

IYSSE Colombo anti-war meeting demands halt to Israeli war on Gaza

Our reporters

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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka held a public meeting last Thursday at the Colombo Public Library Auditorium titled “Ukraine war and how to stop it.”

The meeting focused on the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Palestinian people in Gaza. The speakers explained the origins and implications of these wars and the political strategy of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) to build an international anti-war movement of the working class based on socialism.

Over 50 youth, including university students and workers, attended the event. The meeting was preceded by campaigns by IYSSE teams at Colombo, Kelaniya, Moratuwa and Jayawardanepura universities and several workplaces in Colombo.

The campaigners distributed Sinhala and Tamil copies of the ICFI statement “Down with Netanyahu’s government! Stop the imperialist-backed Zionist onslaught against Gaza!” and other *World Socialist Web Site* articles.

During the campaigns, students and workers raised questions instilled by the media which accuses the Hamas organisation and Russian President Putin of initiating the attacks. But they showed keen interest in clarifying the issues, expressed their outrage against Israel and its imperialist backers, and strong sympathy for the oppressed Palestinians.

The meeting was chaired by the IYSSE convener Kapila Fernando and addressed by another IYSSE speaker, Sakuntha Hirimuthugoda. Socialist Equality Party (SEP) General Secretary Deepal Jayasekera delivered a special report on Israel’s Gaza war.

Fernando explained that the US and other imperialist powers had launched a war against Russia in Ukraine, and Washington was fully supporting the Israeli war on the Palestinian people in Gaza.

“America is using the Israel onslaught to prepare for a war against Iran by sending two huge warships capable of carrying aircraft and thousands of marines to the Middle East. The US is advancing its war plans against China as its main target in seeking global hegemony,” Fernando said.

“In this situation, the initiative taken by the ICFI to build an

anti-war movement of workers and youth based on international socialism is an urgent task. The IYSSE is in the forefront in the fight for this task internationally.”

Hirimuthugoda focused his speech on the US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine against Russia, saying Washington’s backing of Israel was a continuation of its war aims for global dominance.

“You may remember what the US-NATO powers said when they intervened in the war in Ukraine. These powers said they are defending ‘democracy’ and the ‘sovereignty’ of Ukraine. The past 18 months of the war has shattered this lie.”

Hirimuthugoda said hundreds of thousands of soldiers had died in both Ukraine and Russia, with more than 300,000 on the side of Kiev. More than a million had become refugees and immeasurable damage had been inflicted to infrastructure and properties in Ukraine. “Whatever the disaster, Washington wants the war continued, showing its aim is to subjugate Russia.”

The speaker countered the US claim that the Russian invasion of Ukraine was an “unprovoked war.” “Wars result from long-term processes,” he said. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the US had led wars in various parts of the world for its domination. NATO had intensified its military encirclement of Russia rapidly since 1991.

Hirimuthugoda explained that Washington had instigated regime change in Kiev to oust the pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich in 2014 and helped a fascist-backed puppet regime to come to power in preparation for war against Russia. This had pushed Putin to invade Ukraine, falling into the US-laid trap.

“We oppose the reactionary invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime. However, this war was provoked by NATO. Its strategic aim is to colonise Russia and grab its vast natural resources. The US’s ultimate target is to take on China. Washington’s reckless drive entails war between nuclear-armed nations, posing the threat of a global conflagration with catastrophic consequences for mankind.”

Jayasekera’s speech focused on Israel’s genocidal war in Gaza. He said the SEP, along with the ICFI, its other sections and the IYSSE, strongly denounces the Israeli war and demands its immediate cessation. At the same time, the SEP condemns the US and other imperialist powers for their active

support for this war. “The imperialist powers, including the US, while involving themselves in a war against Russia in Ukraine, have collaborated in a historical crime against Palestinians in Gaza.”

Jayasekera pointed out that millions of workers and youth around the world had risen in protests against Israel’s war, defying the intimidation and false propaganda carried out by the US, European powers and their pliant media. “These protests need to be armed with a socialist program and perspective. They must be based on an understanding of the broader context in which the Gaza war has emerged and particularly on the lessons of history,” he said.

The speaker denounced the attempt by politicians in the imperialist countries and their docile media to invoke the Holocaust and “anti-Semitism” to justify the genocidal war of the Netanyahu regime and criminalise Palestinian resistance to Israel’s occupation as “utterly cynical and criminal and also a distortion of history.”

“The Palestinian people had not and have not any relationship with the anti-Semitic policies of Hitler’s fascist regime in Germany and its Holocaust. Opposition to the Netanyahu regime is not opposing the Jewish people as a whole... Indeed, the criminal policies of Hitler’s Nazi regime in Germany are followed today by the Netanyahu regime, which the imperialists are supporting.”

Jayasekera contested the attempts by the Netanyahu regime and the imperialist powers to portray Israel’s Gaza war as a response to the October 6 night attack by Hamas in Israel. He explained that the Palestinian uprising had emerged due to the decades-long brutal military repression by the Israeli regime since the formation of the Zionist state in 1948, expelling Palestinians who had lived there for generations.

He pointed out that the Trotskyist movement, the Fourth International (FI) opposed the formation of the Zionist state from the outset and Jayasekera quoted from a resolution adopted by its second congress in Paris in April 1948, which *rejected* “as utopian and reactionary the ‘Zionist solution,’ of the Jewish question” and declared “that a total renunciation of Zionism is the sine qua non condition for the merging of Jewish workers’ struggles with the social, national and liberationist struggles of the Arab toilers.”

The resolution stated “that to demand Jewish immigration into Palestine is thoroughly reactionary, just as it is reactionary to call for immigration of oppressor people into colonial countries in general. It holds that the question of immigration as well as the relations between Jews and Arabs can be decided adequately only after imperialism has been ousted by a freely elected Constituent Assembly with full rights for the Jews as a national minority.”

Jayasekera said Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe had lined up fully with Israel’s genocidal Gaza war, and quoted from their statements.

He explained that the Israeli working class and the Palestinian people depend on each other in their struggles for their basic social and democratic rights. “And similarly, the working class in Sri Lanka cannot win the struggle against the attacks on their social and democratic rights, particularly IMF austerity, and the growing danger of imperialist war, without fighting to defend the Palestinian masses against the Gaza war.”

The meeting unanimously adopted a resolution that called for a halt to the Netanyahu regime’s war on Gaza and urged workers and youth to come forward to defend the Palestinian people.

The resolution denounced the Netanyahu regime’s war, demanded a halt to the bombing of infrastructure, including hospitals, and the forceful evacuation of 1.1 million people from northern Gaza. It demanded the pulling out of Israeli forces from Gaza and other places. The resolution called on the international working class, at ports, airports and other places, to stop the transport of military supplies to Israel, and for a struggle for the building of a united socialist state so that all Jews, Palestinians and the Arab masses can live together.

During the question and answer session, a youth asked if the SEP called for the unity of Jews, Palestinians and the Arab masses, and why it did not accept a separate state for Palestinians under a two-state policy.

Jayasekera explained that the very experience of the establishment of Israel itself had shown that forming separate states based on religion and ethnicity could not solve any of the problems democratically and rather would lead to disastrous consequences.

The state of Israel had been established under a two-state policy with the intervention of the UN by forcing Palestinians from their own land and herding them into a separate land, while settling Jews in the parts of Palestine designated as Israel. Jayasekera pointed out that people from different nationalities could be voluntarily unified, guaranteeing their democratic rights within a united socialist state, as a part of a broader struggle for socialism in the Middle East and internationally. This is what the ICFI advocates based on the experience of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics established in 1922.



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