

SEP/IYSSE (Sri Lanka) to hold open-air public meeting on April 3

## **Oppose president's suppression of local election! Mobilise working class to defend democratic and social rights!**

Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)  
21 March 2023

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka will hold an open-air public meeting at Kolonnawa near Colombo on April 3 on the theme of “Oppose Sri Lankan president’s suppression of local elections! Mobilise the working class to defend democratic and social rights!”.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe and his ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) government have nakedly violated the country’s constitution and suppressed the local government elections. Previously scheduled for March 9, the polls were postponed to April 25, thus scuttling the people’s democratic right to vote.

President Wickremesinghe blocked the local elections by instructing the finance secretary not to release funds for the polls, excluding it from the essential items list. Responding to a fundamental rights case filed by the opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), the Supreme Court issued an interim order on March 3, calling on the ministry secretary to refrain from blocking funds allocated for the elections.

The ministry has not complied with the order, clearly showing the determination of the Wickremesinghe regime to scuttle the elections. The thoroughly hated president and his ruling party sense certain election defeat and deepening political instability. More importantly, Wickremesinghe and the ruling class fear such a defeat would also jeopardise implementation of the austerity agenda tied to the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) bailout loan.

On Monday, Colombo received IMF approval for the

\$US2.9 billion bailout loan but its full release will depend on implementing the austerity demands in full, on top of the already deep social crisis facing workers and the poor—rampant inflation, widespread job destruction, a collapsing health service and starvation for hundreds of thousands.

Last year’s mass popular uprising during April-July, which forced former President Gotabhaya Rajapakse to ignominiously flee the country and resign, was betrayed by the trade unions backed by pseudo left groups. As part of the class struggles emerging internationally, workers and the poor have begun to come forward to fight the continued attacks on living conditions.

Wickremesinghe and the ruling class are rapidly developing autocratic measures to try to crush this upsurge. Already, he has banned strikes and detained political opponents while mobilising police and troops to the street to suppress protests.

The opposition SJB, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna/National People’s Power and several rights groups have filed Supreme Court cases, sowing the illusion that the same capitalist state will protect the democratic rights of working people in a bid to derail the rising popular anger against the government.

The trade unions and pseudo left such as the Frontline Socialist Party and United Socialist Party are backing this campaign in the courts. At the same time, they are betraying the emerging workers’ struggles, once again limiting them and spreading the illusion that the government can be pressured to halt austerity and its attacks on democratic rights.

Workers and the poor should reject this bogus campaign by opposition capitalist parties and their hangers-on. The SEP and the IYSSE advance a revolutionary socialist and internationalist program to defeat the threat of dictatorship and defend social and democratic rights.

We have called on workers and the rural masses to build action committees in every workplace, factory, plantations and working-class neighbourhood, independent of the trade unions and all capitalist parties. We are campaigning for a Democratic and Socialist Congress of Workers and Rural Masses based on the democratically-elected delegates from those action committees as the basis to fight for a workers' and peasants' government to implement socialist policies.

Attend our meeting and participate in this important discussion on our revolutionary program.

Public meeting venue: Near Kolonnawa Junction, on land adjacent to Bank of Ceylon premises.

Date and time: April 3 at 3 P.M.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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