

# Sri Lankan authorities provide no answers over disappearance of SEP member

**Our correspondent**  
10 April 2007

Sri Lankan Socialist Equality Party (SEP) member Nadarajah Wimalaswaran and his friend, Sivanathan Mathivathanan, disappeared from the northern island of Kayts more than two weeks ago. Despite a stream of letters from Sri Lanka and internationally demanding an urgent inquiry, the defence ministry, the military and the police are engaged in what can only be described as a cover-up.

Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan were last seen on March 22 at about 6.30 p.m. at a naval roadblock on Punguduthivu island, preparing to enter a causeway to Kayts island. Wimalaswaran was on the back of Mathivathanan's motorbike, having gone to Punguduthivu to collect some clothes from a friend's house.

Punguduthivu navy camp commander Hemantha Peiris told the SEP that Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan had been noted in the register as passing through the roadblock. However, Velanai navy camp commanding officer Silva on Kayts has provided no information about the pair. He claimed the navy had not detained or arrested them.

The SEP's own investigations have confirmed the presence of two Criminal Investigation Department (CID) police officers at the Kayts roadblock. The CID officers, who are fluent Tamil speakers, are attached to the Kayts police station and are often involved in questioning people. They are well known to locals, who describe them as the "secret police" because they do not give out their names.

An eyewitness saw the two CID police officers questioning Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan near the Kayts roadblock as they were heading to Punguduthivu at about 5.30 p.m. Obvious questions remain unanswered about what happened at the roadblock on their return an hour later. What did the CID officers question Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan about? Was the pair seized by the military and/or police officers? If they were allowed to pass through, why the extraordinary reluctance by authorities at all levels to provide any details?

After numerous phone calls to officials in Colombo and the northern Jaffna area, no information has been provided to the SEP about what took place at the Kayts roadblock. The self-evident line of investigation would be to question the naval personnel and CID officers who were present at the time.

\* Additional defence ministry secretary H. K. Balasooriya told the SEP she has asked Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) director Chandra Vakishta if the TID police unit had arrested Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan. She said she had also asked the police Deputy Inspector General (DIG) in charge of the northern range about his investigation. However, Balasooriya has provided no answers and declared she cannot "pressurise" the police.

\* SEP general secretary Wije Dias contacted additional defence ministry secretary Sunil S. Sirisena last Thursday. Sirisena said he would contact the navy commander over the SEP's suspicion of naval involvement in the disappearance of Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan. No information has been forthcoming.

\* The SEP last week spoke to police DIG (northern range) Mahinda

Balasuriya, who said the police needed a week to complete the report. When pressed on the urgency of the matter, he declared that the police were unable to travel to many places in the north due to "security reasons".

\* The SEP has spoken to the officer in charge (OIC) of Kayts police to find out what steps had been taken regarding the party's formal complaint. The officer claimed yesterday that the disappearance was being investigated by other officers and promised more information in two hours. Since then, he has been unavailable.

Since President Mahinda Rajapakse plunged the country back to war last year, hundreds of people have disappeared or been killed by death squads aligned to the military. On Kayts island alone, there have been 37 disappearances. Of those, three bodies have been found. Nothing is known about the fate of the remaining 34.

Kandiah Kanapathy Mahendran, for instance, disappeared in Velanai on December 10 after attending a wedding. His family members spent two months in Colombo trying to find out if he was being held at a detention centre in the south of the island, but to no avail.

The SEP is continuing its campaign to demand that the Sri Lankan authorities carry out an urgent investigation to locate Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan. Wimalaswaran has been an SEP member since 1998 and is well known for his internationalist socialist convictions, his determination to fight for defence of the rights of the working people and to oppose the war. We call on SEP supporters and WSWs readers to continue to send letters supporting our campaign.

Letters can be sent to:

Gotabhaya Rajapakse,  
Secretary of Ministry of Defence,  
15/5 Baladaksha Mawatha,  
Colombo 3, Sri Lanka  
Fax: 009411 2541529  
e-mail: secretary@defence.lk

N. G. Punchihewa  
Director of Complaints and Inquiries,  
Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission,  
No. 36, Kinsey Road,  
Colombo 8, Sri Lanka  
Fax: 009411 2694924

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 is a further selection of the letters sent so far.

