

Colombo press conference announces US SEP presidential candidate's visit to Sri Lanka

Our correspondents
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka held a press conference in Colombo yesterday to announce the visit to Sri Lanka of Jerry White, the US SEP presidential candidate. White will address public meetings on August 26, 28 and 30, in Colombo, Kegalle and Galle respectively.

The SEP has launched a vigorous campaign for these meetings, distributing thousands of leaflets on the significance of White's visit. The press conference, held in the Nippon Hotel conference hall, was part of this campaign. Journalists from the Tamil daily, *Thinakkural*, and *Ravaya*, a Sinhala weekly, attended. *Suder Oli*, another Tamil daily, requested information to compile an article.

Chairing the press conference, Vilani Peiris, an SEP political committee member, said: "The aim of the presidential campaign of the SEP in the US is to fight for the unity of the world working class against capitalism, on the basis of an international socialist program. White will visit Sri Lanka to further this struggle." She explained that the US SEP is in solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world Trotskyist party.

SEP general secretary Wije Dias outlined the importance of White's visit, which is part of a world tour in which he will also address meetings in Britain and Germany. Dias said White, 52, had been a fighter for international socialism for more than three decades and his running mate, vice presidential candidate Phyllis Scherrer, also had a decades-long record of fighting for the socialist perspective.

"US presidential elections have political implications

internationally. US imperialist policies affect the entire world," Dias said. "Under these circumstances, defeating those policies in US and globally has become an international task... That is why Jerry White, who is running for the US presidency on our movement's world socialist perspective, has decided to address workers and the oppressed internationally."

The SEP general secretary emphasised that the ICFI continued the heritage of the Fourth International, founded in 1938 under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, to mobilise the world working class to fight for socialism, against the attempts of the Stalinists, Social Democrats and various centrist leaderships to prevent workers from undertaking that historical task.

Dias pointed to the growing resort of the US government to military aggression, from the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, to the regime-change operation in Libya and the preparations for similar interventions underway in Syria and Iran. The threat of war, he said, could be answered only by a unified international movement of the working class, including the American workers and the oppressed masses globally.

"Under those circumstances, the SEP, which fights for international socialism within the US working class, is taking the struggle for the program of world socialism to the world working class, in collaboration with ICFI and its sections internationally, through Jerry White's tour," Dias said.

Further elaborating on the political significance of the meetings that White will address, Dias said Sri Lanka had been entangled in the provocative US turn to Asia

to counter the growing political and economic influence of China. He warned that the US would go beyond simply exerting pressure upon the government of Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse to distance itself from China and toe the US line.

“In this situation, the intervention by a socialist representative of the US working class in South Asia is very decisive,” Dias explained. “It is a part of our movement’s fight for a socialist internationalist strategy against imperialism’s aggressive strategy.”

Dias recalled the principled struggle of the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India (BLPI), the Indian section of the Fourth International in the 1940s, to mobilise the working class throughout the sub-continent on an internationalist perspective. He pointed out that the SEP was the successor of the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), which had been founded in 1968 in the struggle against the betrayal by the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) of these principles.

The SEP general secretary said the visit by the presidential candidate of the American SEP would help “rejuvenate those historical lessons and mobilise the working class of this country and south Asia against the imperialist war plans.”

A *Thinakkural* journalist asked whether White’s visit would have an impact on the elections for three Provincial Councils, being held on September 8. Dias said it could have an impact, but explained: “The SEP organised White’s tour and meetings not because of this election. We have a serious political perspective to discuss, which goes beyond that.”



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