Sri Lankan workers support the campaign of Will Lehman for UAW president

Our reporters
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A number of workers in Sri Lanka have joined hands with their international class brothers and sisters to extend their enthusiastic support to Will Lehman, the Mack Trucks worker in the US who is running for president of the United Auto Workers (UAW).

Several workers produced video statements, pointing to the significance of Lehman's call for the abolition of the UAW apparatus and the international unity of the working class. They also spoke about the parallel between the issues confronting workers in the US and those confronting workers in Sri Lanka.

Sarath, a machine operator in Dammam, Saudi Arabia said he has closely followed the Lehman campaign as a regular reader of the *World Socialist Web Site*.

"It is urgent to building the leadership of international working class," Sarath said.

"This is a new experience for the working class, since the theme of Will Lehman's campaign is the power to the rank-and-file workers. In country after the country, the trade union bureaucracy is so corrupt and openly working with employers to betray workers' struggles by operating as industrial policemen.

"It is crystal clear to us that Will Lehman comes forward to give leadership and political perspective to the American working class that is becoming more militant as its living conditions have been continuously deteriorating.

"The ongoing war over Ukraine has been led by the US with the aim of dismantling Russia. It is very dangerous and is the beginning of a third world war. It has already caused an increase in fuel and food prices, which is having a devastating impact on the living conditions of working class.

"Lehman's campaign gives enormous support to building the IWA-RFC [International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees]. I hope that the working class in the Middle East can resolve the problems they confront as a part of the fight to build the IWA-RFC."

Vasantha is a health care worker who is also a member of the Health Workers Action Committee (HWAC) in Kandy, Sri Lanka. "Even though trade union leaders say they represent interests of the working class, actually they defend interest of the capitalist class," Vasantha said.

As Sri Lanka is passing through an enormous economic crisis resulting in a lack of foreign reserves, the government is cutting funding for public services, with the health sector a major target of austerity measures. Doctors and other medical workers have repeatedly warned about a critical shortage of life-saving medicines in hospitals. Thousands of health care workers, including doctors, have participated in demonstrations to demand these medicines. The HWAC was formed in response.

"I strongly support Will Lehman's campaign," Vasantha said, "which is fighting to take power from a corrupt bureaucracy and place it in the hands of rank-and-file workers. I urge all workers to support his campaign.

"Even though the working class is the majority of the population, only a handful of capitalists control the world. If the workers are united, they can control the world. That is why we are emphasizing the need to form action committees through which we can organize these mass struggles."

"I urge workers in every country to form action committees like we have done here in Sri Lanka.

"War has already destroyed many countries, including Iraq and Afghanistan. It is destructive to mankind. If people across the world unite against the war, we can certainly put an end to it."

Kadeepan is a tea plantation worker at the Glenugie

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Estate in Maskeliya, Sri Lanka and a representative of the Workers Action Committee.

"The UAW has been betraying workers for a long time," he said. "They took decisions against the workers in support of the US government and companies imposing their profit interests on workers. And it is acting to increase exploitation. The bureaucrats have also looted the assets of the union.

"Will Lehman is contesting in this election to defend the rights of workers and fighting to transfer power to the rank-and-file workers from the bureaucracy.

"Today, the problems faced by working people all over the world stem from the economic crisis deepened by the war in Ukraine against Russia waged by the US and NATO. This war is developing towards a nuclear war. The governments in the US and Europe are funding and arming this disastrous conflict and imposing the burden of it on the people.

"Therefore, the working class must fight to abolish the capitalist system, the root cause of this war, and establish workers' governments. And this struggle must be based on socialist program. The fight by Will Lehman is based on this perspective. He is fighting to unite the international working class. We support his brave fight and appeal for workers all over the world to learn the lessons of his struggle."

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