Dias's] matter is receiving attention".

On October 14, more than two months after the killing of Mariyadas, police informed the victim's wife that a new inquiry had started. To date, the SEP and Mariyadas's widow have been told nothing about the inquiry's progress. Two weeks ago, when the SEP contacted the Kantalai police inspector in charge of the investigation, he refused to provide any information and instead asked whether the SEP had any "clue" on the murder.

The Attorney General's department and police are just dragging their feet. On November 13, the SEP renewed its demand for the arrest and prosecution of Mariyadas's killers, citing further evidence pointing to the involvement of the security forces in the murder.

We urge working people in Sri Lanka and WSWS readers internationally to continue the campaign to demand Mariyadas's killers to be found and punished.

Protest letters and statements should be sent 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. Kamalasabeyson,
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 a selection of letters sent to the Sri Lanka authorities.

Dear Sir,

For the last two and a half decades of this country's protracted civil war, we have been the silent witnesses to the deaths of our fellow citizens. Here my attention mostly goes not to those directly engaged in armed conflict, but to the innocent victims unconnected in any way to either of the warring parties.

As far as I know, Mr. Sivapragasam Mariyadas, who was murdered on August 7, 2006 in the eastern district of Trincomalee, is one such victim. The people's faith in the enforcers of the law will be further weakened if the perpetrators of such crimes are not punished. In this light, I ask that a full, impartial investigation be conducted into this crime, and those responsible be brought to justice.

Signed,

Prasanna Vithanage

(Film director and stage play producer)

To the Inspector General of Police Victor Perera,

As the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for Congress in the just completed US elections, I want to add my voice to the hundreds of artists, educators and working people around the world demanding the arrest and prosecution of the murderers of SEP supporter Sivapragasam Mariyadas.

Three months have passed and no suspects have been detained nor have the authorities followed up on critical evidence pointing to those responsible for this crime. Although Mariyadas' life was previously threatened by a home guard in Mullipothana, the police have made no serious effort to track down witnesses or statements, nor has physical evidence from the crime scene been analyzed.

One can only conclude from this inaction that the Sri Lankan authorities are deliberately protecting elements within the military and their associated paramilitary organizations that are the most likely perpetrators of the murder.

Mariyadas, a well-known opponent of the war against the Tamil masses, was the victim of a carefully planned political assassination. In an effort to justify this brutal murder, local authorities have falsely labeled Mariyadas a supporter of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, even though he opposed both Tamil nationalism and Sinhalese chauvinism.

Is it the case that opposition to war and communalism is now a crime punishable by death in Sri Lanka? No defender of democratic rights in Sri Lanka or internationally will accept this outrage.

The US elections showed that growing numbers of ordinary Americans,

like so many people around the world, have come to realize that the Bush administration's "war on terror" has been used as a cover to carry out unspeakable crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan and strip away the most basic rights of the American people themselves. The assassination of Sivapragasam Mariyadas exposes the fact that Colombo's version of the "war against terror" is essentially aimed at crushing all internal dissent and—no less than Washington's—an effort to impose on the people a deeply reactionary agenda.

Once again, I demand the arrest, prosecution and punishment of all those responsible for this murder.

Sincerely,

Jerome S. White

Michigan, USA

Inspector General of Police Victor Perera,

Police Headquarters, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Dear Sir,

I am writing regarding the murder of Sivapragasam Mariyadas at Mullipothana in eastern Sri Lanka on August 7. All the circumstances surrounding his murder, as outlined in the coverage of the WWSW, a publication of which Sivapragasam Mariyadas was an avid reader, strongly suggest that his killing was orchestrated by the military forces or one of its allied Tamil paramilitaries.

Sivapragasam Mariyadas was not an LTTE member or supporter, as the officials still falsely claim, but rather a supporter of the Socialist Equality Party, a Trotskyist organisation committed to fighting against all forms of communalism and for the unity of Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim working people. The following quote from Sivapragasam Mariyadas, cited in one of the WWSW articles on his murder, sums up his opposition to the war in Sri Lanka: "See, we Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims live here with close ties and relations. A handful of people from these three sides come here and incite communal disharmony for their own advantage. It is ordinary Tamils and innocent Sinhala civilians, as well as soldiers, who die in this war."

Sivapragasam Mariyadas's principled opposition to the war was well known in the area and it was precisely for this reason that he was killed. The real aim of his murder is to intimidate anyone looking for a progressive alternative to the bankrupt perspective of communalism.

As a socialist opposed to communal warfare yet again emerging in Sri Lanka, I demand a full investigation into Sivapragasam Mariyadas's cold-blooded murder.

Ismet Redzovic,

Sydney, Australia

Sirs,

The murder of Sivapragasam Mariyadas is a crime which must not be allowed to go unpunished. I urge you to proceed with all speed to investigate the crime and bring its perpetrators to justice.

Larry Moore

In India, 10 students at the College Students Hostel run by the Tamil Nadu state government at Villivakkam, Chennai have sent the following petition to the Sri Lanka authorities.

We the undersigned vehemently condemn the murder by shooting of Sivapragasam Mariyadas, a supporter of the Socialist Equality Party, Sri Lanka, on August 7 at Mullipothana in the Trincomalee district of Sri Lanka.

As a supporter of the SEP, which is fighting to unify the working class, Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim, for a Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and Eelam, Mariyadas was a strong and open opponent of the war in Sri Lanka.

The murder highlights the systematic sterilising of the population of northeastern Sri Lanka as the government of President Mahinda Rajapakse plunges the island back into civil war. The purpose of this murderous campaign is to silence conscious opponents of the war.

In a situation where all the details gathered by the SEP so far point to the killers being members of the security forces, the police or allied paramilitaries; no serious police inquiry has been conducted into the assassination of Mariyadas. This reveals the danger that a monstrous cover-up is being organised—as has happened repeatedly when the Sri Lanka security forces are involved in such crimes.

We demand a full and immediate investigation be carried out without any further delay and all those responsible with this heinous murder be punished.

Dear Sir,

I am writing this to request that a prompt and proper investigation be held into the murder of Sivapragasam Mariyadas on August 7 at Mullipothana in the Trincomalee district.

The conduct of the police subsequent to the murder points to the fact that a genuine investigation is not being conducted into this criminal act.

Officers from the Thambalagamuwa police station, which is in charge of the area, had arrived on the site of the murder within half an hour of the act and removed Mariyadas's body to the hospital at Kantalai. The magisterial inquiry was held not on the spot of the murder but at the hospital, which is 10 kilometres away. A routine verdict of death from gunshot injuries caused by unidentified gunmen has been given.

The evidence points to a professional, targeted assassination and the possible involvement of state security forces in the crime. Troops, police and home guards patrol the entire area heavily. Moving about at night without the knowledge and approval of the security forces is well nigh impossible. If the murderers are allowed to go scot-free, it will definitely embolden the perpetrators of the current spate of abductions and murder that has affected all parts of the country.

I am informed that Mariyadas was a supporter of the Socialist Equality Party and an opponent of the war who stood for developing goodwill and unity amongst all sections of the working people, be they Sinhala, Tamil or Muslim. I see that his murder is an attack on the right of all democratic people to uphold and express the political ideas of their choice. All democratic norms demand that steps be taken to hold a proper inquiry into the crime.

C Hewamanna

Attorney at law,

Piliyandala, Sri Lanka

Dear Sir

I strongly condemn the murder of S. Mariyadas, a supporter of Socialist Equality Party in Sri Lanka, on August 7.

The SEP is a party which has fought, from its beginning, for united program of Sinhala and Tamil working class to end the war. Mariyadas represents this program in the eastern province.

I call for a full investigation into this murder and bringing the culprits to book.

T. Samith S. Fernando,

Secretary,

Chilaw branch,

Union of Postal and Telecommunication Officers, Sri Lanka

Dear Sir,

Inquiry into killing of Mariyadas.

I strongly condemn the assassination of Sivapragasam Mariyadas, who lived in Mullipothana in Trincomalee, on August, 7, 2006. This is alleged to have been carried out by an unidentified group, but it happened in an army-defended zone. Therefore, I suspect that the army or an allied paramilitary is behind this crime.

People like Sivapragasam Mariyadas, a supporter of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), are principled people. As I know, they are against the LTTE and the government's war policy. The SEP has been fighting for the rights of Tamils and against the war.

Today, the killing and disappearances of Tamil people in the north and

other areas are disturbing. It shows the racist character of the war also.

Therefore, I demand that an immediate inquiry be held on Mariyadas's assassination and that the culprits be punished.

Thanking you,
Dilon Fernando,
Lunuwilla, Sri Lanka
Dear Sir

Sivapragasam Mariyadas was shot dead at Mullipothana in Trincomalee district on August 7. As I knew well, Mariyadas, a supporter of the Socialist Equality Party, was hostile to all types of communal politics, including the politics of the LTTE. It is not difficult to understand that Mariyadas, who lived within the army defence zone, was killed by state forces or groups associated with them.

As a person who cherishes democracy, I strongly oppose the killing of an individual for his political activities, whatever they are. So I believe that it is your duty to find the true killers and punish them. With that belief, I urge you to open an immediate investigation into this crime and bring the killers to book.

Lionel Wilfred Alwis
Kegalle, Sri Lanka

Inspector General of Police, I strongly condemn the murder of Sivapragasam Mariyadas of Mullipothana, a photographer by profession and a supporter of SEP. It is clear, as the WSWs explains with strong evidence, that it was a political assassination. Three months after the assassination, the WSWs today reports that there's still no serious investigation into the crime. Because he was a supporter of a party that is strongly fighting against all types of anti-democratic moves and the war in north and east of Sri Lanka, and an opponent of war and communalism himself, the lack of investigation, together with the lack of interest, is sending a message to such opponents that there can be more such killings. Therefore, I request an immediate investigation and the charging of those responsible for the crime.

Regards,

Sameera Withanage

Hanwella, Sri Lanka



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)