

Workers, youth and intellectuals hail the lifelong struggle of veteran Trotskyist Wije Dias

Our correspondents
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Published below are comments by workers, youth and intellectuals about Wije Dias, chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), the Sri Lankan section of the International Committee of the Fourth International. Dias died from a massive heart attack in the morning of July 27, just one month before his 81st birthday.

Thousands paid their respects to the veteran Trotskyist, starting on Thursday at the Jayaratne Respect Home in Colombo, where his body was held, and on Saturday, the day of his funeral. Some of these remarks have been posted as videos on the SEP Facebook page. Others were taken from the Condolences Book and comments on the live Facebook broadcast of the funeral.

K. Kandeepan, an SEP member and worker from the plantation district:

Comrade Wije Dias's death is a great a loss to the working class. Particularly as a worker from the plantations, I experienced the powerful involvement of Comrade Wije leading the party's fight for action committees in the plantations and against the grip of the trade unions. He always insisted on the importance of the unification of the Tamil and Sinhala working class, and also to unite with the working class regionally and internationally.

He contributed to the struggle to orient the working class to an international socialist perspective. As an example, the SEP intervened in the Alton, Katukelle and Welioya plantation workers' struggles recently and guided them to build independent action committees.

Sarath Kumara, an SEP sympathiser and worker in the Middle East:

I learned about the demise of Comrade Wije Dias while I was working in Saudi Arabia and I travelled to Sri Lanka to pay him my tribute. The news of his loss had such a shock on me that I felt I had lost a part of my body. His lectures, ideas and explanations and his approach to questions and his Marxist method were the things that attracted us to the party.

Ratnasiri Arangala, University of Sri Jayawardenepura professor:

We have lost one of the most senior leaders who fought for the defence of Marxism in Sri Lanka. He is one of the courageous few who advanced a political struggle against the betrayal of the LSSP, who claimed to be Trotskyist but later formed a coalition with the capitalist government in Sri Lanka.

It is my belief that the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), formed on the basis of the theory of permanent revolution, has done a tremendous job in developing the class consciousness of the working class. The RCL was able to expose the class nature of the JVP through a sharp political analysis. So far, no such accurate Marxist analysis has been written about the JVP.

Although it is a great loss for us to lose the guidance of comrade Wije, in the circumstances where such a huge political crisis has been created in Sri Lanka, I strongly believe that the SEP, which he led, will carry forward his fight.

Avantha Atigala, a leading cartoonist:

It is a great loss for us to lose the most experienced leader of the SEP, who was engaged in a decisive political intervention in the current class struggle that has erupted in Sri Lanka. While giving my revolutionary tribute to him I would like to mention in particular that while all other movements tried to explain this crisis nationally, only the SEP has analysed this crisis in an international context. Wije Dias's death occurred at a time when he should have been with us to provide the theoretical and political guidance needed to expand this analysis and to take forward these struggles on a correct path.

Upali Karunaratne, an SEP supporter:

Comrade Wije: It is great thing to fully dedicate your life to win a decent life for the masses of the world who have been dragged into poverty and sorrow by a handful of exploiters. Your service to the mankind is immeasurable. It

is difficult for us to bear the loss of such a revolutionary. We swear to build the world you expected, and worked hard for. My respectful, revolutionary salute to you.

Sureka Samarasena, an author:

He departed from us when the things said by Trotskyists like Wije Dias are more true than ever. He is an example for our generation. Our senior generations also have learned from Wije. Throughout these long periods, we have identified him as a person who had not betrayed the core of socialist principles by entering into parliamentary politics.

There is a program led by him. We know that he dedicated his entire adult life to building a revolutionary party in Sri Lanka as part of the Fourth International. So, I would like to salute him here and also like to invite the younger generations to study his books, his ideas and his philosophy.

Chaminda Hettiarachchi, an SEP supporter:

I would like to express my revolutionary condolences to comrade Wije. I was involved in revolutionary politics from 1991 to 1995, when I was an engineering undergraduate at the University of Peradeniya and under the influence of the RCL. It was at that time that I first saw the political brilliance of comrade Wije.

Though I haven't been able to meet him recently, I have been deeply influenced by his personality and politics. For example, remaining an internationalist amid pressures of nationalism, even when they are popular; opposing the discrimination over minorities; and assessing things in a scientific objective manner. Inspired by his career, these are the characteristics that I try to build on. I must thank comrade Wije for that.

Pradeep Kandamby, an SEP sympathiser:

From 1952–53, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) betrayed socialism step by step. Comrade Wije Dias was a pioneer in the fight against that betrayal. The so-called lefts, and even the leaders of the Galle Face struggle, have not even come close to the perspective advanced by the RCL and the SEP with the leadership of comrades like Wije.

Comrade Wije has been explaining that capitalism had entered into a period of an enormous crisis and that if the working class understood the real roots of it, they could go forward to form a worker's government in Sri Lanka. For that, the workers had to break from their traditional leaderships, the pseudo-lefts and the trade unions, who attempt to subordinate working class to capitalist governments. Comrade Wije put his full strength into making the working class conscious of this.

I would like to appeal to youth to understand the scientific socialism advocated by him and his movement.

Hudz Rhodsie commented on Facebook:

Comrade Wije was a wonderful human being and

tenacious fighter for Trotskyism. His legacy is immeasurable and generations of workers will know his name. In great honour and respect, and with condolences to his comrades and family, forward to world socialist revolution.

Lakmal Perera, a senior lecturer at the Open University of Sri Lanka:

I got to study Comrade Wije's political intervention after I was introduced to the SEP during the recent struggles in Sri Lanka. I discussed with SEP campaigners during the protest at the Galle Face Green and was attracted to its politics.

Comrade Wije Dias had played a leading role in explaining the rotten character of capitalist rule for 60 years. He wrote and translated books and delivered lectures aimed at building a party of the working class.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to study the perspective developed by the SEP. It's a program for a real system change, economically, socially and culturally. Comrade Wije's clear and correct explanations on the nature of capitalism provided a great strength to that program and his departure at this critical moment is a huge loss to our society.

Irangani, an SEP member:

I belong to the group that joined the SEP after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. I saw how the RCL was strengthened by the guidance of comrade Wije, based on the lessons drawn from Trotsky's fight against Stalinism. He departed from us at the very moment when he was working to provide similar theoretical and political strength to the party in its initiative to build a "Democratic and Socialist Congress of Workers and Rural Masses in Sri Lanka."

Thilaka from Chennai, the Tamil Nadu state capital in India:

I felt very sad when I heard that comrade Wije Dias died of a heart attack on July 27 morning. Please convey my heartfelt condolences to all SEP comrades, and the family members of comrade Wije Dias. I saw comrade Wije Dias some 25 years ago when he addressed a meeting in Chennai. His powerful speech inspired me. I became more attracted to Trotskyism. I cherish the memory of comrade Wije Dias.



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