Stop the deportation of the Biloela refugee family from Australia!

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
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A family of Tamil refugees faces imminent deportation after a federal court today granted an injunction halting their dispatch to Sri Lanka, where they face state persecution, but only until Friday.

The federal Coalition government's brutal treatment of the family has provoked mass opposition and revulsion at the succession of attacks on the family's basic democratic rights. These include the pre-dawn immigration raid that snatched them from their home in the Queensland town of Biloela last year, the denial of their basic right to medical care in detention, and the sudden attempt to deport them to Sri Lanka under cover of darkness last Thursday night.

The popular response has refuted the incessant claims of the major parties, and the corporate press, that the bipartisan assault on asylum-seekers is supported by ordinary people. Workers in Biloela have waged a sustained campaign in defence of the family: some 200,000 people have signed a petition demanding that they be allowed to remain in Australia, and many thousands have attended protests across the country.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has responded to this outpouring of anger by doubling-down on his declarations that the family must "accept" they have no choice but to return to Sri Lanka, coupled with denunciations of refugee advocates as "liars." The government is using the plight of this family, not only as a test case for a broader crackdown on asylum-seekers, but also as a means of whipping-up anti-refugee xenophobia, under conditions of a deepening economic and political crisis.

The government's intransigence underscores the fact that plaintive appeals to government ministers and immigration authorities are useless. The defence of the family—the husband and wife, Nadesalingam and Priya, and their daughters, Kopika, four, and Tharunicaa, two—and of all refugees, can only be advanced through a struggle by the working class against the right-wing nationalist policies of the entire political establishment, including Labor and the Greens.

Labor, the Greens and the pseudo-left organisations, such as Solidarity, Socialist Alliance and Socialist Alternative, are doing everything they can to prevent the development of such a movement. They have called upon supporters of the family to issue moral pleas to government representatives, and peddled the fraud that a Greens-backed Labor government would adopt a more humanitarian approach to asylum-seekers.

At rallies last weekend, organised by Solidarity, Labor MPs, such as Kristina Keneally, were given a platform to posture as defenders of the family. Her pseudo-left hosts failed to mention that Keneally, just last month, attacked the government from the right, for supposedly "losing control" of Australia's borders, by failing to prevent migrants from overstaying their visas.

In fact, Labor, which is promoted as a "lesser-evil" by the Greens, and the entire pseudo-left and trade union milieu, has spearheaded the assault on asylum-seekers for more than two decades, in line with the nationalist "white Australia" program upon which it was founded, and its right-wing, pro-corporate program and policies.

By attempting to deport the Tamil family to Sri Lanka, the Coalition is merely continuing policies set in place by the previous federal Labor government of Julia Gillard. In 2012, Prime Minister Gillard declared that all Tamil refugees who arrived in Australia by boat would be forcibly repatriated to Sri Lanka.

Labor had falsely declared that it was safe for them to return, under conditions where the Sri Lankan military and state apparatus had waged a three-decade anti-Tamil communal war, and was continuing to carry out

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the mass imprisonment and extrajudicial killing of Tamils and political opponents. Labor was responsible for returning hundreds of Tamil refugees to their persecutors.

At the same time, Gillard reopened the detention centres on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island and Nauru, which are nothing but asylum-seeker concentration camps. This followed the introduction of mandatory detention for refugees by the Keating Labor government in the 1990s.

For their part, the Greens, who claim to be refugee advocates, were in a de-facto coalition with the minority Gillard government, as it abrogated the right to seek asylum.

This demonstrates that the cruel treatment meted out to the Tamil family is not an aberration, or just the product of the right-wing agenda of the current Coalition government.

Rather, it is the logical consequence of the policy supported by all the parties of the political establishment, Labor, the Liberal-National coalition and the Greens, which insist that the capitalist state must retain the right to police the borders of the nation-state.

The Socialist Equality Party, the Australian section of the world Trotskyist movement, is the only political organisation that insists on the right of all people to live and work wherever they choose, with full and immediate citizenship rights.

This is at the cutting-edge of the fight to unite workers internationally in the struggle against the capitalist system, which has nothing to offer but war, austerity and dictatorial forms of rule.

Internationally, millions of refugees are desperately seeking asylum, as they attempt to escape the consequences of US-led wars and military operations—in which Australian imperialism has played a central role—and the authoritarian actions of governments supported by the major western powers, as in Sri Lanka.

Instead of being welcomed and provided with the necessities for a decent life, they face border walls, police and military attacks, along with mass detentions on a scale not seen since the Second World War. In this, Australia, under Labor and Coalition governments alike, has provided a world model for the persecution of asylum-seekers, and it is being adopted by capitalist governments around the world, from Trump's US administration, to the governments of France, Italy and every other European state.

This assault on refugees is part of an offensive against the entire working class, as governments everywhere impose the austerity dictates of the banks and corporations as the crisis of world capitalism deepens. It serves to justify the build-up of the police and military apparatus, which is ultimately directed at the suppression of social and political opposition from workers, students and young people.

At the same time, governments, including in Australia, are promoting xenophobia to cultivate extreme right-wing and fascistic movements that will be mobilised against the emerging struggles of the working class. They scapegoat immigrants for the deepening social crisis that is a consequence of their own pro-business policies.

Against the promotion of nationalism and racism, what is required is a fight for the international unity of the working class in the struggle against militarism, war and dictatorship. This struggle must be aimed at the socialist reorganisation of world society, through the establishment of workers' states, the expropriation of the major banks and corporations and the development of a global socialist economy aimed at meeting social need, not private profit.

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