

Tribute messages from SEP leaders internationally to Sri Lankan memorial meeting for Wije Dias

7 August 2023

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) held a well-attended public meeting in Sri Lanka on July 29, on the first anniversary of the death of long-time SEP General Secretary Wije Dias. We publish below messages sent to the Colombo memorial meeting by leaders of sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). The message sent by David North, chairperson of the International Editorial Board of World Socialist Web Site and the SEP in the US, is published separately in his opening address to the SEP's recent Summer School.

From the National Secretary of the Socialist Equality Party in Australia

Dear comrades,

On behalf of the Socialist Equality Party Australia, I send our revolutionary greetings to the meeting being held by the SEP Sri Lanka to commemorate the first anniversary of the death of Comrade Wije. It is being held under the most advanced conditions of economic, political and social crisis of imperialism for many decades, expressed as it is often the case so sharply in Sri Lanka itself.

The SEP and the IC analysed the mass eruption of class battles in Sri Lanka in 2022, which resulted in the flight of President Gotabhaya Rajapakse and his brother from the island as a precursor of revolutionary struggles emerging throughout the world. This has been confirmed by the mass protests in France, and the strike actions in the UK and the US as well.

Comrade Wije spent the last days of his life discussing and collaborating with his international comrades, and in Sri Lanka, about the response of the party to these uprisings.

The call by the SEP for a Democratic and Socialist Congress of Workers and Rural Masses in Sri Lanka is a powerful programmatic initiative to unite the working class and rural poor on an independent socialist perspective. The party presented it as the principled opposition to and rejection of the invitation to serve in an interim government whose role was to suppress the mass struggles and impose the demands of the IMF onto the backs of the working class.

The IC, with Comrade Wije centrally involved in the discussions, brought to bear the lessons of the betrayal of the LSSP [Lanka

Sama Samaja Party] in 1964 when it joined the crisis-ridden Bandaranaike government, the first time a party calling itself Trotskyist had provided crucial political support for a bourgeois government by joining it. The SEP will never enter such a path.

While Wije's counsel, wisdom and insights will be sorely missed, the historical lessons and political traditions to which he dedicated his entire adult life are imbued in the comrades whom he trained and educated.

Long live the memory of Wije Dias

Warmest revolutionary greetings,

Cheryl Crisp

SEP (Australia) National Secretary

From Nick Beams, a leader of the SEP in Australia

Greetings to the meeting to mark the first anniversary of the death of Comrade Wije Dias.

After first meeting Wije in 1975 I was honoured and privileged to be able to work with him for almost half a century. I learned so much from him in the course of my visits to Sri Lanka, his visits to Australia, and at meetings of the ICFI our world party.

Wije was an indefatigable fighter for the program of permanent revolution. He had a contempt, often couched in very humorous terms, for all the representatives of the ruling classes and their pseudo-left servants.

He has left a powerful legacy which continues to burn bright and which is embodied in the cadre he helped to educate and train.

Long live the memory of Comrade Wije Dias!

Nick Beams

From National Secretary of the SEP in Britain

Dear comrades,

I and every member of the Socialist Equality Party in Britain honour the memory of comrade Wije Dias, a courageous and indefatigable fighter for socialism.

Throughout six decades of his adult life and for more than three as general secretary of the SEP in Sri Lanka, he stood as an exemplar of what it means to provide revolutionary leadership in

the struggle for the liberation of the working class from capitalist oppression and war.

In his speeches and articles, his daily interventions in the work of the party in Sri Lanka and the International Committee of the Fourth International, he brought to bear a vast political experience and an incisive, historically grounded political intellect. His work was informed not only by his encyclopaedic historical knowledge, but, more than this, an intense familiarity with the history of the Fourth International represented today by the International Committee.

From his living experience in the struggle against imperialism, Stalinism, bourgeois nationalism and their Pabloite and pseudo-left apologists, he sought consistently to secure the political independence of the working class by the only possible means: Raising the political consciousness of the advanced workers and youth and developing them as cadre within the revolutionary party.

For Wije internationalism was his alpha and omega. His entire life was informed by an understanding of the terrible consequences that flow from the nationalist and opportunist betrayal of the struggle for world socialist revolution. His careful reading of Trotsky's writings, of the seminal experiences of the degeneration of the Soviet Union and the historic defeats suffered by workers leading to the rise of Hitler's Nazi regime and the horrors of the Second World War, made him an implacable opponent of Pabloism's attempt to liquidate Trotskyism.

As an active participant on the struggle against the Great Betrayal of 1964, and then against the degeneration of the British Workers Revolutionary Party, he was singularly placed to assume leadership responsibilities following the tragic death of Comrade Keerthi Balasuriya.

His political biography is an unblemished record of integrity and political principle.

Like so many within our world party, I cherish the memory of my dear comrade Wije and mourn his loss. But this is tempered by a recognition that everything Wije stood for politically is embodied in the cadre of our Sri Lankan section, thanks to his role in preparing them to meet the great revolutionary challenges that lay immediately before us.

In this spirit, I send revolutionary greeting to this memorial meeting confident that we go forward together in struggle.

Long live the memory of comrade Wije Dias!

Chris Marsden

National Secretary of the SEP in Britain

From the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) in Germany)

The SGP sends its revolutionary greetings to the meeting commemorating the first anniversary of Comrade Wije's death.

Wije's courageous and principled struggle for Trotskyism has played and will play an enormous role not only in building the SEP in Sri Lanka but for the development of the entire world movement.

Wije's live-long struggle against the betrayal of the LSSP and for the independence of the working class and for permanent revolution is of the greatest significance in this new period of war and revolution.

His political legacy, but also his extraordinary personality will never be forgotten by his comrades in Germany and the entire international working class.

Christoph Vandreier

Chairman of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP)

From the Socialist Equality Group in Turkey

A year has passed since we lost Comrade Wije Dias. His death was not only a loss for the revolutionary struggles in Sri Lanka and the building of the Socialist Equality Party as the leadership of those struggles. It was also a major loss for the world Trotskyist movement to which he dedicated his life.

It must be noted, however, that this great revolutionary's contribution to the international struggle for socialism continues. His courageous and principled life and the role he played in ensuring the continuity of the Trotskyist movement is a guiding light for those who are and will be fighting to build a section of the Fourth International all over the world.

The opposition of the young Sri Lankan Trotskyists, including Comrade Wije, to the great betrayal of 1964, their principled advocacy of the revolutionary socialist unity of the working class and their defense of the oppressed Tamil people without any concessions to nationalism, and their carrying forward of the perspective of Permanent Revolution, played a critical role in the development of our group and in our assimilation and adoption of the historical foundations and perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

On the occasion of this anniversary, we once again pay tribute to the memory of Comrade Wije Dias and send our greeting to all comrades in Sri Lanka.

Long live the memory of Wije Dias!

Long live the Socialist Equality Party in Sri Lanka!

Long live the ICFI!

Socialist Equality Group (Turkey)



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