

Demonstration and meeting in Sri Lanka to protest prosecution of Iranian students

7 March 2008

The Socialist Equality Party and its student organization, the International Students for Social Equality (ISSE) will hold a demonstration and a public meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka, to protest the Iranian government's detention and prosecution of more than 40 left-wing students. The demonstration is part of an international campaign initiated by the ISSE.

Those arrested are part of the group Students for Freedom and Equality. In December, the group organized an independent demonstration to denounce US war plans against Iran, while also opposing all factions of the Iranian political establishment. More than 30 students were arrested after the demonstration, and another 10 were arrested on January 15.

Although some students have been released on bail, others have been unable to meet the extremely high bail fees ranging from \$80,000 up to \$300,000. Some students, particularly those alleged to be the leaders of the group, have not been given the option of bail. They have been prevented from making any contact with friends or family outside of prison.

According to those who have been released, the students have been subject to torture, including electrical shocks, beatings, and sexual abuse. All the students face prosecution, which may result in lengthy jail times, expulsion from school, or other forms of punishment.

At least seven students are still languishing in prison. They are: Behrouz Karimizadeh, Ali Kantouri, Amin Qazaiee, Behzad Bagheri, Peyman Piran, Farhad Haji Mirzale and Morteza Khedmatloo. Mirzale, an activist from Sanandaj, capital of Iranian Kurdistan, may be under severe torture at the notorious Evin Prison. A person familiar with the situation said there is concern among the students that Mirzale might be killed in prison. The SEP and the ISSE demand the immediate and unconditional release of all the arrested students.

All charges against them must be dropped.

On March 10 the SEP and ISSE will be submitting a letter demanding the release of the students to the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 5, Independence Avenue, Colombo 7.

The demonstration to demand the release of the students will be held in front of the main port railway station in Colombo, on March 10, at 4:00 pm. After the demonstration, a meeting will be held at 6 pm in Boy Scout Hall, behind the Peoples Bank Head Office, Colombo 2.

We encourage all our readers and supporters to participate in the demonstration and the meeting.



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