

Jerry White demands end to government repression of Sri Lankan SEP

Our reporter
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Jerry White, the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for US president, issued the following statement Tuesday demanding an end to the Sri Lankan government's campaign of intimidation against the Sri Lankan Trotskyist movement. For more on the SEP campaign, visit the election site.

As the presidential candidate of the Socialist Equality Party in the 2012 US elections, I demand that the US-backed government in Sri Lanka cease its campaign of intimidation against the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka.

I condemn the illegal decision of the Ministry of Defense (MoD) to ban the SEP's public meeting in Jaffna on January 29. This occurred three days after military personnel detained two SEP members in Gurunagar for pasting posters and then organized a physical attack on them after their release. More recently, the military has visited the homes of party members to further intimidate them.

These acts of political repression are an attack on the democratic rights of all working people. The SEP is a legally recognized party engaged in entirely legitimate activity. The meeting was called to demand the release of hundreds of political prisoners still held by the government three years after the end of its bloody war against the Tamil minority.

As a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, no other party has fought so consistently and courageously as the SEP and its forerunner, the Revolutionary Communist League, to unify Sinhala- and Tamil-speaking workers on the basis of a socialist program.

The attack on the democratic rights on the Sri Lankan Trotskyists is part of an assault on the entire working class internationally. Everywhere the ruling elite is

demanding that workers pay for the capitalist crisis. In Greece, the banks are dictating cuts that will drive millions of people into poverty. In the United States, both political parties are determined to bail out the banks and force workers to accept a historic reduction in their living standards.

The dictates of the ruling class are not compatible with democracy. In Sri Lanka, facing growing resistance to its IMF-dictated austerity measures, the Rajapakse government is playing the "terrorism" card once again to further militarize the country and crack down on working class opposition. In doing so, it is taking a page from the United States, which has used the "war on terror" to undermine the most basic constitutional rights.

The Obama administration held up the banner of "human rights" to justify the neo-colonial war in Libya and plans for new wars against Syria and Iran. At the same time, the administration continues to provide millions in counter-terrorism and military aid to the Sri Lankan government, which was responsible for the deaths of at least 40,000 civilians in the last month of the war and the disappearances and killings of hundreds of workers, peasants and youth since 2009. This is part of diplomatic and military moves by the US to make the island a strategic beachhead against China.

In our election campaign, the SEP will fight for the international unity of the working class and the struggle against dictatorship and war. The SEP in Sri Lanka—which has sacrificed many martyrs in its decades-long struggle for socialist and internationalist principles—is an inspiration to us all. Hands off the SEP in Sri Lanka!



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