

Funeral of Sri Lankan SEP chairman Wije Dias livestreamed

Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)
29 July 2022

The funeral of veteran Trotskyist leader, Wije Dias, chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), the Sri Lankan section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), will be held in Colombo today. Wije Dias died from a massive heart attack in Jayawardenapura hospital on Wednesday morning, just one month before his 81st birthday.

The body of our late comrade Wije Dias is currently lying at the Jayaratne Respect Home, 483/485, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 08 for those wishing to pay their final respects. The cortege leaves the Jayaratne Respect Home at 2.30 p.m. today (Sri Lankan time) for the nearby Borella Cemetery. The funeral will be held at 3 p.m. at the cemetery before cremation at 5 p.m. The funeral procession and the meeting will be livestreamed through the party's Facebook page.

Comrade Wije's death is a great loss for the SEP in particular, the ICFI as a whole and the working class in Sri Lanka, South Asia and internationally. He was an intransigent fighter for more than half a century for the Trotskyist principles of international socialism that embody the interests of the working class in Sri Lanka and around the world.

Wije was a founding member of the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), the predecessor of the SEP, established in June 1968 to take up the fight for Trotskyism in the wake of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party's (LSSP) betrayal in 1964 when it entered the bourgeois government of Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike.

Comrade Wije, then a member of the LSSP, was a leading member in the remarkable group of youth who opposed the betrayal and, under the ICFI's guidance, drew the necessary political lessons and laid the RCL's firm political foundations.

In the difficult circumstances following the untimely

death of the RCL's founding general secretary Keerthi Balasuriya in December 1987, comrade Wije took up the responsibilities of the post. He was general secretary of the RCL, then the SEP, right up until the SEP's latest congress in May when he was elected to the new position of party chairman.

Wije Dias led the party in fighting for the political independence, unity and democratic rights of the working class throughout Colombo's protracted war against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), during which the entire political establishment whipped up divisive anti-Tamil chauvinism.

Wije lived to see the re-emergence of revolutionary struggles in Sri Lanka. Despite his age, Wije played a key role in charting a revolutionary socialist course for workers and rural toilers amid the current popular uprising against the Rajapakse and Wickremesinghe governments and their agenda of austerity and repression.

His loss will be felt amid this unprecedented economic, political and social crisis in Sri Lanka. However, his powerful political legacy lives on in the cadre of the SEP and political work of the ICFI, which continue his lifelong struggle for a socialist future for humanity.

The ICFI's tribute to comrade Wije concluded: "Comrade Wije Dias is a monumental figure in the fight for Trotskyism in Sri Lanka. His life and legacy now enter into the history of the struggle for socialism. They will serve to inspire, but even more importantly to politically orient workers and young people in what will and must prove to be the decade of world socialist revolution."

We invite workers, youth, rural toilers and professionals to attend the funeral of comrade Wije today at the Borella Cemetery. Those who are not able

to participate in person can watch the proceedings online through the SEP's Facebook page.



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