

“There is a real danger of a nuclear war”: Sri Lankan workers and students oppose Iran war

Our reporters
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As part of the campaign initiated by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) against the imperialist war being waged by the United States and Israel against Iran, the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka have held several discussions with workers and students.

The SEP and IYSSE will hold a public meeting titled “Stop US-Israel war against Iran” on March 17 at Colombo Public Library Auditorium.

SEP/IYSSE campaigners explained the flagrantly illegal character of the attack on Iran, the catastrophic situation developing in the Middle East, and the tasks facing the working class and youth in ending the war, which threatens to escalate into a world war. They distributed Sinhala and Tamil copies of the statement by WSWS chair David North, “Oppose the US Imperialist War Against Iran!”

Workers and students participated in the discussions with considerable interest.

Sameera, a young worker who met SEP/IYSSE members near the Ratmalana railway yard, in the south of Colombo, said he was “completely opposed” to the war.

“It is very clear that the aim is to plunder the oil resources of Iran and other Middle Eastern countries,” he said. “What President Trump says—that this war is being waged to bring democracy to the Iranian people—is an outright lie.”

Commenting on the brutal repression by the Trump administration against immigrants and workers in the US itself, Sameera responded: “No one will believe that a ruler who tramples on the democratic rights of people in his own country is waging a war to defend democratic rights in another country.”

He spoke angrily about the bombing of public infrastructure, including schools and medical centres, and especially the killing of schoolchildren.

Turning to the broader implications of the war, he pointed to its impact on Sri Lanka’s economy.

“If you look at Sri Lanka, most garments are exported to the US. Tea is mainly exported to Iran. These are the country’s main export products. If the war continues it will directly affect Sri Lanka’s economy. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz will be a major factor driving up oil prices. As you say, if the war continues there is a strong possibility that Russia and China will become involved. There is a real danger of a nuclear world war.”

Sameera also noted that the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna/National People’s Power (JVP/NPP) government of President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has not even condemned the US-Israeli war against Iran. Despite claiming to be neutral, “in practice it is pursuing a policy aligned with the US,” he said.

Sameera asked what could be done to stop the war. In response, SEP/IYSSE members explained that a global anti-war movement had to be built through the independent mobilisation of the working class against capitalism, in the US and internationally, based on a socialist and internationalist program. Sameera said he would attend the public meeting on March 17 to discuss these issues further.

Bimsara, an engineering student at the University of Moratuwa, said: “I completely oppose the attack on Iran by the US and Israel. If President Trump wants to take over countries like Venezuela, or assassinate the leaders of Iran, he will do it without respecting any law.”

Campaigners explained that the attack on Iran is not merely the product of the will of one individual but serves the interests of the financial oligarchy, and that the

working class would be forced to pay for it through attacks on living standards and democratic rights.

Three students at the University of Moratuwa strongly condemned the US submarine attack which sunk the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena while it was returning from a naval exhibition organised by India. The attack killed more than 100 sailors.

However, the students praised the actions of the Sri Lankan government in deploying the navy to rescue 34 sailors from the vessel and allowing more than 200 sailors from another Iranian ship to stay in Sri Lanka.

Citing the WSWS article “US memo exposes Sri Lankan ‘humanitarian’ posturing over Iranian sailors’ rescue,” SEP/IYSSE members explained that “the Dissanayake government functioned as a compliant intermediary for the diplomatic and strategic objectives of the US and Israel as dictated by their diplomatic envoys.”

The discussion turned to the hardships confronting workers and oppressed people. “Since the outbreak of the Middle East war, the price of oil has surged within less than two weeks to levels exceeding those of 2022, and further increases are expected,” one of the students said.

A non-academic worker at a Colombo school commented:

“Trump’s claim that Iran is being attacked because it supports terrorism is a lie. Just like the lie that Iran was producing nuclear weapons. After the US and Israel bombed several nuclear sites in Iran in 2025, Trump claimed that Iran’s nuclear weapons program had been destroyed. Yet he again justified the February 28, 2026 attack by claiming that Iran’s nuclear weapons posed a threat to the US and Middle Eastern countries.”

Meanwhile, members of the Plantation Workers Action Committee (PWAC) at Alton Estate in Maskeliya, in the central plantation district Nuwaraeliya, met on March 8 to discuss the war. The PWAC was formed in 2021 during a bitter struggle in which dozens of workers at the estate were suspended and arrested after they protested to demand a living wage and improved working conditions.

The meeting unanimously endorsed the statement “Oppose the US Imperialist War Against Iran!” and participants emphasized the urgent need for workers and youth to mobilize against the imperialist war.

K. Kandeepan, President of the PWAC and political committee member of the SEP, explained how the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and the SEP had predicted the unfolding imperialist aggression more than a decade in advance.

He quoted from the *Historical and International*

Foundations of the SEP (Sri Lanka) published in 2011: “The rise of China, and to a lesser extent India, over the past two decades has dramatically shifted the centre of gravity of world politics towards Asia. China has risen from the world’s 10th largest economy in 1990 to overtake Japan in 2010 and become the second largest after the US. ...

“. . . Every corner of Asia, including Sri Lanka, is caught up in this rivalry that is leading inexorably to a catastrophic conflict. Unlike the first two world wars that focussed on the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, a new conflagration is likely to be centred in the Indian Ocean.”

One worker, **Devi**, said: “The war must be stopped. War can cause us huge problems. Workers like us live in other countries. It is the workers who are dying the most due to war.”

Another, **Selvakumari**, said: “Workers in Sri Lanka have also gone to work abroad. If war breaks out, their living conditions will worsen.”

Devasakhayam said: “I agree that if there is no socialist revolution in the coming period, a catastrophe will threaten the culture of humanity. Capitalism will never go to peace. They are not going to give up arms production. Capitalism needs war. Therefore, the war cannot be stopped without overthrowing capitalism. If it is to be overthrown, I also agree that an international socialist program is necessary. As you mentioned, we must build action committees in all the plantations, cities and hospitals and workplaces. We must also develop an anti-war movement.”

At the conclusion of the meeting, all participants pledged to join the meeting on March 17, and several took Tamil-language copies of the statement to share with their colleagues.



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