

Indian workers and students in Chennai support campaign against Google censorship

Our correspondents

3 October 2017

Over the past weeks, Indian supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) have taken the campaign against Google's censorship of the *World Socialist Web Site* to workers in Chennai, and students at the city's Madras and Anna universities.

The Indian ICFI supporters' group holds regular campaigns in the city, which is the capital of the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu. On August 27, the group held a successful meeting against the US-led imperialist war drive, attended by a broad cross-section of workers and youth and streamed live on Facebook.

Students and working people in Chennai have responded strongly to the ICFI's campaign opposing Google's censorship of the WSWs and other anti-war and progressive publications. Many have added their names to more than 4,500 signatures on the online petition, demanding that the tech-monopoly stop blocking the WSWs from search results.

WSWS reporters spoke to some of those who have signed the petition.

Ganesh, a 28-year-old government worker, said: "I thought Google was a well-trusted organization. But this American institution is banning progressive thought through the censorship of leftist web sites, in league with the government. Blocking information is a dictatorial measure. Governments and big companies are trying to prevent us from finding critical information."

Ganesh was among tens of thousands of Tamil Nadu government workers who went on strike last month, demanding the abolition of a retrogressive pension scheme. "The stoppage was ended on the eighth day, because the national and Tamil Nadu state governments joined together to suppress our struggle through a court order," he explained.

Speaking on the demands of the strike, Ganesh stated: "Temporary workers receive only 3,000 rupees [\$US45] a month. They should be made permanent and their salary must be increased. I am paid around 40,000 rupees [\$US600] a month, but it is not enough to cope with high rent, medical expenses and education costs for my children."

Venkatesan, a 42-year-old government worker, said: "Google's censorship stops information being distributed in an independent manner. It is a major attack on democratic rights." He agreed with WSWs campaigners, who noted that Google has a close relationship with the American government and intelligence agencies.

Venkatesan also expressed support for the call by the ICFI for an international anti-war movement based on socialist policies. He said that he was concerned that the explosive tensions revealed in a recent military standoff between India and China in the Himalayan ridge would resurface. "We oppose war. We are for the international unity of workers," he said.

Ram, a worker at the MNC telecommunications company in Chennai, told WSWs reporters: "No other party has informed us about the dangers of imperialist war. That is why your international campaign makes me happy. Your articles and documents give the working class rich political knowledge."

He added: "The capitalist media and the ruling class cannot tolerate the reporting by the WSWs on the mounting social crisis in America. That is why they are trying to block the WSWs."

"The Open Letter by the Editorial Chairman of the WSWs [David North], explains the real issues to the international working class, young people and intellectuals. That helps them to orient on the basis of a socialist perspective."

Lokesh, a second-year Master of Business Administration student at Madras University, previously signed the WSWS petition demanding the release of 13 Indian Maruti Suzuki workers sentenced to life in prison in Manesar, Haryana, this year on frame-up charges.

Asked about Google's censorship measures, Lokesh commented: "This creates major obstacles for readers looking for important articles about the current situation. People have the right to read what they wish. I oppose Google's attacks on all left-wing web sites, particularly the WSWS, which gives a clear perspective for the working class."

"Corporations like Google work for, and try to safeguard, the private property system," Lokesh said. "But as you explained, if these social media and Internet corporations were taken over, under the democratic control of the working class, everyone could express their political views. The right to free speech would be upheld. Your campaign is very important, because no other parties have told us anything about these issues."

Lokesh spoke out against the Indian government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi: "They said they would create 100 million jobs, but nothing is happening. Modi said he would abolish untaxed 'black money' to give benefits to every citizen. But the tax program is oppressing farmers, small vendors and workers as whole. Modi is not for us."

Another student, Che Guevara, said: "The censorship of the WSWS is anti-democratic. Google must stop it immediately. This is the first time I've been introduced to material from the WSWS. People have the right to decide where they get their information and news from."

The student added that his father, a member of the Stalinist Communist Party of India (CPM), named him Che Guevara, because of his left-wing sentiments. The student asked about the ICFI's attitude to Cuba.

Campaigners explained that Guevara's petty-bourgeois politics, which substituted the actions of a handful of guerrillas for the political mobilisation of the working class, had nothing to do with Marxism. They said this was underscored by the nationalist program pursued by the Cuban regime, and the emergence of mounting social inequality.

Guevara replied: "What you say is completely new to

me, but it looks like you are correct. I have to read the WSWS."

Deepak also denounced Google's actions. He said he was a regular reader of the WSWS because of its daily Marxist analysis of international events, the deepening war drive, workers struggles and the history of the Russian revolution.

Deepak added, "Your organization is working internationally. We can only fight capitalist policies in a globalized world in this way."



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