April 2, 2007

Dear Sir,

The report of the disappearance of the Socialist Equality Party member Nadarajah Wimalaswaran and his friend Sivanathan Mathivathanan of the northern island of Kayts has again raised concerns about the democratic rights of citizens of Sri Lanka.

Socialist Equality Party has a long history of bitter struggle for the democratic rights of the people of Sri Lanka and around the world. It is well known for its opposition to all types of nationalism and also to LTTE separatism. In this context, the disappearance of Nadarajah Wimalaswaran can be believed to have its roots in the political ideology he supports and practiced.

The area in which this incident took place is under the control of government security forces. Therefore I urge you to investigate the incident and to find the whereabouts of the above-mentioned citizens.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

SW, Sri Lanka

Mr. Gotabhaya Rajapakse,

Secretary of Ministry of Defence,

15/5 Baladaksha Mawatha,

Colombo 3, Sri Lanka,

Please find attached the text of the letter sent to us by the Socialist Equality Party. It is the duty of the government to find how this reputed member of SEP and his friend disappeared in a state-controlled area. We totally agree with the concerns showed by the leaders of the SEP about the lives of their comrades.

Please take every step to find these missing men.

Dr Vickramabahu Karunarathne,

PRESIDENT, Left Front [Sri Lanka]

April 5, 2007

Re: Two missing nationals

Dear Mr. Rajapakse,

It has come to my attention that two persons have suspiciously gone missing while in the custody of CID and naval officials.

These two, namely, Mr. Nadarajah Wimalaswaran and Mr. Sivanathan Mathivathanan, stopped at a road block on March 22 and have never been seen since.

Let me remind you that business, industry, and investment must have a sense of law and justice and the cruel disappearance of these two has the makings of official conspiracy which does not bode well when put to my colleagues in the investment field.

I therefore request that you conduct an immediate thorough, open and transparent investigation into these two missing victims and order their immediate release.

Regards,

CS, Taipei, Taiwan, Formosa.

Secretary Rajapakse,

I am writing to express my agreement with the Socialist Equality Party's campaign to find the whereabouts, and to secure the liberty of Nadarajah Wimalaswaran and his friend Sivanathan Mathivathanan, who disappeared in the northern Jaffna islands on March 22.

The Socialist Equality Party has a history of continuous struggle for the democratic rights of all the people of Sri Lanka, regardless of religion and language. It opposes both Sinhala nationalism and LTTE separatism, and stands for international socialism. Because of this, the disappearance of Nadarajah Wimalaswaran has ominous consequences for working people the world over.

I am requesting that the government and the defense ministry of Sri Lanka immediately conduct an investigation in order to find both men.

FKr,

Systems Engineer,

Cambridge, MA, 02139

USA

April 5, 2007

Mr. Rajapakse and Mr. Punchihewa,

The Socialist Labour League (SLL) of India holds the Sri Lankan government and its security forces responsible for the disappearance of Socialist Equality Party (SEP) member Nadarajah Wimalaswaran and his friend Sivanathan Mathivathanan on the evening of March 22 in the Jaffna peninsula's islands in northern Sri Lanka and demands that the Sri Lankan government and its military immediately conduct an investigation into their disappearance.

The circumstances under which Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan disappeared indicate that they could not have disappeared without the knowledge of the Sri Lankan army and navy, which have a tight and complete control of the islets of the peninsula where they were last seen.

In fact, all evidence now suggests that Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan could have been apprehended by the CID and the navy on Kayts end of the long causeway between the islands of Punguduthivu and Kayts.

The spot where they seem to have disappeared on March 22, about a few hours before the 8 pm curfew came into effect—the roadblock at the Kayts end of the causeway—was not only manned by 15 navy men but also by two CID men fluent in Tamil. These CID men were routinely involved in interrogating the local people at the roadblocks in the area and enjoyed powers to arbitrarily detain people “on suspicion”. Thus evidence strongly suggests that Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan were apprehended by the CID and navy on Kayts end of the Punguduthivu-Kayts causeway and at the very least, taken into their custody.

It is well known the world over, that hundreds of Tamils in the north and east of the island have been killed, abducted or have “disappeared” over the past year. It is also a well established fact that the forces behind these killings, abductions and disappearances are none other than the notorious death squads of the Sri Lankan security forces or their associated paramilitaries. The navy operates in collaboration with the paramilitary wing of the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP)—a partner in the ruling coalition government of President Rajapakse—in the area where Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan were last seen.

Despite the mounting international protests and the formal complaints made to the defence ministry, the navy camps in Kayts and Punguduthivu and the police in Jaffna by the Sri Lankan SEP, no effective action whatsoever has been initiated by the Sri Lankan government, its police or its military to find Wimalaswaran and his friend Mathivathanan.

Last year the SLL in India collected hundreds of signatures from students of various colleges in the south Indian city of Chennai, to demand that the Sri Lankan government launch an urgent investigation into the murder of SEP supporter Sivapragasam Mariyadas at his home in Mullipothana, and prosecute the killers.

The Socialist Labour League will in the coming days and weeks step up its campaign in India among workers, students, youths, intellectuals and all other sections of the working people to secure the immediate and safe release of Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan as well as to demand an immediate launching of an investigation by Sri Lankan government into the murder of SEP supporter Sivapragasam Mariyadas and to bring to book his murderers.

Arun Kumar,

National Secretary,

Socialist Labour League

India.

Dear Mr. Secretary;

I am writing to express my concern over the disappearance of Nadarajah Wimalaswaran and Sivanathan Mathivathanan. These men were apparently last seen in the northern Jaffna islands on March 22, 2007.

Their disappearance apparently took place between two navy roadblocks on a long causeway connecting Punguduthivu Island and Kayts Island,

where both men live.

As this disappearance occurred between navy roadblocks, it appears that the military has some responsibility in this matter.

I respectfully request that your ministry investigate these disappearances, and hold those responsible accountable.

We hope that this matter can be resolved in a timely manner, and that you will see to it that these two men will return to their respective families unharmed.

We are grateful for any intervention from your office.

Yours sincerely,

DP,

Regina, Canada

Dear Mr. Secretary,

As a sympathizer of the Socialist Equality Party, as well as a caring human being, I cannot help but be concerned and distressed at the news of Nadarajah Wimalaswaran's and his friend Sivanathan Mathivathanan's disappearance. I myself believe firmly in a policy of "innocent until proven guilty" as judging by hearsay is hardly the best way to make a case against anything or indeed to believe anything. However, this does not mean I have no suspicions as to what has become of these persons. After reading about the murder of Sivapragasam Mariyadas nearly a full year ago and how there is still no reasonable progress in that case, along with the fact Sivapragasam was also a supporter of the SEP, I am left with a dark view of what could have happened to the two individuals who disappeared last March.

I urge the government to find them. Not only for the sake of clearing my mind of any dark suspicions of the government you represent, but also for the fact I hope the two men are alive and uninjured.

Sincerely,

NM

I am writing from Sydney Australia to demand the Sri Lankan government take the most serious investigation into the abduction of SEP member, Nadarajah Wimalaswaran, and his friend, Sivanathan Mathivathanan who have gone missing at a military roadblock that has gained notoriety for its disappearances and murders. To date, there are strong grounds to believe the navy is involved as it heavily patrols this area of the northern islands where both men live. So far no adequate or comprehensible account has been offered from this area replete with roadblocks, patrols and tight naval constraint.

As you are aware, your government and the military have not wavered in using the most ruthless methods to suppress opposition from all political opponents. Seen in its full living context, a refusal to partake in any investigation and offer a reliable explanation, in itself says much. More to the point, no explanation constitutes strong circumstantial evidence of complicity.

You have a military armed to the teeth with all sorts of murderous weapons but you have to abduct and rule using fear. These actions do not come out of strength. Your government and military may have missed a point here, that this method of government rule through criminality and the murder of political opponents contain a large element of cowardice.

I demand an immediate release of these two workers.

JC,

Sydney, Australia

Dear Sir,

The disappearance and possible murder of Nadarajah Wimalaswaran, of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) of Sri Lanka, and his friend Sivanathan Mathivathanan on March 22, and the murder of SEP supporter Sivapragasam Mariyadas at his home in Mullipothana in the eastern Trincomalee district last August 7, are political crimes carried out against the SEP of Sri Lanka and these individuals because of their opposition to the war and their struggle to unite the working class on the basis of an international socialist program against all forms of communalist politics.

I demand that the Sri Lankan government release all the information in their possession relating to the two men, and that government conducts a serious and transparent investigation into the murder of SEP supporter Sivapragasam Mariyadas.

DD

Melbourne

Australia



To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**