

Former leading member of Tamil nationalist LTTE assassinated in Paris

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On the night of November 8, the leader of the Tamil Coordinating Committee in France (TCC), Nadarajah Mathinthiran, was assassinated in Paris near the TCC office by two hooded gunmen riding a motorcycle. His wife and child were in the office at the time. Police arrested two men, commenting that their responsibility is “to be determined in custody.”

Founded in the early 1980s as a front organisation of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) helping Sri Lankan refugees, the TCC is one of several rival pro-LTTE groups operating in the Tamil diaspora. A long-standing member and military leader of the LTTE, Mathinthiran emigrated to France in the early 1990s. After 2004 he led political activities and fundraising.

He had extensive contacts in the French political establishment. Leaders of the Socialist, Gaullist, Stalinist Communist Party and Green parties spoke regularly at TCC rallies. Among Tamils, the TCC’s work centred on spreading illusions that the French government would intervene in the Sri Lankan civil war to help establish a capitalist, ethnic-Tamil state.

Mathinthiran’s killing was timed just before a change in the conditions of his probation in France that would have made attempts against his life more difficult.

The European Union banned the LTTE in 2006, after newly elected Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse broke off talks with the LTTE and declared a war against “terrorism.” In 2007 French Antiterrorist Directorate commandos cracked down on the LTTE in a series of raids, arresting Mathinthiran and over 30 others. Mathinthiran was convicted and sentenced in 2009 to seven years in prison, though he appealed and

was released on bail in 2010, on several conditions—including a prohibition on participating in political activity.

TamilNet reports, “Two weeks ago, the French legal proceedings sanctioned him a 10 months’ probation period that would have put him under close monitoring with restricted movement, including electronic monitoring. This term was to commence on Friday, and had it commenced, it would have been difficult for anyone to assassinate him”.

The TCC has not yet issued any statement on the assassination of Mathinthiran. Rival Tamil nationalist factions’ web sites claim that Sri Lankan military intelligence was involved in the killing. Throughout the civil war, military intelligence infiltrated armed groups and manipulated their internal conflicts, resulting in deadly clashes. This led to the break-up of the LTTE’s Eastern wing in 2004, when infighting led to the deaths of hundreds of fighters.

Since the Sri Lankan government crushed the LTTE militarily in northern Sri Lanka in May 2009, the LTTE disintegrated into competing factions in Europe, Canada and the US, leading to violent clashes.

These rival Tamil nationalist factions could also have been involved in the assassination. In October 2011, Mathinthiran was injured in another attack by masked men carrying samurai swords. He identified two men accompanying the attackers as ex-LTTE members.

All these factions agreed with the basic orientation of the LTTE: subordinating the struggles of the Tamil working class in Sri Lanka to appeals to the imperialist

powers and to India to intervene in the war, while cutting the Tamil workers off from the Sinhalese working class. Their differences appear to be mainly over ownership of LTTE assets and over political control of the Tamil diaspora.

Since the LTTE were crushed in 2009, the Sri Lankan government has also developed considerable influence among the various Tamil nationalist factions. It is grooming LTTE members like Selvarasa Pathmanathan as potential leading officials in newly reconquered, majority-Tamil areas of Sri Lanka. (See “LTTE officials work with Sri Lankan government after civil war”)

Significantly, the period before the assassination of Mathinithiran saw rising tensions between the “International Secretariat” and “Chief Secretariat” Tamil nationalist factions.

The TCC is affiliated with the “International Secretariat” faction. The current leaders of this faction were appointed by the LTTE leadership before the defeat; they controlled the LTTE’s organisational structure in Western countries and still largely control its assets.

The second “Chief Secretariat” faction claims to represent the continuity of the LTTE leadership after the defeat. The term “Chief Secretariat” was usually used by LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran in signing political statements. Many leaders of this faction escaped the final assault of the Sri Lankan military and emigrated to Europe. The “Centre for Tamils France” (Centre des Tamoules France”) is affiliated to this faction.

The Tamil web site run by the “Centre for Tamils France” published a statement reporting the breakup of negotiations with the TCC for a unified event and the decision to organise a separate “Heroes Day” commemoration.

“Heroes Day” is an event organised every year to commemorate Tamil fighters killed in the civil war, and which the LTTE traditionally used to make policy declarations. It is attended by thousands of Tamils who lost family members in the 30-year civil war,

irrespective of whether they agree with the LTTE’s politics. Competing claims to ownership of this event, considered by both factions as an important political asset, provoke bitter conflict.

On November 4 the Centre for Tamils France reported, “Negotiations were conducted between the representatives of the TCC and the Centre for Tamils to arrive at agreement to organise the ‘Heroes Day’ celebrations jointly in one location. Today ... the representatives of Centre for Tamils were present at the agreed meeting. None of the representatives of the TCC who are eligible to make any decision were present at the meeting, and the unique attempt for a unified ‘Heroes Day’ sadly and unfortunately resulted in a failure.”

Last year factional fighting broke out in organising the event. After violent clashes, hunger strikes and police interventions, both factions organised separate events. The events were similar in character, inviting Dravidian politicians from the Indian state of Tamil Nadu and local bourgeois politicians to address the rallies. Two separate but identical statements appealed to the “international community” to initiate an inquiry into the war crimes of the Sri Lankan government and support a separate Tamil state.



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