

Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists line up with Netanyahu genocidal's war in Gaza

Athiyan Silva**4 November 2023**

The genocidal war waged by Israel's Netanyahu regime against Palestinians in Gaza, with the support of America, Britain, France and other NATO imperialist powers, is exposing the bankruptcy of Sri Lanka's Tamil nationalists.

For nearly two weeks after the start of the fighting on October 7, these organizations were silent. Having worked closely with US imperialism for nearly 15 years, since the end of the communal war in Sri Lanka in 2009, they did not want to burn their bridges with Israel's leading backer. When they finally spoke publicly on the Israeli onslaught, they tried to combine deceitful statements of sympathy for Gaza with support for Israel.

After the October 17 Israeli bombing of the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza, Sri Lankan Tamil Federal Party (ITAK) leader M. A. Sumanthiran tweeted: "A most despicable war crime! Even if there was provocation, hospitals cannot be touched. Cannot but have a sense of *déjà vu*: 2009 SL military attack on #PTK hospital was sought to be justified by exactly the same lame and sick excuse! Attacks on civilians must stop now!"

On October 20, Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, leader of the Tamil National People's Front (TNPF), addressed the Sri Lankan Parliament to declare his support for Israel. He said: "Jews should be given their country. They should live in peace. Similarly injustice has happened to Palestine. No matter which party the Tamil people belong to, we are not against the state of Israel."

The People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), another Tamil bourgeois nationalist organization, issued a statement on the Gaza war. Echoing the denunciations of the Palestinians in the imperialist media as Islamist fanatics, the PLOTE stated: "Palestinian forces, which had progressive ideas and actions, have been caught in the whirlwind of regional competition and have now gone to the stage of co-operation with hard-line Islamic organizations."

The speeches and statements of these capitalist politicians, who work as stooges of America, Britain and the other imperialist powers, are politically fraudulent. They aim to confuse and demoralize overwhelming popular sympathy for the Palestinians and outrage at the genocidal policy of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), which is mounting across Sri Lanka and all of Asia.

Workers, youth and students must reject the Tamil nationalists' bankrupt statements, condemn the genocidal IDF war, and struggle in support of the Palestinian people.

Sri Lankan workers have bitter and bloody experience with what is taking place in Gaza today. The Sri Lankan capitalist regime's communal war on the Tamil people ended in 2009, with the systematic mass slaughter of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fighters and Tamil civilians trapped with them in a narrow pocket surrounded by the Sri Lankan army. At least 40,000 people were killed and 250,000 placed in internment camps.

The Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists refuse to condemn genocide against the Palestinians for the same reason they have turned their back on the victims of the slaughter of the LTTE. Oriented to the capitalist nation-state system, they reacted to the LTTE's defeat in 2009 by rushing to find positions of privilege in the Sri Lankan capitalist state machine and embraced imperialism against the working class. Working with Washington, London and the Hindu-supremacist Indian regime, they serve as leading defenders of US imperialist interests against China in the Indian Ocean region.

The hypocrisy of Sumanthiran's criticism of the bombing of Al-Ahli Arab Hospital lies in this: he bemoans the war crime but holds friendly meetings with the war criminals.

Just days before shedding his crocodile tears over the fate of hundreds of innocent victims of this horrific

bombing, Sumanthiran boasted publicly on X/Twitter of his friendly discussions with representatives of US imperialism in Sri Lanka. He wrote, “Good meeting with US Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia Afrin Akhtar in Colombo today.”

The other Tamil nationalist groups all play a similar role. PLOTE leader T. Siddharthan, leading ITAK member Sivagnanam Sreedharan, and Tamil People's National Alliance (TPNA) party leader C.V. Wigneswaran all met Britain's Indo-Pacific Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan and British Ambassador to Sri Lanka Andrew Patrick in Jaffna on October 10. At this meeting, “they shared their perspectives on key Tamil concerns and we discussed expectations and opportunities for progress,” British Ambassador Andrew Patrick tweeted.

Imperialism is plunging the world into a third world war, waging war on Russia in Ukraine and threatening to escalate the NATO proxy war with Russia and Iran in Syria into a global conflict for the domination of Eurasia targeting China. In this war, the Sri Lankan Tamil bourgeois nationalists defend their capitalist interests through alliances with imperialism against the oppressed and in particular against the working class.

On February 1, 2023, US Under Secretary for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland visited Sri Lanka and met leaders of all the major Tamil and Muslim nationalist parties in Sri Lanka. Sumanthiran, Ponnambalam, Tamil Progressive Alliance leader Mano Ganesan, Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader Rauff Hakeem, All-Ceylon People's Congress leader Rishad Bathudeen and PLOTE leader T. Siddharthan were all present. Nuland sought to deepen their integration into the US-India strategic alliance against China.

A key mastermind behind the war against Russia in Ukraine, Nuland is notorious for aggressively pursuing Washington's global war agenda. She was instrumental in the 2014 coup of President Viktor Yanukovych's pro-Russian Ukrainian government with neo-fascist forces such as Svoboda. After a military coup overthrew the pro-NATO regime of Mohammed Bazoum in Niger on July 26, she traveled to Niamey on August 7 to hold talks with junta leaders and negotiate a continuing US military presence at the massive air base in Agadez, Niger.

Just this past year, top US officials made six visits to Sri Lanka, including two by Nuland. These visits show that Sri Lanka is key to US imperialism's global war strategy in the Indo-Pacific region. This alliance is also at the heart of the politics of Tamil nationalism.

As a result, the Jaffna University Tamil-nationalist think tanks and separatist pro-LTTE groups in the diaspora have so far remained silent on the genocidal war on Gaza. The US-based Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam, the Global Tamil Forum, the British Tamil Forum and the Tamil Forums in France, Germany, Canada, and Australia have not opened their mouths on Israel's war of genocide against the Palestinian people.

The support of Washington and the other NATO imperialist powers for genocide utterly exposes their role, as well. In 2009, as the last LTTE fighters were surrounded by the Sri Lankan army, they held protests in the imperialist countries, holding up “Help Us” banners and pictures of then-US president Barack Obama, UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Since then, they have sought to posture as friends of the Tamil people by lobbying the major powers to investigate Sri Lankan war crimes at the United Nations.

The NATO-backed genocide in Gaza is exposing the essential reason why the imperialist powers organized no serious investigation in the 14 years since 2009. The NATO imperialist powers did not hold Sri Lankan officials responsible for mass murder because these powers themselves support mass murder. It is the sharpest possible warning of the urgent necessity of a political break with the counterrevolutionary politics of Tamil nationalism.

A wave of mass protests against the genocide in Gaza is now unfolding around the world. The way forward for this movement is to develop support in every country for a united struggle of the working class against imperialism, genocide and war. The essential basis of such a struggle is socialist internationalism, fighting for the unity of Arab and Jewish workers in Palestine and for the unity of Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim workers in Sri Lanka.



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