

Sri Lanka: Jaffna workers and youth demand a halt to Israel's genocidal war in Gaza

Our correspondents
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Socialist Equality (IYSSE) campaigned last week near the Central Bus Stand in Jaffna, the capital of northern Sri Lanka, to protest Israel's genocidal war against the Palestinians in Gaza.

Campaigners carried placards declaring, "Stop Israel's Attack on Gaza!" "Workers of the World Unite to Protect the People of Gaza!" and "For a united movement by American, European, Israeli, Palestinian workers and youth against imperialist war and capitalism!"

SEP/IYSSE members distributed hundreds of copies of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) statement "Down with Netanyahu's government! Stop the imperialist-backed Zionist onslaught against Gaza!" and other material from the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The campaign provoked intense discussion with workers and youth about why the Palestinian uprising in Gaza had erupted and why the US and European imperialist powers are backing Israel's ethnic-cleansing war.

Starting in July 1983, the Tamil masses in the north and east of Sri Lanka were subjected to a bloody 26-year communal war by consecutive Colombo governments against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The war ended in May 2009, following the killing of tens of thousands of Tamil civilians in the final months of the conflict.

The Tamil bourgeois parties, however, were virtually silent during the first days of the Israeli attack on Gaza. As mass anger has grown, their spokespeople have made tepid and mealy-mouthed criticisms of Israel's actions. These organisations are hostile to any fight against the genocide in Gaza, because they are oriented

to the imperialist entities that are overseeing it, including the US and the United Nations.

Jaffna University student G. Kasinthan told SEP/IYSSE members: "I oppose and condemn Israel's attack on Gaza. America and the European countries are supporting these attacks by Israel. The US has been waging these sorts of barbaric wars to bring the entire world under its control and is doing this by supporting its proxy nations to wage war. The US has previously intervened in various countries to loot their resources. Iraq was invaded to grab its oil resources.

"Israel is occupying Palestine itself; its occupation is illegal. It is unacceptable for any country to support Israel's attacks, but these countries seem to enjoy watching people die. When these countries are engaged in war, there's the real possibility of a nuclear third world war. This must be stopped."

R. Vethavalli, a former secretary of the Jaffna District Co-operative development board, said: "Israel's war on Palestine has been going on for a long time. Of course, this is a war waged in its interests with the support of the United States, which has waged wars in many countries in the world.

"In Palestine, the killing of children and civilians must stop immediately. For that, Israel's barbaric war on Gaza must be ended. People all over the world should intervene and oppose the war. This is why I support the anti-war campaign that you are carrying out."

Sports officer A. Justine said: "Wars must be stopped immediately wherever they occur in the world. I strongly condemn Israel's murderous war on Gaza. No food, no medicine, no drinking water; Israel's bloody activity directed against millions of people in Gaza should not be allowed.

"Fourteen years ago, people living in the north and

east of Sri Lanka experienced the same sort of deadly war situation which the Palestinian people in Gaza now face. Because we know about the horrors of war, we must now come forward to defend the people of Gaza.”

S. Balasingham said: “The people of Gaza must be defended unconditionally. Their democratic rights must be protected. The positions of the United Nations regarding this brutal war are just ridiculous. When our people were being killed during the final days of war in Sri Lanka, the UN did nothing to defend us.”

A Ceylon Transport Board (CTB) conductor declared: “I must say that the US is behind all crimes and tragedies in every country. All the countries, including India and Sri Lanka, are backing Israel’s war against Gaza. They are all frauds like the US. The media is spreading all the lies of the ruling class that Hamas are ‘terrorists.’ I don’t consider them terrorists; they are victims, and have been oppressed for many years. They need to be freed.”

Referring to the bloody atrocities unleashed by the Sri Lankan military against the Tamil people during Colombo’s war against the LTTE, he added: “Our people did not get any justice by appealing to these criminal governments, and the word criminal can be used for the Tamil nationalist parties. They all are frauds. Their call for the ‘international community’ to solve our problems is nothing but cheating us. I never believe these Tamil parties.

“I support the organisation of a movement to stop this war, but it will be difficult because of the opposition of capitalist governments. If genuine workers raised demands in their workplaces, they would face repression by the administration and the trade union leaders which support the administration.”

S. Devanath, a three-wheel taxi driver, said: “I oppose Israel’s attacks on Gaza, Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian land, and the continued oppression of the people. Having experienced the last thirty years of war, we know about and feel the suffering of the people of Gaza. I welcome your party’s anti-war campaign to protect those people.”

Asked about the attitude of the Tamil nationalist parties to Israel’s war against Gaza, he said: “They will never speak out against this war because they support America and India, and America is supporting Israel. The LTTE never spoke out against the US, even during

the Sri Lankan government’s war.”



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