

Online public meeting in Sri Lanka: Condemn the police attack on teachers! Defend free public education! Higher salaries for educators!

Action Committee of Teachers, Students and Parents for the Defence of Education (Sri Lanka)
1 July 2024

The Action Committee of Teachers, Students and Parents for the Defence of Education (ACTSP) in Sri Lanka will hold an online public meeting at 7 p.m. on July 11 entitled “Condemn the police attack on teachers! Defend free public education! Higher salaries for educators!”

The ACTSP vehemently condemns the Wickremesinghe government’s brutal police attack on thousands of protesting teachers on June 26.

One day after this assault, President Wickremesinghe, in a meeting with the Asgiriya Buddhist Chief Prelate, said that there was no money for any salary increase for teachers or any public employees. In the same breath, he threatened to designate the teaching profession as an essential service—that is, to invoke the Essential Public Services Act which bans industrial action and carries harsh punishments.

Lining up with the government, the media has launched a filthy campaign vilifying the educators’ struggle for a decent salary and in defence of public education.

The ACTSP meeting is being held to discuss how to defeat these political threats and carry forward our struggle. This issue is crucial, not just for those in the teaching profession, but for the workers and poor as a whole.

The Wickremesinghe regime is intensifying its assault on free public education, which has already been slashed to the bone by successive Colombo governments. In line with International Monetary Fund demands, government allocations to vital social programs, such as free public education and health, are

being cut, state-owned enterprises are being privatised, and taxes and tariffs increased to jack up revenue to repay foreign debts and boost big-business profits.

Running parallel with the teachers’ fight for higher wages are a series of working class struggles against the government’s austerity measures. Like their trade union counterparts in other sectors, the teachers and principals trade union bureaucracies oppose the organisation of united action to defeat these attacks. Instead, union officials call isolated, scattered and limited protests while claiming that the government can be pressured to stop its social assaults. This perspective is futile and gives the government time to defeat our struggles and impose its reactionary measures.

Leaders of the teachers’ trade unions, such as Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)-controlled Ceylon Teacher Services Union, are telling educators that election of a JVP-led National People’s Power (NPP) government in the forthcoming presidential ballot will solve their problems. This is a lie. All of Sri Lanka’s bourgeois opposition parties, including NPP/JVP and the Samagi Jana Balawegaya, are fully committed to the IMF dictates.

Winning a decent salary and the defence of education is part of a broader political struggle against the government’s austerity measures. Billions of rupees must be allocated to improve essential public education and health services.

These necessary demands are incompatible with the government’s commitment to repay foreign loans and the capitalist system itself. That is why we call for the building of action committees, involving teachers,

students and parents in every school, to take this fight into our own hands. We need decent salaries and a free high-quality education service with adequate facilities.

Our public meeting will discuss these crucial issues and a fighting socialist program to defend education. We call upon all educators, parents and students to attend our July 11 meeting and participate in this important discussion.

Please register here for the meeting.

For more information contact the ACTSP:

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To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact