

Sri Lankan SEP holds meeting in Jaffna—No to war against Syria

Rohantha De Silva
17 September 2013

As a central feature of its campaign for the Northern Provincial Council elections to be held on September 21, the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka held a public meeting in Jaffna last Sunday to oppose the US war against Syria. Workers, youth and housewives attended this important meeting in the war-ravaged Northern Province.

The SEP/IYSSE is also holding a public meeting on the same issue this evening in Colombo. These meetings are a part of the international campaign launched by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) to build a global antiwar movement based on the working class.

The Jaffna meeting was chaired by Paramu Thirugnanasambanthar, who heads the slate of SEP candidates in the Jaffna district. Explaining the political significance of the SEP campaign, Thirugnanasambanthar said: “The SEP is the only party raising the war issue in this election. That is because we are the only movement based on the international working class.”

Thirugnanasambanthar said: “Some people have asked why we raise the explosion of militarism by US imperialism to the centre of our campaign, even though there are serious issues facing the masses in northern Sri Lanka.” The speaker explained that there was no local or national solution to the problems faced by the Tamil masses in the north. He pointed out that the Colombo government was only holding the northern provincial council elections because of pressure from India and US, who were not concerned about the democratic rights of Tamils, but were worried by President Mahinda Rajapakse’s tilt toward China. Thirugnanasambanthar commented: “The political

situation in Jaffna is decided not just in Colombo, but mainly in Washington, London and New Delhi.”

The speaker warned of the far-reaching and catastrophic impact of a Syrian war. A US attack on Syria could draw Russia and Iran into the war, turning it into a regional war and possibly a third world war. “With nuclear weapons, this will be disastrous,” Thirugnanasambanthar said.

The speaker explained that the Tamil capitalist parties were lined up with Washington. “All the Tamil parties are silent about the US war drive on Syria because they support it,” he stated. “They are appealing for a similar intervention here too.”

Referring to the 30-year communal war that ended with the defeat of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009, Thirugnanasambanthar commented: “The Sri Lankan government was able to conduct the war against the Tamil masses with disastrous consequences only because of the support of the Western powers, especially Washington. Now, the TNA is lining up with those Western powers in the name of bringing a solution to the problems of Tamil masses.”

The speaker explained that that only answer to the issues confronting the Tamil masses, including communal oppression, is the unified struggle of the international working class on the basis of a socialist program. Thirugnanasambanthar said: “Tamil nationalism has only produced a disaster for the masses. Tamil workers should unite with their Sinhala brothers and sisters and also with workers in India, US and Europe to fight against their common enemy, capitalism.”

SEP political committee member M. Thevarajah explained that the Obama administration had temporarily postponed a military attack against Syria,

only in order to prepare another pretext to justify the war, which is opposed by the majority of the population in the US and around the world.

“US imperialism is preparing for war against Syria not because Syria’s Assad regime supposedly used chemical weapons against the Syrian people but because of Washington’s strategic interests, in particular its drive for control of the oil-rich Middle East to overcome its economic decline,” Thevarajah said. He pointed out that pseudo-left parties all over the world that nominally opposed the US war against Iraq in 2003 were now lining up with American imperialism under the pretext of defending human rights.

The final speaker, SEP political committee member Panini Wijesiriwardane, compared the present world situation to that before World War II. In the same way that Hitler invaded Poland after falsely accusing the Polish army of attacking German troops, Washington was using the lie that the Assad regime used chemical weapons to justify a war on Syria. Just as Hitler and German militarism arose from the crisis of German capitalism, the eruption of US militarism today was a product of the moribund state of US and world capitalism.

Emphasising the urgent need to resolve the crisis of working class leadership, Wijesiriwardane concluded by urging members of the audience to join the SEP and fight to build it as the mass party of the working class.

Several questions were raised during the discussion period. A Tamil nationalist sought to justify that perspective, asking what the socialists had done “all these years” for the Tamil masses. In response, Thevarajah discussed some of the lessons of the fight for Marxism in the South Asian region and established that only Marxists have consistently defended the democratic rights of the Tamil masses.

Thevarajah pointed out that only the Trotskyist Bolshevik Leninist Party of India opposed the so-called 1948 independence of Sri Lanka, which laid the basis for racial discrimination against the Tamil masses, which later developed into the civil war. The SEP and its predecessor, the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), continuously fought for the withdrawal of Sri Lankan troops from the north and east, and for not a single cent or man to be provided for the war.

Wijesiriwardane recounted the vicious reaction of both the Colombo government and the LTTE to the

principled struggle of the RCL/SEP. The LTTE detained several SEP members from northern Sri Lanka, including Thirugnanasambanthar, in 1998 and they were released only after a vigorous international defence campaign by the ICFI and WSWS. The Rajapakse government was responsible for the disappearance of SEP member N. Wimalaswaran in Kayts in 2007 and the killing of SEP supporter S. Mariyadas in eastern Sri Lanka in 2006.

One person who heard the speeches on the public address system decided to come into the meeting because of the way speakers analysed the Syrian crisis and advanced the idea of uniting the Tamil and Sinhala working masses. Another audience member commented: “I worked in Kuwait during the first Gulf war. I experienced how the Americans behave. They want to get hold of the whole Middle East and its oil. The accusation against Syria of using chemical weapons is just a pretext to get into that country.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact