Sri Lankan students oppose Israeli war on Gaza

Our correspondents
13 October 2023

As part of the campaign for its meeting "The war in Ukraine and how to stop it?", the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka has spoken to students who are outraged at Israel's genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza.

The meeting will be held in Colombo Public Library Auditorium on October 19 as part of IYSSE meetings being held internationally to build a global anti-war movement of the working class. The IYSSE has been distributing Sinhala and Tamil versions of the statement , "IYSSE (Sri Lanka) calls on students and youth to build a mass working-class movement against war!"

On October 12, an IYSSE/SEP team campaigned in front of the Kelaniya University. They distributed the Sinhala translation of the statement of the International Committee of the Fourth International titled "Down with Netanyahu's government! Stop the imperialist-backed Zionist onslaught against Gaza!"

At Jayawardenapura University on October 12, many students stopped by to talk with our campaigners. A number expressed their opposition towards both the Ukraine war and Israel's brutal war crimes in the Gaza Strip against Palestinians.

Pamudu, a management student, said: "Through some news websites, I came to know about the Ukrainian war. It is understandable why Russia launched a war against Ukraine: the US and NATO have increasingly been making plans to integrate that country into NATO threatening Russia's security. In other words, the US and EU powers are well aware that if they succeed getting Ukraine into their side, they can easily use it as war launch pad against Russia. Fearing this prospect, Moscow did not accept it and launched a war against Ukraine.

"I agree that the Putin government is not concerned about interests of Russian working class but Russia's corrupted capitalist oligarchy. It is clear that America wanted to use Ukraine as proxy to carry out war against Russia because it wants the massive mineral, oil and gas resources inside Russian region. I have heard that hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian youth, who were used as cannon fodder of war, lost their lives and that is terrible news to hear.

"The ongoing Israel aggression against Palestine is really terrible and people from all over the world should denounce this apartheid regime. When we look at the history, the Israeli state was illegally created by the maneuvering of the British imperialists at end of the 1940s and since then they have ever eating into Palestine, grabbing lands belonged to Palestinian people. From my childhood I have seen and heard endless tragic news coming from the Gaza Strip which has become a living hell and an open prison for over two million Palestinian people.

"If one could see this bloody history, endless bloody attacks have been carried out by Israel killing thousands of people in past decades. The problem is that nobody talks about that side and now they all point the finger at Hamas denouncing them as terrorists. I think the main issue here is that most people do not know this history. The media and political parties do not tell the truth.

"Sri Lanka's President Ranil Wickremesinghe also denounced the Palestinians while totally keeping silence on the bloody aggression by Israel. I have seen the FSP [pseudo-left Frontline Socialist Party] posted a poster on Facebook denouncing Hamas while promoting the mythical two-state theory as a solution to this problem. This is ridiculous. How it can be? Would there be a peaceful solution while there exists an open prison encircled by a bloody regime? I don't think this as solution.

But I think what you have explained as the solution is

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fantastic: Only the Israel working class together with their class brothers and sisters in the Middle East and throughout the world can come forward against this bloody Israel invasion. This seems only viable solution to this problem.

Kumara, a non-academic worker in the medical faculty, said: "It is very clear the US and NATO powers are using Ukraine as a proxy to attack Russia. This is colonialism as we saw during last two world wars. However, as you explained, this war is no longer a proxy war as the US and NATO powers are openly talking about sending ground forces to Ukraine. The US and European powers have already sent sophisticated weapons to Ukraine and this is a deliberate attempt to provoke Russia.

"Imperialists countries do not care about losing millions of human beings in a global war. The danger of a nuclear World War III is increasingly looming in the eyes of the world's population. While some people keep saying that the ongoing war is happening thousands of miles away from this country, people in this country have already suffered from its impact with increasing fuel and wheat flour prices and falling tea exports to Russia and Ukraine. However, the biggest threat is the eruption of a nuclear war that will not spare this tiny island.

"In regard to the ongoing Israel attack on Gaza: I totally denounce the bloody war crimes carried out by Israel on Palestinian people while we can't justify the killing of Israeli people at the hands of Hamas. However, what led Hamas to carry out this attack is very much bound up with Israel's decades-long bloody repression in Gaza.

"Actually, before I talked with you, I did not have any idea that there is a way to stop this war and it is only the working people can lead a powerful anti-war movement. That is right. The working class has such tremendous power. Actually, if the American working class stopped work that would have major impact on the war. Unfortunately, most workers do not know their power. We should teach them of this."

Kanishka, a graduate at the University of Sri Jayawardenapura, spoke to the IYSSE campaigners on October 5.

"In the Ukraine war hundreds of thousands of soldiers have died. Despite this catastrophe, the US wants to continue and escalate this war, which means drawing more and more countries, possibly, into this conflict. The provocations against China could transform it into a wider war at any moment. We cannot think this war will be de-escalated on its own. We need to consciously build a global working class movement to oppose the war. In that regard, I think this meeting is very important and I am looking forward to it."

In the campaign at Jaffna University, in the war-ravaged north of Sri Lanka, **Dimuthu**, a science student, opposed the military agreements Colombo governments have entered with the US.

"If the US forces are allowed to use our country as a military base, I think it will have far reaching implications when it comes to democratic and social rights considering their overseas notorious record and government's complicity with the IMF program.

"Not only the military agreements of which Sri Lanka is a part, we should oppose any sort of military agreement. They only serve the ruling elite's interest. See the war in Ukraine. We can support neither the US-NATO side or Putin's regime.

"Students are not coming forward because they are intimidated by the student union which conspires with Tamil nationalistic parties for their political agenda behind closed doors and the administration. No free speech here. However, I think the war preparations must be opposed."

A Tamil speaking student said: "Imperialist powers are waging this war to exploit world resources and to divide them among themselves. The same is being done here through the IMF policies. Everything is going to be privatised and the resources in our country will be handed over to international investors.

"We must oppose this war and the IMF program. In this situation, as a student, I don't believe in any parliamentary political parties. All parties are working for their own benefit. Presently, these Tamil political parties particularly are working as the stooges of the imperialist war drive."

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