

Indian ICFI supporters hold meeting against US-led war drive

Our correspondents
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Indian supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) held a successful public meeting in Chennai on August 27 against the US-led imperialist war drive. The meeting in the capital of the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu was attended by workers and youth and also streamed live via Facebook. Online participants sent greetings from different Indian cities, as well as internationally.

Police officers tried to prevent the meeting occurring, underscoring the increasing attack on democratic rights in India. A day before the meeting, the Ambattur industrial estate police summoned an ICFI supporter to a police station in a bid to cancel the meeting. Police inspector Vijayaragavan asked if the meeting would avoid talking about opposing the US and mentioning the danger of an India-China war.

When that was flatly refused, the police exerted pressure on the person in charge of the meeting hall, who asked the ICFI supporters whether they would advocate armed struggle and oppose Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government.

The ICFI supporters insisted on their democratic right to free speech, including to criticise the government. They also explained that Trotskyists are politically opposed to the Maoists or Naxalites and their methods of armed guerrillaism and wage a political struggle in the traditions of the Bolsheviks who led the working class to power in Russia in 1917.

The ICFI supporters emphasised that after getting a receipt of the payment for the meeting hall, a four-week campaign was launched that involved distribution of leaflets and displaying posters, as well as advertising on Facebook and Twitter. They explained that many people in different parts of the country and internationally were waiting to join the meeting via live video streaming.

Although the meeting was allowed to proceed, police entered the meeting hall in a calculated move to create an atmosphere of intimidation. They looked around and then wanted the names and mobile numbers of the main speaker and other office bearers of the ICFI supporters group. A police officer hung around outside, then sat in a chair near the steps leading to the meeting hall, watching those who entered or left until the very end.

A leading member of the ICFI supporters group, Sathish Simon, chaired the meeting. He spoke about the 25 years of imperialist wars of plunder waged by the US-led powers in central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, and the preparations for war against China that have destabilised the Indo-Pacific region.

Simon drew attention to Google's censorship directed against the WSWs and other left-wing, anti-war and progressive web sites. The political censorship has been directed mainly against the WSWs, he said, which amounted to blacklisting it. Simon appealed for support for the online petition campaign launched by the WSWs against Google's attack on free speech.

Turning to the Indian ruling class offensive against the working class, Simon highlighted the life sentences given to 13 Maruti Suzuki workers whose only "crime" was to challenge the sweatshop slave labour conditions in their factory. He emphasised the importance of the international defence campaign launched by the ICFI for the release of the jailed Maruti Suzuki workers.

Arun Kumar, the main speaker, said: "Today the world is on the brink of an eruption of a catastrophic nuclear war." He cited the recent provocative "fire and fury" threats made by US President Donald Trump against North Korea.

Kumar explained that the threat of nuclear war is not simply the product of a fascistic madman in the White House but arises out of the immense geopolitical

tensions fuelled by the deep economic crisis of American and global capitalism. The speaker said powerful sections of the military and political elites in Washington have been pressing for the US to challenge and if necessary go to war with China, regarding it as the chief obstacle to American global dominance in the Asia Pacific.

Kumar referred to Trump's new policy in Afghanistan as a declaration of open-ended and unrestrained military violence against a country that has suffered 16 years of unbroken American aggression.

In its striving to establish global hegemony, the US has cemented a military strategic partnership with India as a counter weight to China, Kumar said. "The principal cause of the rapid deterioration in Sino-Indian relations, of which the current border confrontation is only the latest and most explosive example, is India's ever-deeper integration into Washington's military-strategic offensive against China."

The speaker explained that India has become a frontline state for the US under Prime Minister Modi and his ruling Hindu supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party. India has opened its military bases and ports to routine use by the Pentagon, and expanded bilateral and trilateral military-strategic ties with Japan and Australia, key allies of US imperialism. India's bellicose attitude toward Pakistan also has been encouraged by Washington's support for New Delhi.

"The border disputes in this region are historically rooted in the imperialist partition of South Asia and the imperialist-created reactionary state structures," Kumar said. Both the Hindu and Muslim bourgeoisie collaborated with British imperialism in 1947 to crush the freedom struggle in communal blood.

Kumar pointed out that although the ICFI opposes that US imperialist war drive against China and Russia, it does not support the reactionary nationalist policies of these countries' capitalist regimes, which are the product of capitalist restoration.

Speaking on the role of the Indian Stalinist and Maoist parties, Kumar referred to Communist Party (Marxist) (CPM) general secretary Sitaram Yechury's participation in an "all-party" leaders' meeting summoned by the BJP government to "build a consensus" on the border standoff with China at Doklam.

Kumar also reminded the audience that Kerala Chief

Minister and CPM politburo member Pinarayi Vijayan instigated a state legislature resolution hailing the Indian military's illegal and highly provocative "surgical strike" ordered by Modi inside Pakistan.

Concluding his speech, Kumar urged workers and youth to join the ICFI and help build a mass revolutionary socialist party in India.



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