

Sri Lankan SEP/IYSSE to hold online meeting on Rajapakse government's austerity budget

Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka will hold an online public meeting on Sunday, November 28, to discuss the socialist program the working class needs to fight the 2022 budget of President Gotabhaya Rajapakse's government.

Presented to parliament by Finance Minister Basil Rajapakse, the budget freezes wages and imposes higher taxes on the masses while unleashing full-scale attacks on the public sector and social services.

"This is history's most challenging period," the finance minister demagogically declared, while ruthlessly imposing the burden of the economic crisis, exacerbated by COVID-19, on working people and the rural poor. Rajapakse has also targeted Sri Lanka's 1.4 million public sector workers, vowing to "discipline" the sector and slash state funding. The public sector, he arrogantly told the media, is an "unbearable burden" on the public purse.

The budget will slash billions in funding for social services, such as health, Samurdhi (welfare allowances), water supply, women and child development and rural housing, while boosting allocations for the military and police.

Notwithstanding Rajapakse's proclamations about Sri Lanka's "strength to manage the economy," the financial crisis is deepening. With the country teetering on the brink of a debt default, Moody's recently downgraded Sri Lanka's rating to that of Ethiopia, Laos and the Republic of Congo. A few days after the finance minister's budget speech, Sri Lanka's only oil refinery was shut down because the country did not have enough foreign currency to pay for crude oil

imports.

The government's austerity measures have already been challenged by the working class amid increasingly desperate attempts by the trade unions to contain workers' anger. Throughout this year, health, education, railway and state administration sector employees and plantation workers have taken action against the government's austerity measures. This month electricity, petroleum and port workers held nationwide anti-privatisation demonstrations. Hundreds of thousands of farmers have protested demanding desperately needed fertiliser and other necessities for cultivation.

While workers have demonstrated their willingness and determination to fight, the major problem confronting the working class is the lack of political and programmatic clarity on how to defeat the government attacks. The trade unions are playing a central role in politically strangling this movement, systematically working to trap the rising opposition within the safe channels of parliamentary protest to protect the capitalist system.

The SEP public meeting will discuss the necessary revolutionary perspective of building an independent working-class leadership based on a socialist and internationalist program to fight the Rajapakse government's austerity measures. We urge workers, youth, intellectuals and WSWs readers to attend this important meeting.

Date and time: Sunday, November 28, 4 p.m. (Sri Lankan time).

Please register for the meeting here.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact