

Sri Lankan pseudo-left FSP and IUSF silent on their thuggish attack against IYSSE socialist campaigner

International Youth and Students for Social Equality
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It is more than five weeks since the *World Socialist Web Site* published an open letter by Kapila Fernando, convenor of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka. The letter denounced a thuggish attack last February on members of the IYSSE and the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) by a group of students connected to the Inter University Student Federation (IUSF) at the University of Jayawardenepura.

We demanded that the IUSF and the pseudo-left Frontline Socialist Party (FSP), which controls it, explain why these thugs were unleashed on our comrades. IUSF convenor Wasantha Mudalige and FSP general secretary Kumar Gunaratnam, who head these organisations, are still mum about our open letter, despite email reminders from Kapila Fernando.

The open letter provides details of the provocation by IUSF activists. On February 23, Sakuntha Hirimuthugoda, a leading member of the IYSSE, was engaged in a political discussion with a student at the university's Applied Science Faculty. Hirimuthugoda was threatened by two members of the Student Union of Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (SUFHSS), which is affiliated to the IUSF, who declared that "party politics cannot be allowed in the universities."

When Hirimuthugoda defended his democratic right to discuss politics on campus, the provocateurs attempted to physically attack him, while other thugs that they mobilised snatched his mobile phone. A disciplinary officer then took Hirimuthugoda to the office of the Disciplinary Superintendent, who threatened to hand him over to the police.

When two senior SEP members—Pani

Wijesiriwardena and Wasantha Rupasinghe—heard about the incident and came to Hirimuthugoda's defence, the provocateurs attempted to physically harm them and manhandled Rupasinghe.

The attack followed an SEP public lecture titled "Popular struggle and Marxism" by Pani Wijesiriwardena at the University of Jayawardenepura on February 7.

The event, held on the invitation of the university's Department of Political Science, was attended by over 100 people, including students and university teachers. Several students and teachers interested in the SEP's analysis, and its program, engaged in a lively question and answer session following the lecture.

The IUSF and the FSP are acutely nervous about students breaking away from their anti-democratic ban on all other party politics. It is a well-known fact that the IUSF has used thuggery against students that dare to form their own student organisations.

The SEP and IYSSE have learnt through credible sources that SUFHSS activists have escalated their anti-democratic activities, attempting to intimidate those students who held discussions with us. They have also ordered these students to immediately withdraw from SEP/IYSSE social media groups, warning that they face severe consequences if they fail to do so.

The FSP and the IUSF fraudulently present themselves as champions of democratic rights at press conferences and meetings but violently oppose the IYSSE and students exercising their democratic rights at Sri Lankan universities. These positions flow from the IUSF's long practiced methods when it was under the control of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, and now the FSP.

Those involved in the February 23 provocation declared that they have a distinct culture, and their tradition is to ban all party politics on universities. But this “tradition” is a complete violation of democratic principles, and one that uses thuggery and intimidation to silence students who do not agree with them.

The IYSSE directly opposes this “tradition.” As we stated in the open letter, “The SEP and IYSSE have a consistent and unchallengeable historical record of fighting against every anti-democratic attack and state witch-hunt unleashed on other organisations, including yours, and their leaders.”

In order to answer our open letter, the IUSF and the FSP have to take a position on the democratic right of the SEP and the IYSSE to campaign for their politics inside the universities. Their hide and seek with our open letter is in line with their politics.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe and his government are now moving to fully implement all the savage austerity measures demanded by the International Monetary Fund. The government is introducing extremely repressive anti-terror laws to suppress all opposition from the working class and poor.

Under these conditions, the “no party politics” line and the anti-democratic methods of the IUSF and FSP are aimed at preventing the necessary discussion and struggles required to combat the escalating state attacks on workers, students, young people and the oppressed masses.

Both these organisations reject the Marxist position that the working class is the sole consistent revolutionary force in capitalist society. As Lenin said: “The overthrow of bourgeois rule can be accomplished only by the proletariat, the particular class whose economic conditions of existence prepare it for this task and provide it with the possibility and the power to perform it.”

We are now in a period where the working class internationally is challenging the capitalist ruling classes, which are now attempting to impose the burden of a historic global crisis of capitalism on the masses. The IYSSE and the SEP, together with our sister organisations globally, fight for international socialism and for the working class to lead the oppressed masses to put an end to capitalist disaster, the imperialist war drive and the threat of a third world war.

The IUSF and FSP are hostile to the development of

an independent political movement of the working class against the capitalist profit system. They propose “people’s councils” and “people’s movements” to pressure the government for social reform.

As a recent article by SEP General Secretary Deepal Jayasekera explained: “The FSP’s proposals for ‘people’s councils’ and a ‘people’s movement,’ which are nothing more than going to the government and parliament with a begging bowl, are leading working people into a dangerous political dead-end.”

We call on all university students to reject the IUSF thuggery against our comrades and condemn its anti-democratic dictates. Students must defend their own freedom of expression, and the right of the IYSSE/SEP to conduct political work and organise in the universities.

At the same time, we challenge the FSP and IUSF to end their silence and explain to its student members and workers, why it has not answered the SEP/IYSSE’s open letter.



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