

The struggle against imperialist war among students and youth

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The following speech was given by Dilaxshan Mahalingam, an IYSSE member in Sri Lanka, at the International May Day 2024 Online Rally, held Saturday, May 4.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), in close collaboration with our comrades in the ICFI, is fighting to build an international mass anti-war movement of workers and youth. This movement must be based on the international working class, the only social force which is capable of stopping imperialist war and a disastrous nuclear World War III, and guided by the principles of international socialism.

Our campaign is directed at stopping Israel's genocidal war in Gaza, the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and US war preparations against China. We strongly condemn the brutal police repression unleashed by the Biden administration on student protests at universities across the US against the Gaza genocide. We call for the mobilization of the working class in the US and internationally in defense of all those protesting against the genocide.

In our struggle to mobilize youth and students against imperialist war, the IYSSE combats the political influence of various student organizations, including the Inter-University Student Federation (IUSF) and the Jaffna University Student Union (JUSU). The IUSF and the JUSU are working to block students turning to the working class in their struggle to defend basic rights, including free education, and to confine them within the reactionary bourgeois political framework.

The IUSF, which is politically controlled by the pseudo-left Frontline Socialist Party (FSP), keeps students in the dark on the Gaza genocide and the growing danger of imperialist world war. IUSF activists have violently intervened to block IYSSE

campaigns among university students.

Amid the growing opposition of students to attacks carried out by the government of President Ranil Wickremesinghe on free education, the IUSF is organizing futile protests to contain their anger and limit them to exerting pressure on the government, spreading the illusion that such moves will compel the government to change course.

Contrary to the IUSF's claims, the Wickremesinghe government's attacks on free education are part of harsh austerity measures dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in return for its \$3 billion bailout loan. Neither the Wickremesinghe government nor any other regime which may replace it following future elections can deviate from the IMF program.

The IUSF is utterly hostile to the political struggle waged by the IYSSE among students to turn them towards the working class, and our fight to build a workers-led joint political movement, rallying students against the government and for socialist policies. Free education can be defended only through such a working class-led movement to overthrow bourgeois rule and establish a government of workers and peasants, which is committed to socialist policies.

The JUSU also keeps silent on the Gaza genocide. In response to an inquiry by the WWSW, JUSU leader K. Thuvarkan said: "We do not care about international developments. We care only about our problems, Tamil people's problems."

JUSU's silence on Israel's genocide in Gaza is based on reactionary Tamil nationalism and flows from the pro-imperialist politics of the Tamil bourgeois nationalist parties, including the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), with whom they have close ties. These parties are fully lined up with the US-India military-strategic offensive against China, and plead with the

“international community,” i.e., US and western imperialist powers, to pressure Colombo for a power-sharing arrangement in which the Tamil elite can secure some privileges.

The Tamil bourgeois parties, as with all other parties of the bourgeois political establishment, are fully committed to IMF-dictated austerity measures. Under conditions of a possible presidential election to be held by the end of this year, they are contemplating which candidate they can support to secure the privileges of the Tamil elite.

C.V. Vigneshwaran, the leader of Tamil People’s Alliance, is advocating fielding a “Tamil candidate” to “express to the people and other nations Tamil political issues” and also to “bargain” with other candidates on “what they will give us.” R. Sambandan and M.A. Sumanthiran of the TNA are advocating support for a candidate from the major parties, but have not decided whom. Whether fielding a “Tamil candidate” or supporting a candidate from a major party, the calculation of various Tamil bourgeois parties is on what is the best way to secure the privileges of the Tamil elite.

Workers, youth and students must reject the reactionary politics of all those parties of the bourgeois political establishment and their pseudo-left hangers on. They need to fight for a united revolutionary movement of the working class, cutting across Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communal lines, rallying youth, students and rural poor, to overthrow bourgeois rule and establish a government of workers and peasants, which is committed to socialist policies.

The IYSSE is fighting among youth and students to mobilize them along that revolutionary path. Our call to youth and students is to join with the IYSSE to bring forward this struggle for socialism.



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