

Workers and youth in Sri Lanka support International Online May Day Rally

Our correspondents

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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) have been campaigning in Sri Lanka for the online May Day rally organised by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) on May 1.

Campaigners have encountered strong support for the event, with many people voicing their concerns about the US/NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and the rapidly worsening social conditions in Sri Lanka.

Mass anti-government protests have erupted across the island over the soaring cost of food and other essential items, lengthy daily power cuts and acute shortages of fuel, cooking gas and medical supplies. Protesters are demanding the immediate resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapakse and his government.

Piyumi Hansika, a second-year student from the University of Peradeniya in Kandy, said: “There is no better theme for an International May Day than building a global movement against world war. Nothing could be more destructive to workers than a world war.”

Hansika said she wanted to be part of a global anti-war movement and would definitely attend the International May Day rally. “As we’ve seen in previous US invasions around the world, the provocation against Russia over Ukraine is another demonstration of the unending power and greed of imperialism.

“The aims of the US-led imperialist powers to try to conquer the Eurasian landmass has become a life and death question for people around the world. Workers need to understand that they must not sacrifice their lives for the profit interests of a handful of capitalists. They must understand, and realise, their strength by uniting as an international class,” she continued.

Stressing the importance of youth becoming part of the struggle to build an anti-war movement, she added: “Young people today are going to live in this world in the future. They don’t want the devastation of a world war so they must use their energy to fight the war danger.”

Thirimanna, an engineering worker at Colombo harbour, said: “War is the mass destruction of people and material resources. The working class is already immersed in poverty, with rising food and fuel prices bringing much suffering to the working class around the world. The devastation of a war will surely worsen this situation.

“The ongoing war in Ukraine must be seen as a danger to workers’ lives everywhere in the world. Its destruction is not limited to Ukraine and therefore, the support of the global working class is needed to stop it. This online May Day rally has the potential to build that unity.”

Referring to the protests against the Rajapakse government, he said: “In this struggle we also see the necessity for a working-class program. The international unity of the working class is the only way to end war and capitalist austerity as well. I’m looking forward to participating in the online May Day rally and will make every effort to get as many as possible of my fellow workers at the harbour to attend.”

Wimal Ranatunga, a writer and a journalist, said: “I agree that war is always destructive and that America has been igniting the flames of war all around the world. In the past, the US has intervened in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, and always under the pretext of protecting human rights or falsely accusing [targeted countries] for possessing nuclear weapons. Civilians in those countries have faced massive destruction as a result of these attacks. It’s

clear to me that the US is the aggressor in the Ukraine war as well.”

He continued: “I believe socialism is the only solution to stop a world war and all other social crises. The problem with the capitalist system is that everything is based on profit and that’s the reason for world war and inequality.

“All bourgeois organisations and the trade unions have long been attempting to trap and weaken the working class within many divisions. The May Day rally organised by the ICFI is a very meaningful use of modern technology to unite workers across those divisions.”

Upul Jayaranga, a teacher at a government school in Colombo, explained that he had wanted to follow the Ukraine war more closely after it erupted but that the Lankan media coverage of the conflict was very poor.

He said the danger of nuclear war was the major issue now facing the working class. “The crisis facing the US ruling class has led them into many devastating wars. It’s clear to me that the internal crisis in the US is a major reason for its continued and unjust interventions around the world.

“If we don’t understand this issue then we end up seeing the Ukraine war from the wrong angle. It appeared to me at first that Russia was the culprit but taking a closer look at what the US and NATO have done over the years reveals that they had prepared this war. An online May Day rally will be a new experience for me and I hope to get involved and to understand these issues in more depth,” he said.

Lakshan Gunawardena, a post-graduate student at the University of Peradeniya, said “war is never the solution.” His participation in several IYSSE discussions about the danger of a third world war, he said, had helped him to have an objective understanding of the Ukraine war and how it developed.

“The working class and youth never want war, which is a product of the profit greed of the imperialists. The economic impact of the war has already affected the entire world. Because workers around the world are now facing the same problems, the best conditions are being created for a united struggle of the international working class. I’ll be attending the online May Day rally in order to be part of this” he said.



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