

Sri Lankan SEP/IYSSE meeting opposes imperialist war

Our reporters

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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka held an important public meeting last week.

The May 23 online event titled “Oppose imperialist war” was a part of the International Committee of the Fourth International’s (ICFI) fight for an independent international anti-war movement of workers and youth based on socialist policies. It followed the ICFI’s recent May Day rally.

As well as focusing on Israel’s escalating genocide in Gaza and the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, the meeting unanimously adopted a resolution pledging support for the ICFI’s global campaign to free the Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk.

Syrotiuk is a leading member of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), a Trotskyist organisation based in former republics of the Soviet Union, including Russia and Ukraine, and affiliated with the ICFI. He has been imprisoned since April 25 by the SBU, the Ukrainian secret police, under the bogus charges of being an operative of Russian war propaganda (see “SEP (Sri Lanka) public meeting demands immediate release of Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk”).

Last Thursday’s event, which was simultaneously translated into Tamil, was chaired by SEP Assistant Secretary Saman Gunadasa and the main report was given by SEP General Secretary Deepal Jayasekera.

In his introductory remarks, Gunadasa commented on the significance of the International Criminal Court’s arrest warrants against Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for genocidal war crimes. “That such a judgment was made,” he said, “expresses the intensity of public opinion against Israel’s genocide.”

Gunadasa added: “At the same time, the US and NATO are ratcheting up their war effort against Russia in Ukraine and war preparations against China... Protests against the genocide in Gaza globally, which must be welcomed, alone cannot stop these wars. The working class must intervene with its own independent class action. For that, the working class must be organised in rank-and-file committees independent of the union bureaucracy and the fake-left.”

SEP General Secretary Deepal Jayasekera told the meeting that the genocide in Gaza, the war in Ukraine and the US-led military preparations against China were not episodic, regional wars but the interconnected fronts of a global imperialist war drive to redivide the globe.

“The global mass movement against the Gaza genocide,” he said, “spread further when the Biden administration attempted to snuff out protests in the US universities by unleashing a brutal police crackdown on them. Since then, protests have developed all over the world, with students setting up encampments at their universities.”

Jayasekera said the slanderous branding of all those opposing the Gaza genocide as “antisemitic” was bogus. This was exposed by the fact that many of the workers and students involved in the demonstrations are Jewish. He then explained how the growing danger of a world war was shaping the political situation in Sri Lanka, India and South Asia as a whole.

“Under the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has been transformed into a frontline state of the US war drive against China... In response to ever increasing pressure from the US and India, the Wickremasinghe government is integrating Sri Lanka into their war preparations against China.

“At the end of April, Sri Lankan and US naval forces

were involved in a joint exercise off the Trincomalee coast in the island's eastern province. The Wickremasinghe government has been a supporter of Israel's genocide in Gaza from its inception and sent a warship to the Red Sea to join with the US-led coalition."

Jayasekera pointed out how the whole of South Asia has been dragged into a vortex of deepening geopolitical tensions, which could lead to a nuclear third world war, as a result of aggressive moves by the US and India to integrate countries in the region into their military-strategic offensive against China.

"The basic political conclusion workers and youth in South Asia must draw from these developments is the urgent need for building an international anti-war movement based on socialist policies."

Jayasekera explained that the SEP's position on war was based on the fight for the unity of the international working class. "Our position is a class position. We do not base our position on who fired the first shot."

The speaker reviewed the SEP's principled opposition to the Putin regime's invasion in Ukraine and explained how Russia's invasion was provoked by aggressive moves by the US and NATO following the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union. He also drew attention to the 2014 right-wing coup in Ukraine, sponsored by the US and Germany, to overthrow the then pro-Russian Yanukovych government and the installation of a pro-EU regime.

Jayasekera concluded with a call for workers, youth, rural poor and intellectuals in Sri Lanka, India and the whole of South Asia to join with the SEP/IYSSE to build a global anti-war movement of workers and youth based on international socialist policies.



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