

Vote SEP in Sri Lanka's November 14 parliamentary election!

Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)
10 November 2024

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka is intervening in the country's November 14 parliamentary elections to build an independent political movement of the working class based on international socialism, against war, austerity and the turn to authoritarian methods of rule. The SEP is running 41 candidates in three electoral districts—in the capital of Colombo, in Jaffna in the north and in Nuwara Eliya in the central plantation area.

Political developments in Sri Lanka and internationally have thoroughly confirmed SEP's political intervention. We urge workers, students, youth and rural poor to vote for the SEP in this election to express their support for our socialist perspective and, on that basis, prepare for the class struggles ahead against the pro-imperialist and pro-business Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)/National People's Power (NPP) government.

Never before has the global threat of nuclear annihilation been as great as it is today. The US and its allies are backing Israeli's genocidal war in Gaza and its invasion in Lebanon which threaten to expand into a wider war in the Middle East, directed above all against Iran. The US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the escalating US preparations for war against China threaten to plunge humanity into a global war involving nuclear-armed powers.

The SEP, as part of the campaign being waged by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and its sections, is intervening in the election to assist in building a unified international anti-war movement of the working class based on socialist policies to put an end to the capitalist system that is the root cause of war.

The election of the fascist demagogue Donald Trump as US president will not ease, but worsen, the economic and political crisis of American imperialism that is the driving force for world war. He will target China, in particular, which is regarded in ruling circles as the chief threat to maintaining US global dominance.

JVP/NPP leader Anura Kumara Disanayake, who was elected as Sri Lankan president on September 21, has immediately congratulated Trump for his election victory.

His message is an assurance his JVP/NPP government will work closely with the Trump administration and integrate Sri Lanka into the US-India war drive against China.

Throughout the election campaign, the JVP/NPP and all the parties of political establishment have kept completely silent about the growing danger of global war, signalling their support for the US and its allies, and keeping the working class in the dark.

The SEP warned the JVP/NPP was cynically exploiting the deep-rooted popular hostility to the traditional bourgeois parties and would jettison its phony election promises. Just six weeks after Disanayake's election, the right-wing, anti-working class, communal politics of the JVP/NPP government have been rapidly revealed.

Working with global capital at the behest of big business, the Disanayake government is carrying forward the savage International Monetary Fund (IMF)-dictated austerity measures initiated by the previous government of President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Disanayake has assured the IMF that he will raise the government's primary budgetary surplus four-fold next year compared to last year, dwarfing the inroads into social conditions already carried out. The JVP/NPP government will increase taxes, slash state jobs through privatisation and further cut subsidies to public services, including education and health, to pave the way to repay foreign debt by 2028.

In doing the bidding of the IMF, the Disanayake government has repeatedly declared that there is "no money" to meet the burning needs of working people. It has suspended salary increases for 1.4 million state workers of around 25 percent, approved by the previous government.

Recognising that this pro-business agenda will provoke mass opposition, the government has abandoned its election promise to abolish the existing battery of repressive laws, retaining the notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) in particular.

Disanayake's righthand man, former MP Lakshman Nipuna Arachchi, recently gave the clearest indication of the government's plans to outlaw all industrial action by the

working class, stating that “strikes will be relegated to a thing in the past.” These comments are a clear warning of the anti-working class, fascistic character of the JVP, which was never based on socialism and Marxism, but rather was founded on a petty bourgeois radical mixture of Maoism (Chinese Stalinism), Castroism and reactionary Sinhala patriotism.

The JVP/NPP is calling on voters to fill the parliament with its members in November 14 election so that they can form a “strong government.” Its purpose is clear: to implement the IMF austerity program to the letter and brutally suppress inevitable opposition of workers, youth and the rural poor through police-state repression.

The ruling class as a whole is haunted by the 2022 mass uprising over unbearable social conditions that forced President Gotabhaya Rajapakse to resign and is turning to the JVP/NPP to ram through the austerity agenda. Significantly, President Wickremesinghe, who denounced the economic threat posed by Dissanayake during the presidential election campaign, after being defeated swiftly declared his “confidence” in the new president.

The bourgeois parties of all shades have expressed their willingness to work with the JVP/NPP government as a loyal opposition. These include the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), the main opposition in the previous parliament, the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), the previous ruling party, and the newly-formed Mawbima Janatha Party/Sarvajana Party, an eclectic mixture of Sinhala racialists led by a business and media tycoon.

Likewise, the Tamil bourgeois parties have also expressed their support to Dissanayake despite the fact that his vote was just 10 percent or less in the Tamil-majority north and east, as well as the plantation districts, where working people know full well the JVP’s history of rabid anti-Tamil and anti-Muslim chauvinism.

The fake-left Frontline Socialist Party (FSP) has praised the election of Dissanayake as a reflection of “people’s expectations” and promoted the false notion that the incoming government could be pressured to the left. The FSP is campaigning in the election as part of its broader front, the People’s Struggle Alliance (PSA), on the slogan “change the opposition”—in other words, put FSP/PSA members in parliament to better pressure the Dissanayake government.

The FSP is again seeking to subordinate the workers and youth to the framework of bourgeois parliamentary politics. In 2022, when millions of working people took part in strikes and protests, the FSP worked with the trade unions to promote the illusion that an “interim government” of parliamentary parties would address pressing social needs. The result of the parliamentary manoeuvres was the

installation of Wickremesinghe and social devastation.

In July 2022, amidst the mass uprising, the SEP launched a campaign for a Democratic and Socialist Congress of Workers and Rural Masses, based on an expanding network of action committees of workers and rural toilers. The establishment of action committees independent of the trade unions and all bourgeois parties as the basis for such a Congress is all the more urgent today.

The Congress will provide the means for the working class and oppressed to unite their struggles, articulate their demands, and defend their social and democratic rights in opposition to the JVP/NPP government and the capitalist state apparatus, including the parliament and the executive presidency on which it rests.

The SEP calls for the formation of action committees in every workplace, plantation, working class suburb and rural area to fight for the following demands:

*Reject the IMF austerity program in its entirety!

* Repudiate all foreign debts!

* Nationalise the banks, big companies and plantations under the democratic control of the working class!

* Place all state-owned enterprises targeted for privatisation under the democratic control of workers!

* Subsidies and social programs for rural farmers and the needy!

* For the unity of the working class! Reject all forms of communalism and nationalism!

* Defend the democratic rights of all the oppressed!

* Abolish the executive presidency!

The campaign for these demands and a Democratic and Socialist Congress of Workers and Rural Poor must be directed towards the struggle for the establishment of a government of workers and peasants to refashion society along socialist lines. To unite workers in Sri Lanka, the SEP advocates the formation of a Sri Lanka-Eelam Socialist Republic as an integral part of the struggle for a Union of Socialist Republics in South Asia and internationally.

We again urge you to vote for the SEP in Colombo, Jaffna and Nuwara Eliya districts as a conscious vote for our socialist program. Above all, we call upon you to join the SEP to build it as the mass party necessary to lead the working class in the revolutionary class battles ahead.

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