

Enthusiastic response in Sri Lanka to online May Day rally

Our correspondents
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The Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality in Sri Lanka conducted an extensive campaign in the lead-up to the International Committee of the Fourth International's online May Day rally on May 3. Thousands of copies of Sinhala and Tamil translations of the statement "Join the International May Day Rally" were distributed in Colombo and many areas throughout the island.

The SEP and IYSSE also held a May Day meeting on May 1 in Colombo to promote the online rally. Addressed by SEP general secretary Wije Dias and other party speakers, the Colombo meeting was attended by over 200 people, including plantation workers, public and private sector workers, youth and students from Kelaniya and Jayawardenapura universities.

Numbers of those in attendance registered for the ICFI's online rally, which was held two days later at 11.30 p.m. (Sri Lankan time) and simultaneously broadcast in Tamil and Sinhala. Wije Dias's address to the ICFI's May Day rally can be heard here.

Workers, youth and students across Sri Lanka—from Colombo and Kandy through to the central plantations areas, Jaffna in the north, and Galle, Matara and other cities in the south—participated in the online rally. Some spoke with *World Socialist Web Site* reporters about the experience and the central political issues raised by the event.

Several young workers in Maskeliya, in Sri Lanka's central hills plantation district, listened to the Tamil-language translations, which were broadcast simultaneously with English-language speeches.

R. Jayarane, 35, a plantation welfare centre worker, said: "I first heard about the danger of a third world war through the May Day rally. At school I was taught about the devastation of the cities of Hiroshima and

Nagasaki in Japan by the atomic bomb during World War II. I think there are still people suffering from this attack.

"Apart from your party, nobody talks about the danger of war today. Most of people don't even know about the world situation, so we need to spread this information all over the world. I agree that the only way we can spread this message is through building your party and that the May Day meeting is very useful for people like us here and throughout the world."

Siva Poshan, 28, said the local media, political parties and the trade unions "were trying to block people from understanding the real world situation."

"The Socialist Equality Party and *World Socialist Web Site* are doing great work to educate people all over the world. I had a question: America depends on cheap labor from China, so why is it preparing war against China? Through the International May Day meeting and your explanation I now understand that America is using its military might to try to solve its economic problems and is trying to dominate the world.

"Socialism is the only way to stop the war ... The trade unions in the plantations are working to divert workers' thinking and in every way prevent them from understanding the real world," he said.

Kandeepan, an SEP member, said the international rally served to unite the international working class against the danger of war. "The participation of people from sixty countries is a big thing," he said. "In the future people from many countries will definitely respond to Comrade David North's appeal to join the ICFI. People will think more about the developing world situation in line with this appeal."

In war-ravaged Jaffna, in Sri Lanka's north, **Piramaluxmy**, a teacher, said he was impressed with the online rally. "It was a good meeting. Each speaker

carefully explained their country's and continent's true political and social crisis and we were able to understand the world's problems. It gave me a sense of the developing danger of a world war.

"Wije Dias exposed the South Asian crisis in his speech. He explained that the relationship between Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena and the United National Party developed with the support of the US and it was directed against Rajapakse's relationship with China. America wants to use Sri Lanka as a controlling post in Asia.

"Peter Schwarz explained that Europe has been turned into hell with one in seven people poor in Germany. This also exposes the disgusting nature of life under capitalism."

Kansan, a youth from Jaffna, said: "This is the first time I've participated in this sort of meeting. The speakers clearly explained the global social crisis and the threat of a third world war. I didn't know about this because the capitalist newspapers never explain the crucial world developments."

Sumana, a Sri Lankan student living in the UK, participated in the online rally. "I've never felt the danger and destruction of war so powerfully before I listened to the May Day broadcast," she said. "But I'm also glad to be aware that there is a program and a party existing on this planet that is fighting to stop this destruction. It's really encouraging and I hope next year's May Day is even more successful.

"Countries are still struggling from the recent 2008 economic crisis and there will only be more. Globalisation, the inter-dependability of the nations and the prevailing economic system, means that an economic crisis, which starts in one country, quickly spreads throughout the world.

"The last economic crisis, which began in the US and spread around the world, proved that the US is not stable and it will do whatever it can to remain as the world's political and economic giant. It is aiming at countries like Russia and China, which have the potential to emerge as wealthy nations in the future and take over the power that the US has. I feel that this crisis will eventually develop toward a world war."

Sumana said the struggle against war required a "vast awakening and genuine need to rise up against these issues by the public. The decision to hold an online rally is very wise because the Internet connects and

attracts people internationally. The online May Day rally is a great way to address the people all over the world."

Asiri, a university student, said it was "the first time I've been able to experience a real May Day event." After participating, "I have no doubt that danger of world war is the most important question confronting the mankind.

"The online May Day rally was a very, very powerful response to this dangerous development. The May Day event taught me how the imperialist powers try to dominate the world and the speeches made me aware of the tense situations in other countries which I hadn't been sensitive to before.

"In particular, I understood how the 'regime change' in Sri Lanka was part of the imperialist war drive and learnt that we cannot analyse any political situation just within the context of any individual country. I was also able to get an overall idea about growing social inequality and, most importantly, how this is happening in countries all over the world."



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