Sri Lankan students oppose Google's censorship of the World Socialist Web Site

Our reporters
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Members of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka campaigned this month to gather support among students and youth for the WSWS's petition against Google's censorship of the Internet.

A change to Google's search ranking algorithm announced in April substantially demoted search results from socialist, anti-war, and progressive websites, with the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) being hardest hit.

Owing to the International Committee of the Fourth International's decades-long stance in opposition to ethnic communalism and for the unity of the working class, the *World Socialist Web Site* is very popular in Sri Lanka, ranking among the top 1,800 websites in the country.

SEP Campaign teams distributed the statement "An open letter to Google: Stop the censorship of the Internet! Stop the political blacklisting of the World Socialist Web Site!" among students in Colombo.

Students and youth enthusiastically signed the WSWS's petition against Google's censorship, with many opening the WSWS on their phones and laptops as they spoke with campaigners.

"The issues brought forward by the WSWS are extremely important for making the public aware of what is really going on in the world," said Sugandha, a senior-year science student from University of Colombo.

"The news that we usually see on television and newspapers merely mentioned the growing war situation and never contain this type of serious explanation into the issues. I completely oppose Google's censorship of WSWS as I believe this website must be remained reachable to anyone who needs to know the truth. I am enthusiastically signing the petition and will continue reading the WSWS."

Hasitha, a sophomore at the School of Computing in Colombo, said: "Internet censorship cannot be tolerated under any circumstances. One group cannot decide what people should read and what they shouldn't. People always need to know the truth. It is their right."

Harinda, a science student from the same university, who had recently started reading the WSWS said that the site "is the only news outlet from which I get a clear picture with a correct analysis of the war preparations of US imperialism and the crisis of capitalism."

He added, "It is clear that the WSWS has faced a deliberate attack executed by the US ruling elite with the support of Google. The WSWS is the website whose readership has fallen the most. That proves the WSWS is the main focus of the attack. We need to oppose this attack and share the WSWS's articles as much as possible to defend it."

Bawantha, an art student who signed the petition, said: the "WSWS is warning about the threat of a nuclear world war. It has published a wide-ranging, international analysis with socialist perspective. What is behind Google's censorship of WSWS is the fear of the ruling elite about an upsurge of the working class who see the danger of war through the reporting of the WSWS and are organized to fight it."

Janindu, a marine technology student from Matara, one of the main cities in southern Sri Lanka, said: "The internet created the possibility for the masses to have access to unrestricted information. And that makes Google's censorship unacceptable. Google has no right to regulate what people are allowed to know. If companies continued this it would create totally unfair consequences. That's why I support this petition."

Pramod, a student from Ananda College, a leading school in Colombo, stated "I think the WSWS is

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fighting to save the world and Google's censorship is directed against it. "

His friend Pasindu from Isipathana College, Colombo added, "Socialism is a new concept for me. But I understand that it's a program for creating equality of the society. The WSWS represents that. I support this petition and will continue to read the WSWS."

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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