

IYSSE (Sri Lanka) calls on students and youth to build a mass working-class movement against war!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Sri Lanka)
25 September 2023

This following is a leaflet issued by the IYSSE (Sri Lanka) to call on youth and students to attend a public meeting at 3 p.m. on October 19 at the Colombo Public Library Auditorium.

Youth and students in Sri Lanka, like their brothers and sisters all over the world, are stepping into the last quarter of 2023 amid an escalation of the US-NATO war against Russia over Ukraine, increasing ecological disasters, unbearable social conditions, another surge of the COVID-19 pandemic, rampant unemployment and rapid moves towards dictatorial measures by the ruling elites.

The passing year has powerfully demonstrated that the global capitalist profit system can only offer young people war and social misery.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) declares that youth and students will only be able to secure their future by fighting against capitalism and for socialism.

Stop the war in Ukraine!

The Ukraine war, which began in February 2022, is now at a crucial stage. Ukraine's so-called "spring offensive," launched in June against Russia, has been a debacle, resulting in the death of tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers. President Zelensky's regime, which acts as the puppet of the US and NATO, has already sacrificed more than 200,000 soldiers' lives.

The US and European imperialist powers, which provoked the war and are arming and financing Ukraine, have one predatory aim: subjugating Russia, breaking it up and looting its enormous natural resources. While the imperialist powers are using the fascist backed Zelensky regime to advance their interests, the claims of these powers that they are defending "democracy" and the "sovereignty" of Ukraine are a lie.

No matter how many lives are sacrificed, the US will not accept a defeat in the Ukraine war because it would further undermine its already deteriorated global dominance. The Biden administration and its NATO allies have poured billions of dollars and modern weapons to escalate the conflict against Russia, posing the danger of a new world war between nuclear-armed nations with catastrophic consequence for all humanity and the planet.

The IYSSE from the outset has opposed the war in Ukraine and the reactionary invasion of that country by the Putin regime which represents the interests of the Russian oligarchy.

* We call on you to join the IYSSE and fight to build an anti-war mass movement of workers and youth internationally, including those in Ukraine and Russia, to end this war.

War and the crisis of capitalist system

The imperialist war drive has its roots in the basic contradictions of the capitalist system—between the global economy and the outmoded nation state system on the one hand, and socialised production and the private ownership of the means of production on the other. Competition between the major imperialist powers over trade, natural resources and sea lanes is more acute than during the first and second world wars.

US imperialism is seeking to aggressively use its superior military power to reassert its global dominance. While escalating the war against Russia in Ukraine, the US is increasing its provocations and military buildup against China.

In line with these military preparations, Washington has transformed India into a frontline state against China. Washington and New Delhi want Sri Lanka and other South Asian countries to fully embrace their geo-strategic operations against China, demanding that they break economic and political relations with Beijing. The US has maintained a major naval base for decades in Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

While governments in Colombo, including the current administration of President Ranil Wickremesinghe, have insisted that they pursue a "neutral policy" between the US and China, the pro-imperialist record of the Sri Lankan ruling class shows that all such claims are wavering and fraudulent.

Behind the backs of the population, Sri Lanka has signed an Acquisition and Cross Service Agreement (ACSA) with Washington, allowing the US military to use the island's ports, airports and other logistic facilities. The Sri Lankan military has also been integrated with the US Indo-Pacific command and the Indian Navy carries out regular exercises with the Sri Lankan Navy.

The IYSSE demands:

- * Abolish all military agreements with the US!
- * No to any anti-China military alliance!
- * Withdraw the US military bases in the region!

War and the attacks against social and democratic rights

From the launch of its "war on terror" in 2001 until the beginning of the Ukraine war in 2022, the US has spent over \$US8 trillion (2,596 trillion rupees) on its military and on war. The Biden administration is now pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into the Ukraine war with the money for this—and concessions to big business—plundered from the working class.

The working class is being exploited to the bone to pay for bailouts and tax havens for the big capitalist corporations. According to a January Oxfam report titled "Survival of the Richest," the richest 1 percent have acquired almost two-thirds of all new wealth created

since 2020, i.e., nearly twice as much as the total amount of the bottom 99 percent of the world population.

