

Sri Lankan workers and youth support October 16 SEP meeting on nuclear war danger

Our reporters
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Members of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka are vigorously campaigning for a forthcoming online meeting, titled “Build an international working-class movement to stop nuclear war danger.” A broad range of workers, young people and intellectuals have said they will participate in the event on Sunday, October 16 at 4 p.m.

The US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine poses the real danger of becoming a nuclear conflict. The Biden administration has threatened to retaliate in kind following Russian President Vladimir Putin’s recent warning that he is prepared to use nuclear weapons.

Many of the workers who spoke to SEP and IYSSE members were unaware of the recklessness of US imperialism and its allies and their preparations for nuclear war. Sri Lanka’s mainstream media writes about the war in Ukraine but rarely reports on the nuclear war threats, and always minimises its consequences. The pseudo-left and the trade unions maintain a deathly silence.

The SEP meeting is a part of the struggle being waged by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world Trotskyist movement, for the development of a unified anti-war movement of the international working class based on a socialist perspective to abolish capitalism, the root cause of war.

Suranga, from the Ratmalana railway workshop on the outskirts of Colombo, said: “I only realised the gravity of the developing nuclear war threat through this discussion [with SEP campaigners].

“The crisis created by the coronavirus has been further intensified by the war. It has seen the prices of oil, gas and food explode, and growing scarcities of essentials. When the Sri Lankan governments carried out their communal war [against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] the cost was put onto the working population. Now I see this happening on a global scale.

“The current government is intensifying its witch hunt against workers and youth who fought against the burden of the crisis being imposed on them. In the last months, the police have arrested thousands of activists involved in the mass uprising in Sri Lanka. Working people cannot even afford three meals a day. In our workshop there are hardly any raw materials or proper tools to do our work.

“We need to talk about these issues widely. At present only the SEP and the WSWs raise these vital issues with workers. I agree that the working class is the only force that can stop the war. Making workers aware and building an anti-war movement is vital.”

A.M.K. Amarakoon, who works at Peradeniya railway station, about seven kilometres southwest of Kandy, said:

“The war in Ukraine affects every aspect of the lives of people in the world—from children to the elderly. But I also believe that this war can be stopped by uniting the working people of the world against it. We cannot live like we previously did because our salaries are not enough to buy food and our children’s education has been affected. All these problems are the result of capitalism.”

A nurse from the National Hospital in Kandy explained the desperate conditions at the facility, the second largest medical institution in Sri Lanka.

“Vital medicines and equipment are scarce at the hospital, and we are even forced to clean and reuse disposable oxygen tubes,” she said. The nurse then outlined a long list of important drugs not available at the hospital or at pharmacies.

“This is the situation we face but look at what global leaders around the world are spending on war. How much will Biden spend on this war under the pretext of saving Ukraine? And look at British Prime Minister Liz Truss who is also pledging and spending a lot on war,” she said. “People are suffering in an untold manner. We must oppose this war because if they resort to nuclear weapons then we

all will vanish.”

Surekha Dharmasena, a writer, said: “It is clear that just as the events in Austria had a decisive effect on the First World War, the US-led war in Ukraine against Russia threatens to ignite a third world war. Because Putin has threatened to use nuclear weapons the US is now also suggesting that it would not hesitate to destroy Russia for the sake of ‘Ukraine’s security.’

“The US has given more than \$US51 billion in weapons to Ukraine and is supplying arms continuously. Washington has also promised billions to Taiwan, inflaming tensions with China. Through their anti-China agenda, US presidents have developed a friendship with India.

“Biden, being a brutal imperialist leader, has the ability to embroil the whole world in war by manipulating the right-wing President Zelensky, who stands up for the Ukraine ruling elite’s reactionary interests. I also oppose Putin’s reactionary nationalism,” she said.

Dharmasena emphasised the dangers of a nuclear confrontation that would create an uninhabitable planet. “This is therefore a moment when no one can remain silent,” she said, noting that Sri Lanka and the entire region was being drawn into Washington’s war preparations against China.

The building of a world anti-war movement under the leadership of the international working class, she continued, was “an urgent task.” It was only being fought for by *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International. “None of the other organisations reveal this looming danger. I will definitely attend the meeting and am working to make others participate,” she said.

Saji, a student at Northwestern University’s Faculty of Technology, strongly denounced the intervention of US imperialism in Ukraine and its provision of arms, money and military aid.

“America has invaded and attacked many countries, like Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria, on false pretexts. Iraq was said to have weapons of mass destruction, but nothing was found. Gold was looted from Afghanistan and Syria was destroyed. Now a war is being carried out against Russia, a conflict that will be more destructive than the Iraq war,” he said.

Referring to the impact of the war on global food prices, Saji said: “Importing wheat flour to Sri Lanka has become a problem, just like everywhere else in the world, including India. The war has also created shortages of petroleum and gas and Sri Lanka’s tea exports have gone down. We should really oppose this war.”

A 21-year-old youth unable to get into university said he was planning to learn Japanese and travel abroad for work. He supported the forthcoming SEP and IYSSE meeting. “An

international movement of the working class can be built against the war. People in every country are now confronting the same harsh conditions we face with food prices rising all over the world. If the war goes ahead and nuclear weapons are used, an unimaginable situation will develop.”

A non-academic worker from the University of Moratuwa said: “Many of us do not know much about the Ukraine war because the media and the political parties in this country don’t tell us the truth about it. The media does not even show the connections between the US and the Ukraine war, and there’s been no conversation on the reasons for this war.

“When the local media writes about the war they project Putin as a red devil and insist that all the people are suffering because of him. I only learnt that the Ukraine war was the result of a trap set against Russia by the US because of your explanations.”

Sarath Wijesinghe, a teacher from Peradeniya, said: “We’ve seen the devastation caused by COVID over the past few years, what a disastrous impact it has brought to the world.

“The war in Ukraine is ongoing but we’ve only been able to correctly understand it through the SEP, which has explained that it’s a war designed by the US for the looting of the resources in Russia. It has also affected the economic and social lives of all the countries of the world,” he added.

Wijesinghe agreed that the war could only be stopped through the conscious intervention of the international working class and said he would attend the SEP-IYSSE online meeting on October 16.

To register for the meeting click [here](#).



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