

Sri Lankan SEP/IYSSE meeting calls on working class to intervene to stop Israel's genocide in Gaza

Our reporters

25 November 2023

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka held a powerful public meeting last Tuesday at the Colombo Public Library Auditorium titled “Stop Israeli genocidal war on the Palestinian people in Gaza.”

The Colombo meeting is a part of a series of meetings in Sri Lanka, as well as around the world by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), to build an international anti-war movement of the working class based on socialist policies. Prior to the Colombo meeting, SEP/IYSSE held two meetings—on November 15 in Jaffna in the north and on November 19 in Galle in the south—and also held a powerful protest outside the Colombo Fort Railway Station on November 9, on the same theme.

Over 50 youth, including students and workers, attended the Colombo meeting. It was preceded by SEP/IYSSE campaigns in residential areas in Colombo, at universities such as Colombo, Moratuwa and Jayawardenepura and workplaces in the area. The campaigners distributed Sinhala and Tamil copies of WSWs articles on the Gaza war, including one titled “Israel's genocide in Gaza and the resurgence of imperialist barbarism.”

The meeting was held amid the intensification of the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza and the West Bank, with the death toll at over 14,000 people, including over 5,000 children, and thousands of women and elderly.

The meeting was chaired by SEP Political Committee member W.A Sunil and the main speech was delivered by SEP General Secretary Deepal Jayasekera. SEP Political Committee member M. Thevarajah translated the speeches into Tamil.

Sunil emphasized the backing of the imperialist powers for Israel. He said the brutal genocide that started on October 7 by the US-NATO backed Israeli regime has

now gone on for more than six weeks. “Hospitals, refugee camps, schools, infrastructure have become the targets of Israeli attacks; people have no food, water and electricity.”

He then explained the background for the Hamas attack in Israel, which is being used by Israel and its imperialist backers for the Netanyahu government's genocidal war in Gaza: “On October 7, the Hamas-launched-attack expressed outrage against decades of brutal oppression by the Zionist Israeli regime, which was established in 1948.” He added Israel used this “attack as a pretext to implement a long-planned genocidal war aiming to wipe out all Palestinians from Gaza.”

Pointing to Netanyahu's regime's next step, he added: “Israel's next goal is to extend the genocidal campaign to the West Bank. Already over a hundred Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank by the Israeli army and fascist right-wing Jewish settlers who have forcibly occupied there [on Palestinians land].”

Referring to Israel military's repeated bombings on hospitals in Gaza, including Al Shifa hospital, Jayasekera commented: “Attacking hospitals is not permissible under any circumstances according to Geneva Conventions—even military hospitals. It is clearly a war crime.”

He expressed the SEP's solidarity with the “millions of workers and young people around the world who have joined protests against Israel's war and in support of the Palestinian people.” He condemned the imperialist powers and their pliant media that have falsely branded protesters as “antisemitic” to intimidate them and have sought to criminalise their protests.

Jayasekera called for an expansion of global protests against the Gaza war with the widest possible participation. “We make a special call for the working

class internationally, the social force capable of stopping this war and growing imperialist war drive, to independently intervene to take the lead in the struggle against war.”

He explained that the Indian government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Sri Lankan government of President Ranil Wickremesinghe have both lined up with their imperialist masters in supporting Israel’s genocidal war.

Jayasekera also exposed the role of the opposition Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) in Sri Lanka in lining up with Israel and the imperialist powers. He cited the comments of JVP general secretary Tilvin Silva who declared at a press conference that “killings targeting civilians by both sides should be condemned.... The world community must pressurise both sides to stop these killings. You can’t take one side.”

Jayasekera pointed out: “Here the JVP is equating Israel’s genocidal war and the Palestinian uprising. By that they can’t take one side, the JVP is effectively lining up with Israel.” He explained that the pseudo-left Frontline Socialist Party (FSP) similarly equated Israel’s war and Palestinian resistance by “condemning the killings of Israeli, Palestinian civilians.”

Jayasekera also rejected the so-called two-state solution proposed by various organisations, including the JVP and the FSP. He explained: “This scheme of having a Zionist Israeli state alongside with a separate Palestinian statelet has already led to bloody consequences for Palestinians as the past 75 years has shown. It has also not brought anything good for Jewish workers.

“The interests of both Arab workers and Jewish workers can only be safeguarded by overthrowing the existing state of Israel and replacing it with a united socialist state that fully protects the democratic and social rights of Jewish and Arab workers as part of the fight for socialism throughout the Middle East and internationally.”

Attendees spoke to the WSWs reporters after the meeting.

A teacher from Borella, a Colombo suburb, said: “I am completely against the war of extermination. Innocent people, including small children, women are being killed. I believe that people around the world should stop dispatching weapons to Israel. As you have explained, I am in favor of building an anti-war mass movement. That is why I joined the meeting.”

A youth who works for a website commented: “I do not believe the opinion that the present crisis is due to Hamas, because they [Palestinians] have been suppressed for a

long time.” He also rejected media claims that Israel knew nothing about the Hamas attack inside Israel, saying “Israel cannot be attacked without their knowledge.”

Referring to the danger of the conflict expanding beyond Gaza, he said: “Israel does not stop it, and even the US does not do it,” noting that the US had dispatched its military including warships to the Middle East.

A mother and daughter, who wished to remain anonymous, spoke to SEP members during a campaign for the Galle meeting on November 19. The mother was very concerned at the rising death toll in Gaza, particularly of children.

“It is pathetic. The people don’t even have medicine. It is very inhumane. When we turn on the TV, we see these scenes and feel very upset. No-one should be killed; we must not harass each other. The UN is pretending to do something without taking any action. The production of weapons must be stopped, and it is the big countries that produce these.”

Her daughter, an Advanced Level student, explained the motives for the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine: “Russia has a lot of resources such as oil, rare earths.” She warned that Israel’s aggression in Gaza, backed by the US, “will involve countries such as Iraq, and many other countries ultimately developing towards a third world war.”

On growing protests against the Gaza genocide, she said: “In many countries including in Britain, Muslim people and others have protested,” adding that to stop the war “other countries must impose sanctions against Israel.” When SEP members explained that workers must intervene to stop the war, she replied “Yes, those people involved in manufacturing of [weapons] must stop production.”



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