

Sri Lankan pseudo lefts back bogus US calls for human rights

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The pseudo-radical Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) in Sri Lanka has once again displayed its colours as a pro-imperialist group and spokesman for the ruling class. It has joined the traditional right-wing opposition party, the United National Party (UNP), in a campaign to press President Mahinda Rajapakse to heed the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolution passed last month on Sri Lankan human rights violations.

The US-sponsored resolution called on the government to implement the proposals of its own Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC), which was appointed precisely to cover up the military's war crimes. Tens of thousands of Tamil civilians were killed by the Sri Lankan military during the Colombo government's communal war against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The UNHRC resolution urged the government to hold "credible investigations" into its own human rights abuses.

This resolution had nothing to do with protecting basic legal and democratic rights in Sri Lanka. The US backed the Colombo government's war, which culminated in the LTTE's defeat in May 2009. Since then, Washington has exploited the atrocities committed by the military to pressure Rajapakse's government to pull back from its close relations with Beijing.

On March 14, the UNP-led alliance, the Protest of Opposition (Vipakshaye Virodhaya or VV), in which the NSSP is a partner, sent a letter to Rajapakse asking him to call an all-party conference, with the opposition parties, to "face problems" that would be created by the UNHRC resolution.

Apart from the NSSP, the other parties in this alliance include the United Socialist Party (USP), another pseudo-left group, as well as the Tamil capitalist

parties, the Tamil National Alliance and the Democratic People's Front, and two Sinhala extremist groups, Sihala Urumaya and the Motherland Protection Front.

UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe convened a press conference of the alliance on March 18 to explain its proposal for an all-party conference. He openly warned of a possible US-led intervention against Sri Lanka, declaring that due to the UNHRC resolution, "Sri Lanka would soon be in a situation similar to Syria and Libya." The government could avoid this situation, he stated, by holding an "all-party conference to work out concrete measures to implement the UNHRC resolution."

Wickremesinghe was clearly using the UN resolution to pressure Rajapakse to collaborate with the UNP and bring Sri Lanka into closer alignment with Washington. By publicly pointing to the US-led powers' violent overthrow of the Gaddafi regime in Libya and their operations in Syria to oust Bashir al Assad's government, Wickremesinghe was warning that though there was not yet such a threat to Rajapakse, the situation could change.

At the same press conference, NSSP leader Wickramabahu Karunaratne insisted that because Rajapakse had made promises to the "international community"—that is, to US imperialism and its allies—to implement the LLRC proposals, he should do that.

Economic Development Minister Basil Rajapakse rejected any agreement with the opposition. For now, the government is exploiting the campaign on human rights to posture as a victim of an international conspiracy—without actually naming US imperialism. It serves as a convenient diversion for working class anger over its imposition of austerity measures and its attacks on basic democratic rights.

Nevertheless, Wickremesinghe and Karunaratne are

continuing the campaign, aligning themselves directly with the US. On March 27, Karunaratne wrote to the *Daily Mirror* warning that as the US resolution had increased pressure on the government, any “failure to act urgently could lead to strictures and even sanctions.” Karunaratne appealed for a unified front with Rajapakse, offering support to the government. “Despite protests, the opposition is willing to participate in implementing the LLRC recommendations, even now, if the government is prepared to go into action,” he wrote.

Despite its occasional protests against the government’s policies, the NSSP, along with the UNP, is ready to collaborate with Rajapakse in carrying out the requirements of the US. If the president refused, the opposition parties would “mobilise all democratic forces to press for its implementation of the LLRC proposals,” Karunaratne declared.

By painting Washington as a human rights crusader, the NSSP is whitewashing its criminal actions. Over the past decade alone, it has invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, wreaking massive destruction. Washington has also murdered thousands of people in countless drone strikes in Pakistan. Having intervened in Libya to execute “regime change,” it is seeking to do the same in Syria, as well as threatening Iran and North Korea with war. Indeed, Obama’s diplomatic pressure on Rajapakse is just one element of his aggressive Asian “pivot” to isolate and confront China. Most recently, the Obama administration has asserted the right to assassinate people, including US citizens, around the globe, without any legal procedure.

The NSSP and Karunaratne are making rapid rightward strides. In February, the NSSP signed a “memorandum of understanding” with the UNP, along with several other parties in the VV, to further cement the alliance that they formed last year. The NSSP dropped its earlier demand for the abolition of the authoritarian executive presidency and in effect agreed to uphold the bourgeois Sri Lankan constitution. It also endorsed proposals for a “political solution” to the war that involve a power-sharing arrangement between the Sinhala and Tamil elites.

The memorandum said parties or members should refrain from criticising leaders in the alliance. “We should work with an understanding about self control and censorship,” it stated. Acceptance of this program

and discipline consolidates the NSSP’s integration into the Colombo political establishment.

The NSSP leader has praised Wickremesinghe as a liberal democrat and claimed that the front with the UNP will defend democratic rights, despite the UNP’s own ruthless record in office in prosecuting the war and brutally suppressing political opposition. The NSSP is seeking to subordinate workers and youth to this bourgeois party and to block any struggle by the working class to fight for its independent class interests on the basis of a socialist perspective.

It is no surprise that Karunaratne has lined up behind Wickremesinghe’s warning about Libya and Syria. The NSSP’s international counterparts, such as the New Anti-Capitalist Party in France, have fully backed these neo-colonial interventions, falsely portraying them as missions to uphold human rights.

Workers and youth must reject with contempt the NSSP’s reactionary claim that imperialism and their agencies, such as the UNP, are upholding democratic rights. The defence of fundamental legal and democratic rights, including ending the oppression of Tamils, can be established only in a struggle against imperialism and the Rajapakse government, as part of the fight for world socialism.

Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim workers should turn to the working class throughout the Indian sub-continent, the United States, Europe and internationally, in a unified struggle for a Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and Eelam, and socialism in South Asia and internationally. This is the program advanced by the Socialist Equality Party (SEP).



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