

Growing support for Sri Lankan SEP campaign against pro-government thug attack on its members

Our reporters

7 December 2023

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka is receiving strong support from workers, youth and their organisations around world for its campaign against a violent attack, carried out by thugs connected to the Sri Lankan government, on two SEP members.

The assaults occurred at a party campaign at the rear gate of Moratuwa University on November 30. Dehin Wasantha and Lakshman Fernando were violently attacked by Indika Perera and Suranga Piyawardena, the president and secretary of the university branch of the Podujana Pragathishile Sevaka Sangamaya (PPSS), which is affiliated to the ruling Sri Lankan Podujana Peramuna (SLPP).

The SEP issued a statement urging “workers, youth and students in Sri Lanka and internationally to defend our party’s democratic rights to freely engage in its political activities.” We are publishing below some of the protest notes we have received so far in response to this call.

The Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists from the former Soviet Union:

Dear comrades from Sri Lanka,

The Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL) from the former Soviet Union stands in solidarity against the attack on the democratic rights and physical health of your members. The attack by two SLPP thugs shows the pathetic state of the ruling Wickremesinghe regime which resorts to physical violence to stop the cultivation of socialist consciousness among workers and youth.

The attackers should be held accountable to the full extent of the law. However, the court will definitely not give a fair verdict without working-class pressure. This raises pressing questions about the safety of our comrades around the world. We must seek support in the working class to be able to defend ourselves against such brazen attacks on the democratic rights and health of our comrades.

Just as the working class needs a firm and principled leadership that defends its independent interests, so the leadership needs the support of the working class to be able to overcome the ideological and physical pressure of the bourgeoisie. The history of the Trotskyist movement has clearly

shown that, thanks to the defense of the workers and the attentiveness of the leadership, the movement was able to preserve its cadres for the new crisis of capitalism.

The injuries suffered by comrades Dehin Wasantha and Lakshman Fernando should not be underestimated. We wish a speedy recovery to the injured comrades. In these times when governments and their hand-picked gangsters come up with such brazen and dangerous attacks, we must remain vigilant and be prepared for further blows from the capitalist gangsters.

With a Trotskyist greeting,
Member of the YGBL Central Committee
Andrei Ritsky

Harvey Lichtman, an educator from New York in the US:

As an educator of twenty-four years for the New York City school system, I condemn the physical attack of President Inkida Perera and Secretary Suranga Piyawardena of the Podujana Pragathishile Sevaka Sangamaya (Peoples Progressive Employees Union) branch in Moratuwa University, Sri Lanka, on two members of the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka). In light of the mass protests against Israel's genocide in Gaza, which include many employees in education and students, the sense that democratic and social rights are a matter of international concern also calls for myself, and workers internationally, to oppose the anti-democratic actions of thugs who even discredit the name of their organization as it is the opposite of progressive and works against uniting the employees and the working people.

This incident involved an attempt to stop the leafleting for a meeting for a socialist comrade from America to speak on the centenary of Trotskyism, the movement that embodies the modern struggle for socialist internationalism. This shows the political motivation involved because the SEP internationally opposes the oppressive exploitation of the working class in all countries, and particularly in Sri Lanka, of the International Monetary Fund acting on behalf of the wealthy capitalist class and imperialism. This attack is an example of how the union bureaucracies side with the government of President Wickremesinghe to continue the policies of former President Rajapakse to implement the IMF-dictated austerity program,

which can only be carried out through the use of violent goons against the mass opposition of the workers of Sri Lanka. Workers like myself across the world are concerned by such attacks on the political rights of the SEP, as they are for the lives and rights of the Palestinian people, because it is becoming clear that the growing violence and war are rooted in the global crisis of capitalism and threatens the working class and humanity everywhere.

Having caused two respected SEP members who campaign in the interests of university employees and students to require hospital care, government failure to prosecute the offenders on behalf of not only the SEP but also the political rights of the working class to hear the SEP, and all political parties, would only be another demonstration that the rights of the working class are something for which they must fight. Workers in Sri Lanka, and in my own country of the United States, should learn the program of the SEP and join the fight for that program of social equality internationally.

Sincerely and with fraternal regards,
Harvey Lichtman

Jacob Josefson:

I'm opposed to all attacks by the capitalist governments & their fascist goons against any member of the SEP & the entire international working class.

Victory to the SEP, WSWs.ORG, ICFI, IYSSE.

Shannon Jones, World Socialist Web Site reporter in the US:

I strongly protest the thuggish attack on supporters of the Socialist Equality Party in Sri Lanka by Indika Perera and Suranga Piyawardena, officers of the Peoples Progressive Employees Union branch in Moratuwa University on November 30. Dehin Wasantha, a non-academic employee at Moratuwa University for more than 25 years, received serious injuries in the unprovoked assault and had to be hospitalized. SEP member Lakshman Fernando also received injuries.

This barbaric behavior by the two PPSS officials must be condemned by all workers and defenders of democratic rights in the strongest possible terms. The SEP is well known in Sri Lanka as an intransigent defender of the rights of workers, students, intellectuals and the rural poor. The attempt to intimidate and silence the SEP is an attack on the entire working class and cannot be allowed to succeed.

I call for the prosecution of those involved in this attack and the naming of those who authorized it and the widest exposure.

Workers in the USA are well aware of the thuggish behavior of the corrupt official trade unions whose loyalty is to the employers and the state, not workers.

I stand in solidarity.

Shannon Jones
SEP (US)

Kemal Ülker from Turkey:

I am writing to convey my deep dismay and outrage over the recent brutal attack on members of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) at Moratuwa University.

I am appalled by the incident involving Indika Perera and Suranga Piyawardena, leaders of the Podujana Pragathishili Sevaka Sangamaya (PPSS), who viciously attacked SEP members Dehin Wasantha and Lakshman Fernando.

I strongly demand a comprehensive and impartial investigation into this incident to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice under the full extent of the law. The right to free expression and peaceful assembly is essential to any democratic society, and any attempt to infringe these rights must be strongly resisted.

Kemal Ülker
(Turkey)

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Letters of protest should be sent to the following addresses (with copies to the SEP's email address: wswscmb@sltnet.lk)

- Senior Professor N.D. Gunwaedena, Vice Chancellor, University of Moratuwa

Email: vc@uom.lk or ndg@uom.lk

- Attorney General, Mr. Sanjay Rajaratnam

Email: agdurgentmotions@gmail.com

We also call on workers and youth in Sri Lanka to attend our important public meetings addressed by comrade Joseph Kishore, the US SEP national secretary, in Peradeniya, on December 7 at 3 p.m. at Hall no. 86, Political Science Department in the University of Peradeniya and in Colombo, on December 10 at 3 p.m. at New Town Hall.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact