

SEP candidate in Wales demands the return of missing Tamil socialist

14 April 2007

The following is a statement issued by Poopalasingam Thillaivarothayan, Socialist Equality Party candidate for South Wales Central, denouncing the government repression against the SEP of Sri Lanka.

As a candidate in the Welsh Assembly election for the Socialist Equality Party of Britain, I demand the Sri Lankan government and its military immediately return Socialist Equality Party (SEP) member Nadarajah Wimalaswaran and his friend Sivanathan Mathivathanan. The two disappeared on the evening of March 22 after leaving a naval roadblock on Punguduthivu Island, while travelling to Kayts Island. The causeway and the island are under the tight control of the Sri Lankan navy and military.

Yet, after three weeks of campaigning by the SEP in Sri Lanka, the authorities still claim to have no knowledge of what happened to Wimalaswaran and his friend. The SEP's own investigation found an eyewitness who stated that Criminal Investigation Department (CID) police officers questioned our member at the Kayts roadblock.

Wimalaswaran, an SEP member for nearly 10 years, is well known throughout the area as an opponent of the war, and defender of the rights of working people.

The government authorities are fully responsible for the fate of Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan. I note that the Sri Lankan government has failed to conduct a serious investigation into the murder of SEP supporter Sivapragasam Mariyadas at his home in Mullipothana in the eastern Trincomalee district last August 7 and have failed to prosecute the killers. The murder took place in an area that is also under the control of the security forces and all the evidence indicates that they were responsible.

Disappearances and killings have become routine in Sri Lanka. Over the last year more than 4,000 people

have died, over 225,000 have been displaced and hundreds have disappeared—victims of the brutal civil war, which has been continued by successive governments in Colombo for 25 years. As a result of this war, more than 75,000 have been killed.

It is clear that the Rajapakse government has no intention of protecting ordinary people's rights. When Mahinda Rajapakse narrowly won the presidential election on November 2005, he formed a government with the support of extremist parties—the Sinhala chauvinists of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU)—which demanded an end to the so-called “peace process” and the open resumption of the civil war against the Tamil people. Hundreds of thousands of people have suffered from bombardment and displacement as a result.

The peace process is backed by the United States and other major powers to pursue their own economic and strategic interests, not those of working people. The Sri Lankan government supported the Bush administration's “war on terror” because it gave them a free hand in Sri Lanka.

The western powers and their allies launched an illegal war against Afghanistan and Iraq based on lies in order to seize oil and gas resources, creating a catastrophe for the Afghan and Iraqi masses. The US administration is attempting to reorganize the world to stabilize its economic power through military occupation, which is a new form of 21st century colonialism.

The Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka has fought to defend democratic rights and to forge the unity of Sinhala and Tamil workers with the working class throughout the world. It is well known throughout Sri Lanka for its opposition to the civil war, its demand that the Colombo government immediately withdraw all armed forces from the North and East of the island.

I am standing in the election in Britain in order to oppose imperialist war and the nationalist politics in Scotland and Wales propagated by those seeking to divide the working class. The Labour Party is responsible for this nationalism, which it encouraged as a means of diverting the working class from the necessary development of an independent movement against war and social inequality on an international perspective.

Similarly, the Scottish Socialist Party and Solidarity advocate nationalism and separatism behind vague socialist phraseology, in the same way that the Tamil national movements such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam misled and disoriented Tamil youth. Workers must learn the lessons of the tragic experiences of Sri Lanka Nationalism has nothing to do with socialism and can only result in communalism and civil war.

I urge Scottish and Welsh workers and youth to oppose nationalist politics and vote for the Socialist Equality Party, which is based on class not race, nation or ethnicity.

I oppose the propaganda that the Labour government has launched under the terror threat, which aims to scapegoat immigrant workers and asylum seekers. Working people must take a principled stand against the deportation of refugees by the Labour government. Sri Lanka is a classic example of the way in which deportees are put into danger when they are sent back.

Above all, I call on workers and youth to join the fight to build a mass socialist party that has the aim of unifying the world working class in a common struggle against the profit system. The campaign for the return of Wimalawaran and his friend Mathivathanan is an integral part of this fight.

Letters demanding an inquiry into their disappearance 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

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