

“We should work to unite Tamil and Sinhala people”

Participants in SEP Jaffna meeting speak out

Our correspondents
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Participants in the Jaffna SEP presidential election meeting voiced their enthusiastic support for the socialist internationalist program advanced by the party, several terming it a breath of fresh air.

While the SEP, has long conducted political work in Sri Lanka's Northern Province, it was, until very recently, able to do so only clandestinely due to government-military and LTTE repression.

“I am very pleased to have participated in this meeting,” a 22 year-old Jaffna University student told the *World Socialist Web Site*. (Because of the ongoing threat of repression, the WSWs is withholding the names of those interviewed.)

“Both main candidates in this election (President Rajapakse and ex-Army Commander Fonseka) prosecuted the war against the Tamil people. Whichever of them wins, people will not get any solution to their problems.

“The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is supporting Sarath Fonseka, thinking only about benefits for themselves. Earlier, while supporting the Tigers (LTTE), they also did not have concern about the people. Although Sivajilingam (a TNA dissident) is contesting as an independent candidate, he is having the same politics.

“I am studying for a higher (university) qualification, but I have no hope about getting a job. A Tamil party which is a partner of this government gave some jobs to its supporters. Others having qualifications do not get anything.”

A young housewife, one of many women who attended the meeting, said, “Prices of some food items have been reduced. This is an election gimmick. All such pretences will be over once the election is

finished. The policies of your party are really essential. They should be taught to people”.

A fisherman said, “According to my point of view, no citizen of this country can think of voting for the two main candidates because of the atrocities they have committed in the past. Most of the other candidates have announced their support to Rajapakse or Fonseka.

“I had some hope on Wickramabahu (Karunaratne) of NSSP. After seeing your leaflet I was thinking about whom to vote for. Your meeting has given me a clear picture about them. They would rally behind one of the two who will win the election. I think there should be an alternative for the people.

“We are not aware about the past history of working class struggles. When the war started I was nine years old. I have never been to Colombo. I haven't met any Sinhala speaking people other than those who are in the armed forces. Most of the young people are like me. They should be taught about the necessity of joint struggles of the Tamil and Sinhala workers.

“Rajapakse says that there is peace in every corner of the country. Now you will have seen this area. In every nook and corner there are army check points. People have to move in fear. How can they say people live in peace?

Another participant at the meeting spoke of his experiences during the war. “I was at Mulangavil (to the north of Mannar) when the government launched its final offensive. We were displaced from place to place and finally reached Putumattalan. When we were there, multi-barrel rocket shells were pouring in on us. Many with us died. As we could not suffer further, we passed over to the army controlled area in a difficult journey of two days.

“After checking us ruthlessly, the security forces took us to Manik Farm (detention camp.) The situation there was terrible. When the presidential election was called, we were released from the Manik Farm. Every Sunday many of us have to sign at an area police station. If we are going out, we have to inform the police station. This is the peace we have. Our movement is restricted. We were not given any compensation or facilities to rehabilitate us. How could people vote for the two main candidates? If any one advocates voting for the main candidate, they are treacherous leaders.”

An unemployed female graduate said, “The decision of the TNA to support Sarath Fonseka is a crime. It is also the same to support Rajapakse. Both did this war. Still fisherman can’t go out freely for fishing. Women and youths cannot move round without fear. Still Rajapakse advocates the (maintenance of) high security zones. Because of that people can’t go to their lands. Remaining shops in the Vanni (the LTTE stronghold overrun in the final offensive) have been converted to army canteens. Buddhist statues have been erected at every junction.

“It is interesting to know about the policy of your party at this juncture. We should work to unite the Tamil and Sinhala people. Though we speak different languages our interests are the same”.



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