

SEP/IYSSE Sri Lanka meeting against US-Israeli war on Iran reveals growing interest in socialist program

Our correspondent
19 March 2026

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) held a well-attended public meeting on March 17 under the title “Stop the US-Israel criminal war against Iran” at the Colombo Public Library Auditorium.

Despite travel disruptions caused by fuel shortages linked to the escalating war in the Middle East, about 75 people—including party members, supporters, workers, youth, and academics—attended the event.

The meeting was live-streamed via Zoom, with additional participants including groups from areas such as Jaffna and the plantation districts. It was also broadcast on the SEP’s Facebook page, where it garnered over 2,000 views and has been shared more than 100 times at the time of writing.

SEP Assistant Secretary Saman Gunadasa chaired the meeting, warning that the US and Israel have escalated their military offensive in the Middle East, extending it from the Gaza genocide to an illegal war against Iran. The assault on Iran, one of the oldest civilisations in the world with a population of 93 million, has a “fascist character,” he said. There were already over 1,500 deaths, including women and children, more than 50,000 buildings destroyed, and 3 million people displaced.

The war, Gunadasa declared, underscores the collapse of international law, with UN charters and legal norms “thrown into the dustbin.”

Its central aims—control over oil, trade routes and renewed forms of colonial domination—he continued, are fuelling global opposition alongside intensifying class struggles. Gunadasa insisted that the US-Israeli conflict can only be halted by the independent

intervention of the international working class, armed with a socialist program.

Speaking on behalf of the IYSSE in Sri Lanka, Sakuntha Hirimutugoda described the real nature of the war, pointing to the developing catastrophe in the Middle East. Imperialist leaders such as US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, the speaker said, have made clear their aims, declaring that they do not recognise international law and will attack Iran with the most violent military methods.

Hirimutugoda explained that this was evident from the very first day, with US and Israeli forces deliberately targeting schools, neighbourhoods, major cities and towns, communication systems, and defense infrastructure. Iran’s cultural and historical heritage is also being systematically destroyed.

The speaker compared the carnage to the destruction of World War I and quoted from Rosa Luxemburg’s *The Junius Pamphlet*, written in 1915, in which she explains how war reduces cities to ruins, spreads famine, disease, and chaos, and plunges societies worldwide into misery, desperation and collapse. Hirimutugoda concluded by warning that the carnage cannot be stopped by trying to “put pressure on the same imperialist powers that have launched the war.” Students and youth, he said, should turn to the working class and fight for socialism.

SEP General Secretary Deepal Jayasekera, the final speaker, warned that the US-Israeli war against Iran was rapidly escalating toward a global conflagration and threatening “the very existence of human society.”

Jayasekera said the US submarine attack and sinking of the Iranian naval ship *Iris Dena* in the Indian Ocean near Sri Lanka, which killed more than 100 mariners,

along with the deliberate US-Israeli targeting of hospitals, schools, and other civilian infrastructure, demonstrate that the assault on Iran is a “war of extermination and deliberate destruction.” The question we now face, he continued, “is simple and stark: Will the international working class act to stop this imperialist barbarism, or will capitalism drag the world into destruction through a Third World War?”

Jayasekera explained that the war is driven by the deep crisis of US imperialism, which is seeking to reverse its long-term economic decline through militarism and global domination.

“This war is not emerging from the diseased psyche of Donald Trump... He acts as the representative of the billionaire American oligarchy. This war is part of that oligarchy’s strategy,” the speaker said, explaining that Washington aims to subjugate Russia and China through control of the Middle East, with Iran as a central target.

Jayasekera condemned the “criminal methods”—including assassinations and attacks on civilians—used by the US and Israel, saying that these revive the logic that “might makes right.” Citing David North, he added: “The strategy of this war is to abolish the 20th century... to eliminate completely all traces of the great liberation struggles.”

The speaker highlighted the class character of the war and its social impact, noting that governments are slashing social spending and diverting billions of dollars to war, with workers and youth bearing the burden through declining living standards and the erosion of democratic rights.

Jayasekera criticised the duplicitous roles of regional governments. Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disanayake had falsely postured as neutral, all the while overseeing greater ties between Sri Lanka and American imperialism.

He also denounced “fake-left” organisations, such as the Frontline Socialist Party, which oppose any independent mobilisation of the working class. “These pseudo-lefts,” he said, “propose that people must put pressure on and appeal to the imperialist powers to stop the war.”

The speaker concluded by calling for the formation of independent action committees in workplaces and neighborhoods, coordinated internationally through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File

Committees. He insisted that the fight against war must be developed as an international socialist movement directed toward abolishing the capitalist system.

A lively question-and-answer session followed the speeches. One participant asked why, if the war was linked to US preparations for conflict with Beijing, China had not vetoed a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution endorsing the war on Iran.

Jayasekera explained that although US geostrategic and military moves against China are aimed at its complete subjugation, China’s capitalist regime is attempting to reach a compromise with US imperialism. China’s decision not to block the UNSC resolution reflects these manoeuvres. The Chinese government’s bankrupt manoeuvres, he said, would not result in any let up in the US war drive against it.

Jayasekera said workers and youth must draw political lessons from these developments. “None of the bourgeois regimes, including those in Moscow, Beijing, Havana, or Caracas, can be assigned the task of defeating imperialism. They are utterly incapable of fulfilling this role. The lesson to be drawn from China’s action at the UNSC is that the international working class must take up the struggle against imperialism on the basis of an international socialist program,” he said.

The meeting concluded with an appeal for attendees to donate to the SEP’s special fund of one million rupees (\$US3,225), announced at the meeting and to be completed within three months. An initial response from the audience saw contributions exceeding 10,000 rupees. Attendees purchased more than 14,000 rupees worth of literature, including all copies of a newly published pamphlet on the US-Israeli war, reflecting growing interest in the party’s socialist program.



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