

# Sri Lankan Tamil bourgeois parties support US-Israeli war on Iran

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The main Tamil bourgeois parties in Sri Lanka have for the most part said nothing about the criminal US-Israeli war against Iran. But it is a silence to cover up their ongoing support for US imperialism and the major powers as is demonstrated by the handful of comments that have been made.

The island's Tamils were subjected to a brutal communal war for nearly three decades in which tens of thousands were slaughtered by the Sri Lankan military in final months that led to the defeat of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009.

For many Tamil workers and youth, like their counterparts throughout the island and internationally, their sympathies undoubtedly lie with the civilian victims in Iran of the relentless US-Israeli bombardment. However, for the main Tamil party, Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK), the slaughter of Tamils is cynically used as the pretext to justify its failure to condemn, in reality tacit support for, the slaughter taking place in Iran.

During a parliamentary discussion on March 6, ITAK MP Sivagnanam Sritharan responded to mild criticisms of the Iran war by Muslim party MPs by declaring: "When the war was waged in this country with the help of 22 countries in the name of 'humanitarian operation,' when airstrikes were carried out, when multi-barrel bombs [in Tamil areas], no one in this world spoke for us; no one raised a voice for us."

He then blurted out, "If that [war against Tamil people] was a 'humanitarian operation', then the war [against Iran] that launched by the United States, which now identifies itself as the leader in determining and regulating the world order, is also just! Why do you see that war as wrong?..."

There is no end to the cynicism in this statement. Sritharan also uses the Iranian regime's support for the Colombo government's anti-Tamil war to justify its own tacit support for the illegal US-Israeli war on Iran.

He deliberately avoids naming any of the 22 countries in order to conceal the principal backers of the Colombo government's war, including the US, the EU, India and Israel. US imperialism in particular provided critical intelligence that significantly aided the Sri Lankan military, while others supplied essential weaponry and extended political support, including proscribing the LTTE as a "terrorist" organisation.

In 2006, then US Ambassador Jeffrey Lunstead openly warned the LTTE, declaring: "Through our military training and assistance programs, including efforts to help with counter-terrorism initiatives and block illegal financial transactions, we are helping to shape the ability of the Sri Lankan government to protect its people and defend its interests."

During and after then end of the war in Sri Lanka, ITAK repeatedly appealed for support to the "international community"—that is, the major powers led by US imperialism. After the LTTE's defeat, it continued to beg Western powers to pressure the Colombo government to grant concessions to the Tamil elites, all in the name of alleviating the suffering of Tamil working people. When US imperialism seized on the war crimes of the Sri Lankan military to pressure Colombo to distance itself from China, ITAK aligned itself with that bogus campaign.

ITAK's refusal to condemn the Trump administration's barbaric war on Iran is because it still promotes the fatal illusion that US imperialism and its allies can be counted on to defend the democratic rights of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The claim that "no one in this world spoke for us" during the war is contradicted by the fact that, even as imperialist governments backed Colombo, tens of thousands of people internationally opposed the war crimes being committed by the Sri Lankan military.

ITAK's underlying support for the war on Iran was openly spelled out in a resolution passed on March 10 by

the Pachchilaipalli Pradeshiya Sabha or local government body in Kilinochchi which backed the US and Israel. Its chairman Subramaniam Suren wrote a grovelling letter to the US ambassador in Colombo, declaring: “We extend our support for this initiative led by the United States aimed at maintaining world peace.”

To describe the destruction being rained down on Iran by the US and Israel as “maintaining world peace” is monstrous. In a little more than a month, thousands of civilians have been killed, including 160 schoolchildren and critical infrastructure, including hospitals and schools, has been levelled. Now the Trump administration is preparing to send Iranians “back to the Stone Ages” by destroying all its power stations. What Israel has already done in its genocidal war in Gaza, the US is now planning for an entire country of 90 million people. And just as it backed the Gaza genocide, ITAK is supporting the war of aggression on Iran.

The letter to the US ambassador proved to be too blatant for the ITAK leadership. ITAK General Secretary M.A. Sumanthiran disowned the Pachchilaipalli resolution “runs contrary to ITAK’s principles” and noted that the chairman had been suspended. But this manoeuvre cannot conceal the party’s abject allegiance to US imperialism as its real guiding “principle,” which is indistinguishable from that of Sri Lankan government that criticizes the violence of Iran but not the aggressors—the United States and Israel.

The other Tamil bourgeois parties have adopted a similar pro-imperialist stance. The Tamil National People’s Front (TNPF), led by Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, campaigns for so-called national self-determination by appealing to the US and its allies and backing UN human rights resolutions aligned with imperialist interests.

The TNPF-connected Vavuniya Association of Relatives of the Enforced Disappeared (VARED) similarly calls for the “international community” to ensure “accountability” for the hundreds of Tamils who were “disappeared” in the course of the civil war by military-aligned death squads. A rally on February 25 to mark the grim milestone of 3,000 days of protests featured grieving relatives displaying American and European Union flags.

At a similar protest in Vavuniya on March 4, VARED secretary S. Raj Kumar spelled out the TNPF’s support for the Iran war. “We congratulate President Trump for the international actions taken against Iran,” he declared. “We also call for the involvement of the international

community in the decades-long political struggle of the Tamil people.”

Other Tamil parties—the People’s Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), and Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) as well as parties based on Tamil plantation workers—maintain a total silence on the Iran war. It is a silence speaks volumes about their complicity in the crimes of the US and Israel.

The entire political establishment is mired in reactionary communal politics, which is above all aimed at dividing the working class. Successive Colombo governments whipped up Sinhala supremacism that resulted in anti-Tamil violence, pogroms and ultimately civil war. The Tamil bourgeois parties promote Tamil nationalism and separatism in a bid to secure their own venal interests. In doing so they all align themselves with imperialism and its crimes.

The Socialist Equality Party has consistently opposed all forms of nationalism and chauvinism, defended the democratic rights of Tamils and called for the withdrawal of troops from the predominantly Tamil areas of the North and East. We do so on the basis of uniting the working class on the basis of a common fight for Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and Eelam.

We call on all workers—Tamil as well as Sinhala and Muslim—to oppose the US-Israeli war on Iran and the pro-imperialist policies of all of the country’s capitalist parties. Far from being “an initiative for world peace,” the war on Iran is one front on an unfolding world war already underway in Ukraine and being prepared against China threatening a catastrophe for humanity.

Only a unified anti-war movement of the international working class fighting for the abolition of capitalism and a socialist future for mankind can prevent that disaster.

We urge workers and students to participate in the public meeting titled “Stop the US-Israeli War Against Iran!” organized by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Sri Lanka) on April 7 at 3:30 p.m., at the Orient Educational Institute in Hindagala, near the University of Peradeniya.



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