

Sri Lanka: Peradeniya University lecturers and students demand ceasefire in Gaza

Our reporters

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About two hundred protesters, including students and academics, demonstrated at midday outside the Peradeniya University Arts Theatre in Kandy, Sri Lanka, on November 8 to protest Israel's barbaric assault on Palestinians in Gaza. Peradeniya University is Sri Lanka's largest university with over 2,600 academic and administrative staff and more than 11,000 students.

The demonstration, which was organised by the "Peradeniya University Community" and titled "Declare ceasefire" and "Stop violence in the Gaza Strip," was originally planned as a silent protest.

Participants joining the event, however, began shouting slogans, including "Condemn genocide in Gaza! Stop killing children and innocent people! Free Palestine!" Many carried placards such as: "USA Hands off Palestine!" "All United for Free Palestine!" "We feel the pain of the Palestinian Children!" "Stop the war immediately!" and "Killings 10,022/ Children! 4,104/ Women 2,641/ Wounded 25,408!"

Members of the International Youth and Student for Social Equality joined the demonstration. Their main banner was titled "Stop Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza" with members carrying placards such as "Build a united socialist state of the Jewish and Arab workers!" "Forward to a World Federation of Socialist States!" "Block the transport of weapons to Israel!" and "Reject the reactionary the two-state solution!"

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe was among the first government leaders internationally who condemned the October 7 Palestinian uprising against Israel's 75-year repression and sided with the Netanyahu regime. The opposition Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and Samagi Jana Balawegaya cynically claim that they cannot choose between Hamas and the

Zionist regime, effectively taking the side of Israel. The Tamil nationalist parties have taken the same position.

IYSSE Sri Lanka convener Kapila Fernando addressed gathered media at the rally. He noted that the *World Socialist Web Site* and Socialist Equality Parties internationally have stressed that the genocide will not be attended through appeals to the Israeli, US or other governments.

The US has its own strategic agenda, dispatching aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines to the Middle East and threatening to attack Iran. These intrigues, and the genocide itself, are part of an eruption imperialist militarism, threatening a global nuclear conflagration. They go hand in hand with US involvement in the Ukraine war against Russia and preparations for conflict China, Fernando said. Washington and the other NATO powers are directly supporting Israel, which has already killed over 10,000 Palestinians, mostly children and women, he added.

"We insist that it is the international working class, including port workers and others who produce and transport weapons to Israel, that must take the leading role against this war. Young people, including students, must develop this campaign."

Fernando explained that the IYSSE throughout the world was fighting to build a global anti-war movement of workers and youth to stop the imperialist drive towards a third world war.

WSWS reporters spoke to some of the protesting students.

Sandali, an Arts Faculty student, said: "I totally oppose Israel's genocidal attacks on innocent Palestinians. I watched some YouTube and other social media videos from Gaza and was shocked by the horrible humanitarian disaster now unfolding there. I

learnt that over 4,000 children, who have no idea of the conflict or anything about world politics, were brutally killed by the Israel military. How can the modern world bear such crimes? I don't know how anybody can justify it.

"The main problem is that none of the mainstream media is telling the real truth about this situation. I never heard anything from them about what you [the WSW] have just explained.

"I've heard some people say that the war is happening thousands of miles away and has no impact on us. I don't buy that claim because Sri Lanka was already impacted by the US and NATO war in Ukraine. The prices of oil and wheat flour have massively increased and income from tourism has greatly fallen because of that war. We've already been affected by that war.

"I firmly believe that everybody, particularly young people, should learn about and thoroughly understand this war and take a stand against it."

Ashan, a science faculty student, said: "War is always devastating for oppressed people—they are the most affected by it—and that's exactly what we see in Israel's criminal war against the Palestinian people.

"I've seen horrible scenes from the Gaza Strip, which has been reduced to rubble by Israel's military attacks. The worst thing is that hospitals and refugee camps are being deliberately targeted even though millions of people across the world have been demanding a ceasefire.

"It seems that Israel is not going to pay any heed to anti-war protesters. I'm sure that these vicious attacks are producing enormous anger and frustration within the world's population.

"I learnt that Israel has dropped 18,000 tons of bombs on Gaza, which is 1.5 times more than the atom bomb the US dropped on Hiroshima. Why is this? The motivations for such a disastrous war against an oppressed population are clear. Israel is not just carrying out a war against Hamas but against the more than two million people in Gaza. How can anyone justify this sort of disaster?"



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