

Sri Lankan SEP gains support for campaign against pro-government thuggery

Our reporters
27 February 2024

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka is gaining support from workers, youth and academics throughout the world for its campaign against pro-government thugs' violent attack on its members at Moratuwa University.

Dehin Wasantha and Lakshman Fernando were physically assaulted near the rear gate of the university on November 30 by Indika Perera and Suranga Piyawardena—the president and secretary of the Moratuwa university branch of Podujana Pragathishili Sevaka Sangamaya (PPSS). The trade union is affiliated to the country's ruling party—the Sri Lankan Podujana Peramuna.

Wasantha, a university non-academic worker for more than two decades, is well-known for his principled struggle for rights of his fellow workers and the working class as a whole and socialism. Fernando is a full-time party worker.

They were violently attacked with long wooden clubs causing serious injuries while 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).

Wasantha suffered two fractured fingers and had to go on medical leave for almost a month, as his fingers took a considerable period to mend. Lakshman was badly bruised and left with a neck injury.

When the case on the violent attack was brought before a judge at the Magistrate's Court in Moratuwa on January 8, the Magistrate ordered the case to be referred to a mandatory Mediation Board. The case will be recalled at the court on May 20.

As Perera and Piyawardena were not present when the Mediation Board took the case on January 20, the board decided to reconvene the case on February 3.

They were present at the board's hearing on February 3 and opted for a settlement. Wasantha categorically stated that he would not accept a settlement. Then the board asked both parties to be present at the courts on May 20.

In response to the campaign launched by the SEP and its sister parties of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) in defence of Wasantha and Fernando and the SEP's democratic rights, workers, youths, academics and their organisations around the world have sent protest letters to relevant Sri Lankan authorities condemning the attack and demanding the culprits be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

We are publishing here some protest letters sent from US and Sri Lanka.

Robert B. Livingston, San Francisco, US:

Dear Senior Professor N.D. Gunawardena, Vice Chancellor, University of Moratuwa and Attorney General Sanjay Rajaratnam,

My name is Robert B. Livingston. I live and work in San Francisco in California.

I write to you today to register my agreement with a very principled American, Will Lehman who is protesting the lawless injury of two Sri Lankan Socialist Equality Party members by union thugs.

I was shocked when I read about it at the *World Socialist Web Site*, the most read socialist news on the internet.

With Mr. Lehman, I implore you to hold the thugs, Indika Perera and Suranga Piyawardena to full account for their crimes against civil society.

I myself have encountered such evil brutes while picketing on behalf of hotel workers here in San Francisco. Some of the hotel workers were Sri Lankan immigrants here.

If only I had known at the time someone as

yourselves to complain to! I hope you do your civil duties and protect the peace of your country.

See:

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/12/13/donw-d13.html>

I hope to one day visit Sri Lanka. I adore its classical music.

Sincerely,

Robert B. Livingston
San Francisco

Lawrence Moore

To Senior Professor N.D. Gunwardena and Attorney General: Mr Sanjay Rajaratnam

I must add my voice to those protesting the attacks on Dehin Wasantha and Lakshman Fernando. It is outrageous that the thugs caused bodily harm to two men who were causing no harm to anybody. I strongly urge you to investigate and prosecute those individuals to the fullest extent of the law. This cannot be allowed to let pass.

Sincerely,

Lawrence Moore

Jeyakanthan, an engineer in Sri Lanka:

I am a reader of *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) and I was alarmed by news of the attack on SEP members (1. Dehin Wasantha 2.Lakshman Fernando) just in the perimeter of University of Moratuwa 30th November, 2023 by Indika Perera & Suranga Piyawardena president & secretary of Podujana Pragathishili Sangamaya (PPS) while they were distributing leaflets & campaigning for the meeting on the centenary of Trotskyism to be held on December 10 in Colombo new town hall.

Also I learned that it is the trade union affiliated with the ruling party of Sri Lanka. Dehin is known to me over two decades. He introduced [the] socialist web site WSWS to me. WSWS indicates both the victims are relentless fighters among workers & oppressed masses. This includes Tamil minorities also.

I believe that each & every individual has the right to express their own ideas/opinions without fear. I urge the use of the maximum power of the judiciary against Indika Perera & Suranga Piyawardena.

Thanking you

Yours sincerely,
Eng. Jeyakantan

* * * *

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).

Senior Professor N.D. Gunawardena, Vice Chancellor, University of Moratuwa

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

Attorney General, Mr. Sanjay Rajaratnam

Email: agdurgentmotions@gmail.com



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact