

Sri Lankan educators' safety committee supports Chicago teachers fight against union sellout

The Teacher-Student-Parent Safety Committee (Sri Lanka)
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The Teacher-Student-Parent Safety Committee (TSPSC) in Sri Lanka stands in complete solidarity with the Chicago educators' struggle for virtual schooling to save the lives of teachers and students from the worsening coronavirus pandemic.

Teachers in Chicago, the third largest school district in the United States, are fighting against a murderous agreement between the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to reopen schools amid an unprecedented surge in COVID-19 infections.

The TSPSC welcomes this courageous initiative to save the lives of children, educators, school workers and the entire population. It marks a major fightback against the capitalist classes around the globe who place profits above human lives.

According to the shocking recent report of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the week ending January 6 recorded a 580,247 pediatric COVID-19 cases in the US, up 74 percent from the previous week. The opposition of Chicago teachers, which shows that the working class no longer tolerates such a horrible situation, provides a great example and inspiration to teachers and workers internationally.

The Sri Lankan government ordered schools to be fully open for all grades from last Monday, despite the country being on the verge of a severe increase in Omicron variant infections. The Gotabhaya Rajapakse government is artificially maintaining low official numbers of infections and deaths by carrying out fewer tests and less contact tracing in order to paint a rosy picture and to claim the situation is not so dangerous.

In reality, more than a thousand students and hundreds of teachers have been infected in the past three months since the government partially reopened

schools in October. Hundreds of thousands of students and teachers are now being exposed to the danger of the Omicron variant through having to travel to school on congested public transportation and being packed into overcrowded classrooms.

The more than 250,000 government school teachers in Sri Lanka, as a part of the working class, are a decisive force in the fight against these criminal policies of country's ruling elite. They demonstrated their power last year by staging a determined 100-day strike for better wages. But the education sector trade unions betrayed this struggle, accepting the Rajapakse government's meagre wage increase and supporting the government's decision to reopen schools during the pandemic.

The role being played by Chicago Teachers Union has sharply revealed that workers can have no confidence in the unions. Throughout the pandemic, the CTU has worked closely with the government and education authorities to suppress teachers' opposition and push them back into in-person learning. The TSPSC calls on Chicago teachers to join the Chicago Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee, which is mobilising educators to stop the reopening drive of Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot and the CTU.

As Chicago Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee correctly noted in their latest statement, the government's and the CTU's ruthless intent is "to pack children into crowded and dangerous classrooms, even if there are not enough healthy teachers to teach them. They want their parents to keep working and producing profits for the billionaires who have enriched themselves while more than 850,000 have died." No worker around the world should allow this agenda to

succeed.

We are discussing the political experiences of Chicago teachers with Sri Lankan teachers and fighting to gather support for their struggle as a significant step in the development of the International Workers' Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. We are emphasising that Chicago teachers are by no means isolated and that they must continue their struggle as part of the international working class.



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