

Sri Lankan workers and students discuss the US-Israel war on Iran and how to stop it

Our correspondents

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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) will hold the second in a series of public meetings entitled “Stop the US-Israeli War on Iran!” on April 7 at 3:30 p.m at the Orient Institute of Education at Hindagala, near the University of Peradeniya in Kandy. We call on workers, youth and university students and teachers to attend.

Members of the SEP and the IYSSE have been campaigning among students, non-academic staff and academic workers at the University of Peradeniya, workers and youth in surrounding areas. Dozens of copies of the booklet titled “Stop the US-Israeli Criminal War on Iran!” were sold and thousands of leaflets distributed.

Students, lecturers and residents spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) condemning the war against Iran.

Sahan Mahesh, a lecturer in the history of art at the University of Peradeniya, said:

“I am personally on the side of Iran. I say that justice should be done to Iran because the war was started by America. I have read that America is worried about China’s system of buying Iranian oil in its own currency, the yuan, which challenges the so-called petro-dollar system, as it will affect the dollar’s position. I don’t think it will be easy for America to control the Strait of Hormuz or to change the Iranian regime in a few days. It has already become a more difficult task than expected...”

“If the US launches a ground attack, there will be heavy loss of life on both sides. There will also be significant economic destruction. The war will drag on, resulting in a major impact on the world. It is said that Sri Lanka will be among the countries most affected.”

Concerned about the prospect of world war, he continued, “As a history teacher, I know that once a war starts, it is usually very difficult to stop. The history of world wars shows this. If China or Russia joins the war, it will become a world war. In fact, America’s primary goal

is to attack China, which it considers its main rival. It is attacking Iran as part of preparations for that.”

Asked about the SEP’s insistence that the working class is the main revolutionary force capable of stopping the war, the lecturer replied:

“The working class is powerful, but it has not recognized its strength. If workers come together, they are like a bundle of sticks. If the sticks are separate, they can be broken. The capitalists will not allow us to form that bundle. What we need to do is tie the rope—unite the working class. The working class must be united. Then it can stop wars. That requires leadership.”

He promised to attend the meeting, adding that he would introduce the WSWS and the Socialism AI chatbot to his students and encourage them to participate in the meeting as well.

Ishan Hettiarachchi, a final year student at the University of Peradeniya, strongly condemned the US and Israel for launching an illegal war in complete violation of international law.

“Trump’s tariffs and war are severely affecting the economy. That’s why the American people are protesting against the war. Likewise, everyone in the world should oppose this war,” he said.

Hettiarachchi pointed out that despite the fact that thousands of people, including children, have already died in US-Israeli attacks, organizations that claim to stand up for human rights, including the United Nations, are completely silent about it. He said the war cannot be stopped without fighting capitalism and accepted that the alternative to capitalism is socialism.

He warned that Trump’s threat to launch a ground attack on Iran would be disastrous, costing hundreds of thousands of lives. “The economies of countries including Sri Lanka that heavily depend on tea exports, tourism, garment and other industries will collapse and there could also be a massive increase in food prices and a food

shortage.”

During the discussion, Hettiarachchi said he thought “Israel needed the war” and that “Trump fell into Israel’s trap.” But as SEP/IYSSE members explained, the real roots of the war were to be found in US strategic interests in plundering Iran’s oil and gas resources in preparation for war against China and Russia. It was not that Washington was falling into the Israel trap but that US imperialism was using Israel as an attack dog in the Middle East for its own predatory interests.

Hettiarachchi, as well as studying at university, is teaching as an intern at a school. He said that the oil crisis was seriously affecting his travel, so he had to teach online, which is not very effective. Due to the shortage of cooking gas, the university canteens are not providing food so students have to buy food outside at higher prices. He said his monthly Mahapola scholarship of 10,000 rupees (\$US32) did not even meet 10 days of expenses.

Rosie, a third-year geography student at the University of Peradeniya, said that she does not believe the bankrupt politics of fake left parties like the Frontline Socialist Party, which peddles the myth that war can be stopped through futile appeals to the very imperialist powers who are waging war in defiance of international law.

Expressing her belief that working people have the ability to stop the war, she said, “The best example of such strength is the ordinary people—workers, farmers and youth—who rose up against the authoritarian rule of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa during the 2022 people’s struggle and forced him out of the country. In fact, workers are the ones who produce and distribute everything in the world. If they stop working, the world will stop. Accordingly, it can be understood that they have the ability to stop the war.”

A non-academic staff member at the University of Peradeniya, strongly condemned the US-Israeli war, and spoke out against the destruction in Iran shown through the media, including social media. “As a mother, I saw children dying in this war. It caused me unbearable pain. I have to talk to about this loudly. I really want a way to express my opposition.”

She explained how the war had raised oil prices and the cost of living, increased electricity bills, disrupted travel and teaching, limited students’ access to learning, and reduced staff income, making it difficult to survive.

When the discussion shifted to how to stop the war, she said: “I think the working class can do it. And everyone needs to be made aware of this. There is definitely a

group of people who understand this... If the working class organizes itself, it can do anything. Unity among the working class is important, against the politicians who are trying to divide them.”

She asked: “Would this war have stopped if there had been another president instead of Trump?” The campaigners explained that Trump was just the face of the American oligarchy, which is in crisis, and that the war is an imperialist war waged in a desperate attempt to overcome that crisis and seize Iran’s oil and other mineral resources.

Pushpa Tennakoon, a housewife from Hindagala, said: “If this war drags on for another month or two, people will starve to death. Industries will close and thousands of workers will lose their jobs. Right now, we only know about the war through the media. But you have given me a deep understanding of it. As you said, working people all over the world must unite against this war.”

Dineth, a worker in an air cargo delivery company, explained: “The impact of this war has greatly affected our profession these days. I do not have a clear understanding of the reasons for this war. But what I think is that behind this war is the program of America to plunder resources. We saw what happened to the President of Venezuela. Now [it is] the Middle East.”

He said that if the war continues and more countries are involved in the war, the destruction will be enormous. Referring to the discussion with the IYSSE/SEP team, he added: “I only learned today that there is a program against the war. I realized this anti-war movement can be built based on the international working class.”



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