

A reply to Tamil nationalist slanders against the World Socialist Web Site

An Open Letter to *TamilNet*

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To the editors of *TamilNet*:

We are writing to you on behalf of the *World Socialist Web Site* to demand that you retract the baseless slanders against the WSWS published in your article “Tamils and World War III.” Your claim that the WSWS is working with imperialism to facilitate genocide by the ethnic-Sinhala-led government in Colombo is a grotesque fabrication, as you are well aware.

Your article states, “If agencies are hurriedly deployed from all quarters to concentrate on one point, i.e., to detract and contain the national question of Eelam Tamils, [it] is to consolidate the Colombo-centric genocidal system in order to use it and its military in an impending larger war or entry into the region.”

You attack those who are “ironically facilitating a Colombo-centric genocidal state that was serving the interests of the USA.” You continue: “If both the *World Socialist Web Site* and the corporate imperialisms of World War III want to see Eelam Tamils dropping their national claim, then there must be something wrong.”

What is “wrong” in your analysis is the defamatory amalgam you establish between the WSWS and imperialism in order to cover up the Tamil nationalist parties’ collaboration with imperialism and the Colombo regime.

The record of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which publishes the WSWS, and of its Sri Lankan section, the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka), is well known. Even you felt compelled to acknowledge in your previous articles the SEP’s unflagging opposition to imperialism and the Colombo regime and its uncompromising defence of the Tamil minority’s democratic rights.

In your February 2009 article summarising a WSWS statement by K. Ratnayake, you declared: “The views of the Sri Lanka’s Socialist Equality Party writer, even though looking at the liberation struggle of the Tamils as ‘representing the interests of the Tamil bourgeoisie’, bring to light how war is imposed on Sri Lanka by powers considering only economic and strategic interests. ... [T]he writer advocates a working class approach and initiative to end the root cause of war, the profit system.”

What has changed since then is not the position of the SEP and the WSWS. Since the defeat of the Tamil-separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in May 2009, and their massacre by the Colombo regime, the Tamil nationalist parties you defend have capitulated to imperialism and joined what you call the “Colombo-centric genocidal state.” In the year since a US-backed regime-change operation installed President Maithripala Sirisena in power, they have emerged as key tools of US foreign policy in Colombo.

A class gulf separates the SEP from the Tamil bourgeois interests represented by yourselves and the Tamil nationalist parties. In the January 2015 presidential elections, the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)

opposed both the incumbent, Mahinda Rajapakse, and Washington’s candidate, Sirisena. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA), on the other hand, called for a vote for Sirisena, who served as Rajapakse’s war minister during the final massacre of Tamil civilians and LTTE fighters at Mullaitivu.

Echoing Washington’s pro-Sirisena rhetoric, the TNA officially endorsed Sirisena as fighting for “the values of democracy, good governance, and the rule of law.” Its leader, Rajavarothingiam Sampanthan, unambiguously declared, “We think Maithripala Sirisena will bring the country together as one nation.” The lesser Tamil nationalist groupings all aligned themselves with the TNA’s support for Washington’s man in Colombo, who, as part of the US “pivot to Asia” against China, was tasked with cutting off the ties Rajapakse had developed with China.

The TNA was rewarded for its subservience with the nomination of Sampanthan as opposition leader in parliament. The TNA backed Sirisena’s austerity policies and his refusal to release political prisoners, including Tamils. In their manoeuvres to defend Sirisena, the TNA and the Tamil National People’s Front (TNPf) even covered up the use of torture against their own supporters, flying victims out of Sri Lanka so that news of their abuse at the government’s hands would not emerge.

Your attempt to give a “left” veneer to the pro-imperialist policies of the Colombo regime and the Tamil bourgeoisie is collapsing. Protests by students, farmers and workers of all ethnicities have erupted against Sirisena’s austerity agenda. Only days before you published your attack on the WSWS, Sampanthan and other TNA officials were forced to call police to intervene in a meeting in Kilinochchi to protect them against Tamils demanding to know what has happened to their disappeared relatives.

You are desperate to contain the rising anger in the working class and oppressed masses against the reactionary policies of Sirisena and his Tamil nationalist allies, and you are aware of the danger of world war posed by the escalating rivalry between the United States and China.

The ICFI has consistently warned of the danger of world war and fought to mobilise the working class in a global struggle to prevent world war on the basis of a fight for socialism. It has opposed imperialist wars in the Middle East, Africa, Ukraine and the Balkans, as well as the “pivot to Asia.” Its statement, “Socialism and the Fight Against Imperialist War,” cites the danger of nuclear war and declares: “Another imperialist bloodbath is not only possible, it is inevitable unless the international working class intervenes on the basis of a revolutionary Marxist programme.”

Your position, on the other hand, is an incoherent and reactionary defence of the Tamil nationalists’ strategy of serving as the servants of imperialism in order to get a few crumbs from its table. You complacently rule out the danger of inter-state conflict between the major powers, then

assert that World War III is in fact already being waged by the “imperialism of corporates,” and finally call for a “global mobilisation” of Tamils.

You write: “If the first two world wars were fought among powers in competition for territory and resources, the Third World War is different in many ways. ... There are no governments of peoples, but imperialism of corporates. The corporates, disproportionately oriented to particular parts of the world, control the Establishments called governments. All the articulating Establishments are together in waging the Third World War against peoples all over the world. In waging a war against peoples there is no ‘balance of fear’ to worry about nuclear weapons.”

This is empty word-juggling to deny the danger of war. You try to pass off the capitalists’ global attack on the living standards of the workers and oppressed—which Tamil nationalist groups are now helping to carry out in Sri Lanka—as a “world war.” However, the Tamil nationalists’ collaboration with US imperialism is setting the stage for what could be very real world war.

Imperialist wars and proxy conflicts over control of territory and resources such as oil and gas not only continue, they have engulfed large portions of the globe, from Mali and Libya to Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine. They now threaten to escalate into war between nuclear-armed adversaries—between the imperialist powers on the one side and Russia and China on the other. High-ranking officials in the United States, Europe, and Russia have all referred to the possibility of nuclear war.

The emergence of the danger of world war due to the aggressive policy of the imperialist powers marks a new stage in the bankruptcy of Tamil nationalism. The Tamil bourgeoisie—including the LTTE, for whom you served as an English mouthpiece—always based its perspective in the final analysis on obtaining support from the imperialist powers.

During the Civil War, the LTTE’s perspective was to use their military power to establish exclusive control of areas of Sri Lanka that had been ethnically cleansed of their non-Tamil inhabitants. The LTTE hoped to then convince the imperialist powers to support a power-sharing deal between the LTTE and Colombo. The LTTE never criticised the “war on terror” or the US invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, but based their entire policy on appealing for support to the imperialist and regional powers, particularly the United States and India.

After the defeat of the LTTE, the Tamil nationalists openly oriented to figures in the Colombo regime supported by the imperialist powers. They first embraced General Sarath Fonseka—the US-backed candidate in the 2010 presidential elections, though he had commanded the final slaughter of civilians and LTTE fighters at Mullaitivu—and then last year’s US-backed campaign for regime change around Sirisena.

You still seek to devise a common strategy between imperialism and the Tamil bourgeoisie. You address the Tamil People’s Council (TPC), a group composed of TNA and TNPJ members, and advocate cutting deals to modify the imperialist powers’ policies: “Any move from the TPC towards global mobilisation to course-correct powers has to be wholeheartedly supported. But without waiting for the TPC, the world Tamils have to be awakened to the realities. ... Global Tamils should have an own programme independent of World War III partners.”

Your proposal for a “global mobilisation” of Tamils is not an independent strategy, but a cynical trap, designed to cut off Tamil workers from their class brothers and sisters of other nationalities. Its disastrous results are exemplified by the protests held in Europe and North America by the Tamil nationalists in the final months of the war. Their impotent pleas to US President Barack Obama, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and French President Nicolas Sarkozy to order Colombo not to massacre the Tamils at Mullaitivu fell on deaf ears.

After such appeals to imperialism failed to prevent the Mullaitivu

massacre, you are proposing the same bankrupt policy, supposedly to halt the drive towards World War III. Now, as in 2009, the main aim of this manoeuvre is to block the emergence of a movement against war in the international working class and facilitate bargaining with Colombo and the imperialist powers.

You seek to divide the working class along ethnic lines and suppress its opposition to imperialism with rank anti-Sinhala chauvinism and historical lies.

To justify why you are calling for a global mobilisation only of Tamils, you write: “European colonialism first took away system-collapsed South Indian Tamils as indentured labourers. Then came the decades-long genocide, partnered by the US-led West and the successors of British Raj, sophisticatedly enslaving refugee-diaspora of Eelam Tamils. In any part of the world Tamils became stateless. Note that the Sinhala nation never went through these drives.”

The claim that only Tamils and not the Sinhalese were oppressed is a reactionary falsification. All the workers and toiling people of Sri Lanka were ruthlessly oppressed first by British imperialism, and then, after 1948, by the formally independent Sri Lankan state. The purpose of your denial that the Sinhalese were also oppressed is to divide the working class and blunt its opposition to imperialism.

The Sri Lankan civil war, which pitted the Colombo regime against the LTTE, was part of a broad strategy of all the factions of the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie aimed in the final analysis at dividing the uprisings of workers and rural youth along ethnic lines, the better to crush them.

While it discriminated against the Tamils and then waged a civil war against them, Colombo also ruthlessly suppressed the struggles of Sinhala workers and youth. Tens of thousands of Sinhalese were massacred during the repression of the 1971 uprising of rural youth led by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna. After the mass sacking of more than 100,000 workers following the 1980 general strike against the free-market policies of President J.R. Jayawardene, Colombo waged another slaughter following the signing of the Indo-Lankan pact in 1989, killing 60,000 largely Sinhalese rural youth.

Only the ICFI consistently opposed the political crimes of the Colombo regime against Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people alike, on the perspective of rallying the working class across the Indian subcontinent in struggle against imperialism and the local bourgeoisies. Your slanders against the WSWs, on the other hand, are further confirmation that you stand on the other side of the barricades from the working class.

Yours sincerely,

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To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact