

Sri Lankan court case exposes police investigation into missing SEP member

Our correspondent
28 May 2007

Two months have passed since the disappearance of Socialist Equality Party (SEP) member, Wimalaswaran Nadarajah and his friend, Sivanathan Mathivathanan. Despite the demands of the SEP and protest letters by WSWs readers in Sri Lanka and internationally, the police have failed to carry out any serious investigation to find and secure the release of the two men.

All the evidence collected by the SEP points to the involvement of the security forces. Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan were last seen on March 22 about 6.30 p.m. travelling on a motorbike along a long causeway from Punguduthivu Island toward Kayts island, where they both reside. To enter the island the pair had to pass through a navy checkpoint. However, the commander at the Velanai naval camp, which is responsible for the checkpoint, denies any knowledge of the missing men.

A hearing in the Kayts magistrate court on the May 18 found that the local police had yet to question naval personnel about the missing men. The officer in charge (OIC) of the Kayts police, Kingsly Gunasekera, and an officer from the Velanai Kanchadeva navy camp, D.M.S. Dasanayake, were both in court after being directed to attend by the magistrate on May 10. The court is considering a formal complaint lodged by the wives of the missing men.

OIC Gunasekera told the court that he had asked at military camps and informed police stations throughout Sri Lanka about Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan, but had received no information. However, questioned by S.E. Ehanathan—the lawyer for the two wives—the policeman admitted that he had not questioned personnel from the naval camps at Velanai and Punguduthivu—the obvious starting point for any genuine inquiry.

The lawyer pointed out that the names of the missing men had been registered at the Punguduthivu navy check point as entering and leaving that island on March 22. Asked if he had spoken to anyone at Punguduthivu naval camp, Gunasekera again answered “no”.

Gunasekera attempted to evade responsibility by claiming that he had no information about the men’s movements. The

wives, he complained, had not included the details in their original complaint. Ehanathan, however, showed a copy of the letter presented to the court setting out the facts. The magistrate directed the police to obtain a fresh statement from the two wives and set aside June 15 for a full day hearing. The officer from the Velanai Kanchadeva navy camp was also told to attend.

The SEP also made formal complaints to the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission (SLHRC) and the defence ministry soon after Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan disappeared. The SLHRC gave the navy until May 18 to respond. SLHRC director S. G. Punchihewa told the SEP last week that the commanders at the Kayts and Punguduthivu naval camps had informed the commission that they had not arrested the two men but provided no further details. Punchihewa said the commission would initiate an inquiry on June 14—that is nearly three months after the two men disappeared.

SEP general secretary Wije Dias sent a further letter to defence secretary Gotabhaya Rajapakse on April 27 calling for an urgent investigation into the case. Dias attempted to speak to Rajapakse but was repeatedly told he was unavailable. His secretary told Dias the ministry was being inundated with around 200 complaints a day.

Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan are among hundreds of people, mainly Tamils, who have disappeared or been killed over the past 18 months as President Mahinda Rajapakse—the defence secretary’s brother—has plunged the island back to civil war. The evidence points to the operation of organised death squads acting with the complicity, if not active involvement, of the security forces. In virtually none of the cases has anyone been arrested, let alone prosecuted.

The SEP holds grave fears for the well-being of Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan. We again call on our supporters and *World Socialist Web Site* readers to write to the Sri Lankan authorities to demand an urgent investigation to find and release the two men.

Letters can be sent to:

Gotabhaya Rajapakse, Secretary of Ministry of Defence,

15/5 Baladaksha Mawatha,
Colombo 3, Sri Lanka
Fax: 009411 2541529
Email: 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.

We publish below a selection of the latest letters.

Dear Sir,

For the release of Nadarajah Wimalaswaran and Sivanathan Mathivathanan.

Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka) member Nadarajah Wimalaswaran and his friend Sivanathan Mathivathanan, both residents of Kayts island off the Jaffna Peninsula, disappeared on March 22, 2007.

It is reported that for the last time they had travelled from Kayts to Punguduthivu island on a motor bike and there are records that on their return that evening they passed through the naval checkpoint in that area. We believe that the authorities of the state and the armed forces are responsible for these two who have disappeared in an area under the control of the state and the military.

The attempts by the military authorities of the area to dismiss this type of disappearance by either attributing them to the LTTE or by branding the victims as LTTEers, should be rejected with contempt.

Therefore, we request you and your government to take steps to release the member of the SEP, which is a party that is acting on the basis of a constant principled position of opposing the war, as well as his friend Mathivathanan.

Yours sincerely,

Siritunga Jayasuriya,

General Secretary, United Socialist Party.

Demand for an inquiry into the disappearance of Socialist Equality Party (SEP) member Nadarajah Wimalaswaran and his friend, Sivanathan Mathivathanan.

It is reported that Socialist Equality Party member Nadarajah Wimalaswaran and a friend of his, Sivanathan Mathivathanan, have both disappeared from Kayts Island on March 22. The SEP is a political party that is engaged in a principled struggle for a socialist perspective, especially against the LTTE that is fighting for a separate state in the North and the East, as well as against Sinhala racism in the

South. It is a struggle that is being taken forward both in the North and the South in the midst of all difficulties. Therefore, the disappearance of Wimalaswaran and his friend is disturbing. We request that an investigation should be carried out immediately into this disappearance.

W.D.I. Yasalal,

Secretary, Science and Technology Graduates Union, Sri Lanka

The following letter was signed by eleven WSWS readers in Paris.

We demand an immediate and proper investigation into the disappearance of Socialist Equality Party (SEP) member Nadarajah Wimalaswaran and his friend, Sivanathan Mathivathanan from Punguduthivu island of Jaffna district, missing since March 22.

Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan disappeared on the evening of March 22 on the northern Jaffna islands. They were last seen at around 6.30 p.m. on Punguduthivu island, riding a motor bike towards a long causeway connecting it with Kayts island. Under conditions of a heavy navy presence throughout Kayts island, it is impossible for a person to disappear without the knowledge of the navy.

Therefore, there is a very strong foundation for the SEP's suspicion of involvement of your navy and the Eelam People Democratic Party (EPDP) in this incident of disappearance.

Under a rule where abductions and murders take place freely to the shame of human civilisation, could you prevent incidents like this?

Nadarajah Wimalaswaran is a civilised person who fought against the racist war and nationalist perspective. He believes in a socialist perspective that fulfills the needs of the masses.

The civilised world will never forgive the abduction and torture or murder of these progressive and ordinary people. The government must immediately conduct a full inquiry to find out the whereabouts of Nadarajah Wimalaswaran and his friend Sivanathan Mathivathanan. And they should be released immediately.

World Socialist Web Site readers in France.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact