

Sri Lanka: Vote SEP in the Local Government elections

Support a socialist program against war, austerity and dictatorship

Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)
2 May 2025

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) calls on workers, young people, rural poor and intellectuals to vote for our party in the local government elections to be held in Sri Lanka on May 6. Your vote for the SEP will demonstrate your support for a socialist program against imperialist war, austerity and dictatorial forms of rule.

The SEP is contesting for Kolonnawa Urban Council in the suburbs of Colombo and Karainagar Divisional Council in the war-ravaged Jaffna district, fielding slates of 21 and 13 candidates respectively. Our slates are headed by longstanding party leaders, Vilani Peiris and Paramuthirugnan Sampanthar.

From the outset, the SEP has warned workers, youth and poor that the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)/National People's Power (NPP) government called the election to strengthen its hand to implement austerity measures dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

These include the privatisation/restructuring of over 400 State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), higher taxes on working people and funding cuts for basic public services like education and health. The result will be the destruction of hundreds of thousands of jobs as well as the slashing wages and working conditions.

We have been proven correct.

In his May Day message, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake emphasized: "In the face of global geopolitical shifts and growing challenges, it is the working people of Sri Lanka who continue to shoulder the burden of rebuilding our economy."

What his remarks mean is that the government will impose new burdens on the working class as the capitalist crisis in Sri Lanka and internationally continues to worsen.

Speaking at the JVP/NPP May Day rally, Dissanayake declared: "We urge trade unions to shed their old attitudes. Do not fight even for trivial things."

Although the president referred to trade unions, his real target is the working class. It is a warning that the

government will not tolerate any opposition by workers and will not hesitate to use police-state repression to suppress strikes and protests.

All the opposition parties, including the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), United National Party (UNP), and Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), as well as the Tamil and Muslim bourgeois parties, fully support the IMF agenda as the only means of saving capitalism. Their demagogic criticisms of the government and empty promises are simply to grab votes.

The local elections in Sri Lanka are taking place amid a deepening crisis of global capitalism, centered on US imperialism. Events over the past month have overwhelmingly confirmed the necessity of building an independent and socialist movement of the working class, as outlined in our election statement.

The fascistic US President Trump openly draws on the ideology of the Nazi dictatorship of the 1930s. He is brazenly defying laws and the constitution in carrying out mass deportations of immigrants, dismantling essential social services, firing hundreds of thousands of public sector workers, and launching a global trade war—accompanied by heightened war preparations against China.

The current confrontation between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan greatly heightens the danger of a war that drags in the US and China on either side. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made unsubstantiated accusations against Pakistan over the April 22 terror attack in Indian-held Kashmir and has threatened to cut off water to the Indus River—an act of war.

The unfolding conflict underscores the urgency of unifying workers throughout South Asia with their class brothers and sisters globally in an anti-war movement based on socialism. That is the program for which SEP, the Sri Lankan section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), is fighting.

During Modi's visit to Sri Lanka last month, he and

Dissanayake finalized a defense cooperation pact. The military agreement is aimed against China and includes joint exercises, intelligence sharing, training, capacity-building initiatives and high-level exchanges. Dissanayake, like his predecessor, the notorious US stooge Ranil Wickremesinghe, is integrating Sri Lanka with India into US imperialism's war plans.

The IMF has publicly praised Dissanayake for implementing its harsh austerity dictates. Much more is to come, however, as the IMF demands full compliance. This includes raising electricity prices bills to make the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) profitable, fast-tracking the privatization of SOEs, and finalizing debt restructuring to repay the defaulted 2022 debts in exchange for the next tranche of a \$US3 billion IMF bail-out loan.

Already working people are suffering. The minimum expenditure required for a person to survive has been jumped by 134 percent from 2019 to February 2025, according to government statistics. Yet income levels are stagnating and unemployment rates are rising with close to 26 percent for young people aged 15 to 24 years. A recent World Bank report found that a third of the population is below the poverty line and facing persistent malnutrition.

The JVP/NPP government came to power by capitalizing on widespread anger against the traditional parties that have ruled since independence in 1948 and inflicted deep attacks on the social and democratic rights of working people. Once in office, Dissanayake dropped his promises to improve conditions of workers and rural toilers and pledged to implement the IMF demands in full.

Trade unions also bear responsibility for this social disaster, having suppressed and sabotaged the struggles of the working class under both Wickremesinghe and Dissanayake. The union bureaucrats agree with the IMF agenda and have deliberately limited protests and strikes to futile appeals to the government and as a means of letting off steam.

The SEP warns workers not to trust any of the capitalist parties or their apologists among the fake left parties and trade unions. The Frontline Socialist Party claim that workers can pressure the government to the left and onto the "correct path." What has happened is the opposite—the JVP/NPP has intensified the social crisis and cracked down ruthlessly on any resistance by workers.

The working class must rely on its own independent strength and fight for a socialist alternative to the capitalist barbarism of war and austerity resulting from the reactionary policies of its political representatives.

The SEP urges workers and rural toilers to establish democratically-elected action committees in every workplace and neighborhood to fight for their social and

democratic rights. We pledge our full political support to this effort.

We will redouble our campaign for a Democratic and Socialist Congress of Workers and Rural Masses, comprised of delegates from these action committees as the means to develop an independent political movement of the working class and rally rural poor. Only by overthrowing bourgeois rule and establishing a workers' and peasants' government to implement socialist policies can working people defend their class interests.

The cornerstone of our program is internationalism. Workers must oppose all forms of nationalism and communalism, including Sinhala supremacism and Tamil separatism, and fight to unite with the international working class. Working people in Sri Lanka need to join their action committees with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), as the means to wage a unified struggle against predatory global capital.

We urge workers, the poor and youth to demonstrate your support for a socialist alternative by voting for our candidates in Karainagar and Kolonnawa. In other areas, we do not endorse a vote for any party or candidate.

We appeal to all those who vote for us to take the next important step. Study our political perspective and program and join the SEP to build it as the mass revolutionary party needed for the struggles ahead.

We also make a special appeal to workers, youth, rural toilers and socialist-minded intellectuals in Sri Lanka and throughout South Asia, to attend the International May Day Online Rally organised by the ICFI. It will start at 12.30 a.m. on Sunday, May 4 (Sri Lankan and Indian time).



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