

May Day Online Rally calls for formation of International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees

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On Saturday May 1, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) held the annual International Online May Day Rally. The rally motivated the formation of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

The rally was a major international event. It attracted a global audience of over 2,000 participants from 73 countries. There were attendees from the United States, Great Britain, Sri Lanka, Australia, Canada, India, France, Brazil, the Philippines, Turkey, Thailand, Spain, Pakistan, Japan, Mexico, Iran, Israel, Russia, South Africa, Nigeria, and many other countries.

Fourteen speakers addressed the rally, including leading representatives of the International Committee of the Fourth International from 10 countries: France, the UK, Germany, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. Speeches were delivered in seven different languages: English, German, French, Tamil, Sinhalese, Turkish and Portuguese.

The event was moderated by Socialist Equality Party (US) National Secretary Joseph Kishore, and the introductory report was delivered by WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North.

In his opening report, North drew attention to the massive scale of death caused by the coronavirus pandemic. “Exactly one year ago,” he said, “on May 1, 2020, the total global pandemic death toll had reached 240,000. Today, the number of people who have died stands at almost 3,200,000 – a more than 13-fold increase.”

North indicted capitalist governments around the world for their responsibility in refusing to take the necessary measures to save lives. “Far from approaching the end of the crisis,” North explained, “the pandemic has profoundly destabilized the entire world capitalist system. Not only is the world not approaching the end of the pandemic, or even the beginning of the end, what initially began as a medical crisis has metastasized into a fundamental economic, social, and political crisis of the entire world capitalist order.”

North highlighted in particular the significance of the speech given by US President Joe Biden before the joint session of

Congress just four days before the rally. North explained that far more significant than the “vague promises of half-measures and quarter-measures” offered by Biden was the accelerating US war drive against China and Biden’s call for the US to “win the 21st century” against its major rivals.

The Biden administration is aggressively promoting the official unions to suppress social resistance in the working class. “[T]he obliteration of any form of independent working-class organization in a government-sponsored labor movement—completely integrated into the capitalist state along corporatist lines—is a strategic imperative for American imperialism as it prepares, under conditions of profound economic crisis, for what is seen in ruling circles as an inevitable confrontation with China.”

It was within this framework that North explained the role of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. North explained:

That is why the International Committee of the Fourth International has issued the call for the formation of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). The aim of this global initiative is to develop a genuine broad-based movement of the international working class; and to encourage workers in all countries to break out of the prison-like shackles in which they are confined by the existing state-controlled and anti-democratic unions, staffed by right-wing pro-capitalist executives.

The IWA-RFC will strive to break down national barriers, oppose all efforts to undermine class unity through the promotion of racial, ethnic and related forms of identity politics, and facilitate the coordination of class struggle on an international scale.

It will, through these efforts to unify workers across national boundaries, contribute mightily toward the creation of a global movement to counteract and prevent the drive toward war.

North concluded: “In its efforts to assist workers in the formation and building of the IWA-RFC, the International Committee of the Fourth International, its affiliated Socialist Equality parties, and the *World Socialist Web Site* will seek to impart to these efforts a clear international strategy, to explain the connection between local struggles and the unfolding global struggle of the working class against capitalism and imperialism.”

All the speeches were based on a unified global perspective, explaining the state of the pandemic, the responsibility of the capitalist governments, and the role of the trade unions. They motivated the call for the formation of the IWA-RFC and the building of the ICFI as the revolutionary socialist leadership of the working class.

Four of the speakers represented sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Europe: Christoph Vandreier, deputy national secretary of the *Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei*, and candidate in the upcoming German federal elections; Chris Marsden, national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (UK); Thomas Scripps, assistant national secretary of the SEP (UK), and Alex Lantier, national secretary of the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* in France.

Scripps spoke powerfully in defense of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who remains locked up in a maximum security prison in London for revealing the crimes of American imperialism.

From Turkey, Ula? Ate?ci, a leading member of Sosyalist E?itlik, the Socialist Equality Group of Turkey, spoke on the danger of nuclear war, the social crisis in Turkey and the complicity of the trade unions in the back-to-work and back-to-school policies. Denouncing the various bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties and organizations, Ate?ci declared: “These parties, subordinated to imperialism, are incapable of defending democratic or social rights. That task falls to the international working class, fighting to overthrow capitalism as part of the world socialist revolution.”

Three of those addressing the rally spoke to the situation in South Asia, including India, which is now an epicenter of the pandemic, with daily reports of a horrific level of death and human suffering. This included Keith Jones, the national secretary of the SEP in Canada, who is an expert in South Asian politics and history.

Particularly significant were two speakers from Sri Lanka, Deepal Jayasekera, assistant national secretary of the SEP, who spoke in Sinhalese, and M. Thevarajah, a member of the national committee of the SEP, who spoke in Tamil. The two remarks embodied the struggle of the SEP to unify the working masses of Sri Lanka against the Sinhala chauvinism of the Sri Lankan state as well as Tamil nationalism.

“We call upon the working class in South Asia to politically and organizationally break from those treacherous parties and unions and unify their struggles to defend social democratic rights, and to form their own rank-and-file committees,” said

Jayasekara, explaining that the fight for socialism must be based on internationalism and Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution.

From Latin America, Tomas Castanheira, a leading member of the Socialist Equality Group in Brazil, spoke on the terrible toll the pandemic has wrought in the country, with a reported 80,000 dead from COVID-19 in April, making it the deadliest month of the pandemic in Brazil so far. As is the case throughout the world, Castanheira noted that, “the unions actively worked to demobilize working class resistance against the murderous capitalist policies.”

“A progressive solution to the crisis in Brazil is impossible without a definitive break with the unions and all forces of the national bourgeoisie,” said Castanheira.

Four of those addressing the rally spoke from Australia and the South Pacific: Nick Beams, a longtime leader of the ICFI and an authority on Marxist political economy, who spoke on the world economic situation; Cheryl Crisp, national secretary of the SEP (Australia); Tom Peters, leading member of the Socialist Equality Group (New Zealand), and Peter Symonds, WWS Australia National Editor, who reviewed the US war drive against China.

Joseph Kishore ended the meeting by stressing the historic and global character of the event. “The speakers have advanced a global perspective to a global audience, to build a global movement of the working class against a global crisis,” said Kishore.

Kishore concluded by making a strong call for all listening to take up the fight for the IWA-RFC and to join the Socialist Equality Party and build the ICFI.

“Objective reality impels the working class toward socialist revolution. But what is possible must be acted on. It is not enough to criticize the state of the world. The task is to change it. The fundamental task is the building of a socialist leadership.”



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