While the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the crisis of global capitalism, this was further deepened by the war in Ukraine. In country after country, the ruling elites are ruthlessly imposing austerity measures and placing the burden of this crisis onto the working masses. Governments are moving towards dictatorial forms of rule to suppress any upsurge of the class struggle.

Battered by the escalating financial crisis, Sri Lanka's weak economy faces an unprecedented collapse that has seen the Wickremesinghe government turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a \$3 billion bailout loan.

Under brutal IMF dictates, 420 state-owned enterprises are now on the chopping block for privatisation or closure, which means the destruction of hundreds of thousands of jobs, wages and pension cuts, and the imposition of harsh working conditions.

Public education and health are key targets for the state expenditure cuts demanded by the IMF. While public schools and universities struggle to survive without adequate resources, including a severe lack of teachers, the government has called for increased investment in private schools and universities.

Early this month, a UN Development Program report revealed that 55.7 percent of the Sri Lankan population is "multidimensionally vulnerable." At least 500,000 people have lost their jobs, the majority of them young workers.

Inflation and the rising cost of living has led to increasing numbers of school dropouts, while over half of the country's university students are missing meals or have to find part-time jobs, seriously impacting their education.

No one should believe Wickremesinghe's "economic recovery" claims. The government is ruthlessly cutting government expenditure and attacking social rights in order to pay back defaulted loans to international bankers and to boost investor profits.

Wickremesinghe's regime is rapidly stepping up its attack on democratic rights. This includes its Online Safety Bill (OSB), aimed at suppressing freedom of expression, and a new Anti-Terrorism Bill (ATB) to define the struggles of workers and young people as terrorist acts and prosecute them with harsh prison sentences.

Notwithstanding their hypocritical denunciations of the government, the opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) and Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, (JVP) are committed to IMF austerity.

The fake-left Frontline Socialist Party (FSP), Inter University Students Federation (IUSF) and the trade unions are derailing workers and students fighting to defend their social and democratic rights, claiming that it is possible to pressure the government to reverse these attacks. No amount of pressure, however, will change the policies of capitalism in crisis.

The IYSSE urges youth and students to reject the policies of the capitalist parties, the fake left groups and the trade unions.

- * No to privatisation, including education and health!

- * Allocate billions for education and health! Free public education and health for all!

- * Oppose the draconian OSB and ATB!

Turn to the working class and Trotskyism, the Marxism of the 21st century!

The objective crisis of capitalism that stokes war also creates the conditions for world socialist revolution. This year over three million workers in France took action to fight the government's pension cuts.

More than 150,000 autoworkers at General Motors, Ford and

Stellantis in the US are being blocked by the United Auto Workers bureaucracy, which is collaborating with the Biden administration, to stop all-out strike action to win decent wages and improved working conditions.

Masses of workers and the poor in countries like Sri Lanka, have been engaged in powerful struggles against IMF austerity measures, including Lebanon and Argentina.

Last year, Sri Lanka was convulsed by a mass uprising involving millions of workers, poor people and youth, against former President Gotabhaya Rajapakse who was forced to flee the country and resign as his regime collapsed.

The trade unions, backed by FSP and IUSF leaders and other fake-left groups, betrayed this struggle. They diverted workers to support calls by the SJB and the JVP for an interim capitalist government. This political betrayal paved the way for Wickremesinghe to come to power.

The struggles of workers around the world, including in Sri Lanka, have demonstrated that the working class is the only revolutionary force in society. And it is only this revolutionary class which can provide leadership to young people and the oppressed masses in the struggle against capitalism.

Falsely portraying themselves as "left" formations and political parties, organisations such as the Democratic Socialist of America, Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain and the FSP in Sri Lanka reject the revolutionary role of the working class and function as supporters of imperialist war and the capitalist parties.

All the central political issues of the last century—imperialist war, fascism and socialist revolution—are on the agenda again. The world Trotskyist movement, led by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), is the only organisation that has deeply analysed these strategic political and historical experiences and developed an international perspective and program to mobilise the international working class to put an end to capitalism and advance a socialist future. The IYSSE is the youth movement of the ICFI.

The fight against war and attacks on social and democratic rights is a fight against global capitalism. It is a fight for international socialism. Today, it is the fight for Trotskyism.

- * Study Trotskyism, the Marxism of the 21st century!

- * Turn to the working class!

- * Fight for socialism!

- * Join and build the IYSSE!



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