

# University of Michigan IYSSE protests attack by pro-government thugs on Sri Lankan SEP members

International Youth and Students for Social Equality at U-M  
14 January 2024

*We are publishing here a letter being sent by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at the University of Michigan condemning the violent attack on two members of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka by pro-government thugs. Dehin Wasantha is a veteran university worker who is a well known fighter for workers' rights and socialism, and Lakshman Fernando is a full-time SEP party worker.*

*Fernando and Wasantha were physically assaulted at the University of Moratuwa on November 30, 2023 by Indika Perera and Suranga Piyawardena—the president and secretary of the Moratuwa university branch of Podujana Pragathishili Sevaka Sangamaya (PPSS). The PPSS is a trade union affiliated with the ruling Sri Lankan Podujana Peramuna party.*

*The two SEP members were campaigning with other party members near the rear gate of the university for SEP public meetings on the Centenary of Trotskyism addressed by Joseph Kishore, national secretary of the SEP (US). They were attacked with long wooden clubs, causing serious injuries.*

*Wasantha suffered two fractured fingers and had to take nearly a month's medical leave. Lakshman was badly bruised and left with a neck injury.*

*The SEP (Sri Lanka) and its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) around the world are carrying out a campaign in defense of Fernando and Wasantha and the SEP's democratic right to conduct political campaigns.*

*The U-M IYSSE has joined workers, students and academics internationally who have sent protest letters to the Sri Lankan attorney general and the vice chancellor of the University of Moratuwa demanding*

*the maximum legal action against the perpetrators.*

*The legal case on the violent assault was presented to a judge at the Moratuwa Magistrate Court on January 8. The magistrate ordered the case to be referred to a mandatory Mediation Board. The case will be recalled to court on May 20.*

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The IYSSE at the University of Michigan strongly denounces the attacks against SEP members Lakshman Fernando and Dehin Wasantha which took place outside the Moratuwa University.

We support Joseph Kishore and the SEP in their efforts to raise workers' and students' consciousness on the history of Trotskyism and the urgent need for a movement that unifies the international working class.

As has been shown at universities worldwide, including the cancellation of a pro-Palestine vote on our own Michigan campus, the ruling class has no interest in engaging in a reasonable and respectful discussion, demonstrating the political and moral bankruptcy of its politics. Instead, bureaucratic thugs and agents of state violence suppress dissent against their pro-war, pro-capitalist agenda across the globe, using physical repression or ideological intimidation.

These acts of violence show that the ruling class apparatus cannot be reasoned with and reformed. Instead, students and workers around the globe must unify into a cohesive movement to stop the drive towards more war and destruction.

The union thugs who attacked comrades Fernando and Wasantha have a material stake in preventing the increased consciousness of the student body and working class because a society organized under the rank and file would erase their privileged managerial

position in the production mechanism, a position they are willing to defend at all costs.

By turning to the working class worldwide, the IYSSE and the SEP will continue the struggle to encourage a general strike and empowerment of the rank and file, as this is the only way to stop the imminent threat of world war.

The contradictions of global capitalism are becoming ever clearer and the desperation of the ruling class is evident in its violent outbursts, presenting our movement with a unique opportunity. These outbursts demonstrate that the ruling class has resorted to barbarism as a last resort to suppress growing agitation amongst workers. This illuminates the political opportunity of the present global situation and the urgency with which the socialist international, the International Committee of the Fourth International, must act to organize workers to overcome capitalism.

The IYSSE urges workers and youth to fight for socialism and against the repression of political activity in all forms.

Sincerely,

The IYSSE at the University of Michigan

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The SEP is calling on all those who are concerned to defend democratic rights of freedom of expression to register their opposition by sending protest letters to the following addresses of relevant authorities with copies to the SEP ([wswscmb@sltnet.lk](mailto:wswscmb@sltnet.lk)).

Senior Professor N.D. Gunawardena, Vice Chancellor, University of Moratuwa  
Email: [vc@uom.lk](mailto:vc@uom.lk) or [ndg@uom.lk](mailto:ndg@uom.lk)

Attorney General, Mr. Sanjay Rajaratnam  
Email: [agdurgentmotions@gmail.com](mailto:agdurgentmotions@gmail.com)



To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**