

Mobilise workers against Sri Lanka's Sirisena-Wickremesinghe-Sampanthan regime!

V. Gnana
24 September 2016

Over 18 months have passed since a US-backed regime change operation installed the so-called “good governance” regime of Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. Yet under this regime, which enjoys the support of the Tamil Nationalist Alliance (TNA) and its leader R. Sampanthan, the burdens facing workers, peasants, fishermen, graduates and students have only increased.

Today's protest in Jaffna reflects deep anger against Sirisena and the TNA. Seven years after the end of the Sri Lankan civil war, 100,000 soldiers are still deployed in the Northern Province, whose total population is only 1 million. Thousands are still disappeared, and thousands displaced by the war still live in camps in inhuman conditions. Political prisoners languish in prison, and the invalid suffer without assistance. None of the basic problems of the war victims have been resolved, while austerity measures attacking wages and social services intensify.

Events have vindicated the Socialist Equality Party's (Sri Lanka) opposition to the Sirisena regime change operation and to the politics of Tamil nationalism, which divided working people between Sinhala, Tamil, and Muslim.

Workers, toilers, and youth protesting the policies of the TNA and the Colombo regime must be warned, however: there are no fundamental differences between the TNA and the political organizations that have called this protest.

Aping the rhetoric of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the civil war, the Tamil People's Council (TPC) of Northern Provincial Council Chief Minister C. Wigneswaran called the rally as a “Tamil

upheaval.” The TPC was joined by the Tamil National People's Front (TNPF), Jaffna University circles, and groups that served during the war as paramilitary proxies of the Sri Lankan or Indian armies—the Eelam People's Democratic Party and the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front. The South Indian Tamil nationalists also sent their best wishes.

In calling this rally, the Tamil nationalists have three main goals. The first is to cynically exploit the slogans of the LTTE, which was itself a bourgeois nationalist movement clamoring for support from US imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie. The current crop of Tamil nationalists have the same basic strategy of cutting deals with Washington and the Colombo regime, whose top officials played leading roles in the army's massacre of LTTE fighters at the end of the civil war.

Second, promoting the LTTE's nationalist slogans cuts off Tamil workers from the growing awareness that they face the same social and economic problems as Sinhala and Muslim workers. This works to divide the working class along ethnic and religious lines, and stabilize capitalist rule by derailing growing opposition among workers of all backgrounds to the Sirisena-Wickremesinghe-Sampanthan regime.

Finally, under conditions where Wigneswaran proudly showcases his meetings with visiting US diplomats and admirals in Sri Lanka, the TPC is trying to hide the growing danger of a world war being prepared by the US “pivot to Asia” against China. US officials are not paying regular visits to Jaffna to express their generosity and humanitarian care for the Tamil people. They are seeking to defend their hegemony over economically vital Indian Ocean trade routes connecting Asia, Europe, and Africa, to impose a

blockade on China in case of war.

The evolution of the Tamil nationalists into supporters of Washington's war drive vindicates the SEP's decades-long Trotskyist opposition to nationalist forces of all ethnicities. It was the only party that uncompromisingly fought to unite the working class across barriers of race, religion and language, based on an international socialist perspective for the Indian subcontinent. It opposed the Sri Lankan civil war based on the perspective of the United Socialist States of Sri Lanka and Eelam, as part of a United Socialist States of South Asia.

The allies of the Tamil oppressed in the island are not Sirisena, Modi, and Obama, but the Sinhala workers and the working class of the Indian subcontinent and the entire world. The only way forward is a turn towards these forces, rejecting illusions peddled by the Tamil nationalists in the new constitution they are negotiating with the Washington-backed Sirisena regime.

The TNA justified its opposition to the Jaffna rally, citing its plans for a "long journey" together with Sirisena. TNA number two, M. A. Sumanthiran, pledged, "The new constitution will bring a full solution for the Tamil people." He cynically added, "Already we have been cheated several times in the last 60 years, but it doesn't matter if we are cheated again."

The organizations calling the Jaffna protest are promoting illusions in the very same constitution and regime. TNP leader Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam declared: "The government will present the constitution in two months, and the TPC's proposals must be included in it. Only that way will all the social problems be solved. ... We must exercise massive pressure to the Sinhala nation to include our cause" in the constitution.

In fact, the nearly 70-year history of "independent states" established after World War II in the Indian subcontinent shows that the capitalist class is incapable of solving social questions, building democracy or unifying the population across national and religious lines. The new constitution would be a dead end for the masses. Amid growing class conflict and global tensions, it would pave the way for a police-state regime imposing austerity and preparing for a new imperialist world war.

The critical question in the turn to the international

working class is the building of its revolutionary leadership. We appeal to workers, youth, and socialist-minded intellectuals to read and support the *World Socialist Web Site* and join the SEP.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact