Sri Lankan SEP announces presidential election campaign public meetings

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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka is holding a series of public meetings across the country as a part of its campaign in the November 16 presidential election. The first public meeting will be on Tuesday, October 15 in Colombo.

The SEP's presidential candidate is Pani Wijesiriwardena, a long-standing political committee member of the party and a member of the Colombo editorial board of the *World Socialist Web Site*. He has a long history of fighting for international socialism amongst workers, youth and the oppressed.

The Sri Lankan ruling class confronts a deepening political crisis—the product of a global economic breakdown, geopolitical tensions exacerbated by US imperialism, and mounting working-class strikes and struggles, which are part of a resurgence of the international working class.

All parties of the political establishment are thoroughly discredited amongst the people. Apart from the SEP, there are 34 other candidates contesting the presidential election. The long list is another indication of the crisis of Sri Lanka's ruling elite.

Confronted with a deepening economic slump and growing foreign debts, and shocked by mass strikes and protests, the ruling class parties, like their counterparts around the world, are moving towards dictatorial methods. All these parties, including the ruling United National Party, the opposition Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, are calling for "strong government" and "strengthening national security." This is the language of repression.

Pseudo-left parties, such as the Nava Sama Samaja Party, Frontline Socialist Party and the United Socialist Party, say they are standing "socialist" candidates. These claims are bogus. These thoroughly nationalist parties have a long history of backing bourgeois parties, directly or indirectly. There is no nationalist solution to the deepening attacks on the democratic and social rights of workers and the poor within the capitalist profit system.

The SEP, in opposition to all other parties, and together with its sister parties of the International Committee of the Fourth International, advances a socialist program for the independent mobilisation and international unity of the working class against imperialist war and the assault on social and democratic rights. A decisive component of this struggle is the global campaign to defend WikiLeaks' founder Julian Assange and whistleblower Chelsea Manning who are being persecuted for exposing the war crimes of the US and other major powers.

In this context, the SEP fights for a workers' and peasants' government as part of a Union of Socialist Republics in South Asia.

The SEP election meetings will discuss these and other vital political issues confronting workers and the poor. We urge workers, youth and intellectuals to attend our meetings and engage in this important discussion.

Meeting venues and dates:

October 15, 4 p.m. – Colombo, Public Library Auditorium
October 24, 4 p.m. – Kandy, Devon Hall
October 30, 4 p.m. – Galle Town Hall
November 3, 2 p.m. – Hatton, Town Hall
November 6, 4 p.m. – Chilaw, Sudasuna Hall

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