

Vote SEP in Sri Lankan Northern Provincial elections

**The Socialist Equality Party
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) calls on workers and youth in the Jaffna district to vote for the party's slate of candidates in tomorrow's Northern Provincial Council elections.

By voting for the SEP, working people and youth will register their support for its socialist and internationalist program against the growing danger of imperialist war in Asia and globally, the sweeping austerity agenda being carried out by President Mahinda Rajapakse's government and its intensifying police-state measures.

Only the SEP has campaigned against the US war drive against Syria, explaining the catastrophic consequences for the working class internationally of a conflict that could embroil the Middle East and the world. For all of Rajapakse's claims that Sri Lanka is "non-aligned," the island, like the rest of South Asia, is caught up in rising tensions between the US and its rivals, including Russia and China.

The Sri Lankan government is performing a desperate balancing act between Washington and Beijing, which recognises that a US attack on Syria would be a prelude to a similar intervention against Iran, threatening China's energy supplies. In a statement on Syria, the Colombo government stated that it "abhors the production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons," but did not attribute blame either to the Syrian government or the US-backed opposition militias.

The Sri Lankan government depended heavily on China for arms and finance when it restarted the communal war against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2006. The US fully backed Rajapakse's war but after the LTTE's defeat in 2009 seized on the military's war crimes to pressure the Sri Lankan president to distance himself from Beijing. Washington's diplomatic intrigues in Sri Lanka are part of the Obama "pivot" to Asia, in preparation for

war against China.

The US and India pressured the Sri Lankan government to hold the Northern Provincial Council election—the first in over two decades. Both powers are pressing for a "political solution" in Sri Lanka, that is, a power-sharing deal between the Colombo government and the Tamil and Muslim elites, which they calculate will enhance their influence in Sri Lankan politics.

Without naming the US, the Rajapakse government criticises the "international conspiracy" against Sri Lanka even as it attempts to appease Washington. The main opposition parties, including the bourgeois Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and the United National Party (UNP), are cynically seeking US backing for their own bids for power and have aligned themselves with US war plans.

In an appeal to the "international community," the TNA election manifesto declared that, "justice to all peoples who inhabit Sri Lanka and genuine reconciliation through permanent peace is only achievable under international auspices." In doing so, the TNA hailed US-led interventions in other countries, declaring that "the international community has rightfully played a vital role in several instances around the world."

The pseudo-left groups, the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) and the United Socialist Party (USP), back the TNA. Both support the bogus US call for the protection of human rights in Sri Lanka. The NSSP is silent on the US war plans against Syria, but its international counterparts openly embrace the US-backed regime change operation against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Against this pro-imperialist line-up, the SEP is the only party opposing the US war drive against Syria. It has joined with its sister parties of the International

Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) to fight to build a global anti-war movement based on the international working class and a socialist program to overturn capitalism, the root source of war.

Whatever the outcome of tomorrow's voting, the Rajapakse government will push ahead with its austerity measures, including further subsidy cuts and tax increases, as dictated by the International Monetary Fund. The cost of living is soaring, devastating workers and the poor. Under the impact of the greatest world economic breakdown since the 1930s, Sri Lanka's export markets in US and Europe are contracting, threatening thousands of jobs. Youth unemployment is growing.

Fearing the rise of social unrest among Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim workers alike, the government is fomenting a communal campaign against Tamils and Muslims. The government and Sinhala chauvinist organisations have seized upon the TNA election manifesto's call for "self-government" in the North and East, accusing it of preaching separatism and seeking to "revive LTTE terrorism." Anti-Tamil agitation has been utilised repeatedly by the Sri Lankan capitalist class since so-called independence in 1948 to divide and weaken the working class.

At the same time, the government is unleashing the police-state machine it developed during the civil war against workers, youth and peasants who are coming into struggle against its pro-big business program. The military's attack on villagers in Weliweriya demanding clean drinking water, in which three youth were killed, was the latest warning of the repressive methods that will be used against resistance by working people.

Again, the pseudo-lefts of the NSSP and USP are playing the most pernicious political role by seeking to corral working people behind the opposition UNP. Together with the trade unions, they are painting the UNP—the ruling elite's traditional party with a long and bloody anti-working class record—as a defender of democratic rights and living conditions. Both are campaigning to bring this right-wing party to office, derailing any independent movement of the working class and effectively paving the way for a police state.

Workers, youth and peasants cannot obtain decent living conditions and defend democratic rights within decaying capitalism. Nor can the Tamil people win their democratic rights under the capitalist order. What

is needed is a socialist alternative.

The SEP is the only party that has consistently opposed the communal war carried out by successive Colombo governments, demanding the withdrawal of all Sri Lankan troops from the North and East, and at the same time opposing the separatist program of the LTTE and other Tamil groups. We have fought for the unification of Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim workers against all forms of nationalism and communalism, advancing the program of a Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and Eelam as a part of a broader struggle for socialism in South Asia and internationally.

The SEP calls on workers, youth and the oppressed masses in Jaffna to vote for our party in order to support this international socialist perspective. Above all, study our program and join our party to build it as the mass revolutionary party of the working class.



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