

IYSSE (Sri Lanka) meeting discusses socialist strategy to stop the war against Iran

Our Correspondent
10 April 2026

On April 7, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) held the second in a series of anti-war public meetings titled “Stop the US-Israel illegal war against Iran” at the Orient Education Institute in Hindagala, near the University of Peradeniya. Students, workers, university academics and party supporters attended the meeting. The SEP also livestreamed the event on its Facebook page, where, at the time of writing, viewers had shared it more than 325 times and watched it over 4,800 times.

In the lead-up to the meeting, SEP and IYSSE members and supporters conducted an extensive campaign at the University of Peradeniya and in surrounding areas, engaging workers, youth and students on the necessary strategy to stop this criminal war.

Most participants in these discussions expressed anger and opposition to the war and sought clarity on how it could be stopped. This demonstrated a strong interest in understanding the root causes of the imperialist war drive and its implications in the context of the deepening global crisis of the capitalist system. More than one hundred copies of the booklet *Stop the Criminal US-Israeli War on Iran*, containing Sinhala and Tamil translations, were sold during the campaign.

The SEP and IYSSE also held a lunchtime picket prior to the meeting, calling for an end to the war against Iran through the building of a conscious and active international anti-war movement of the working class. The protest was witnessed by thousands of commuters using public transport, and several news websites reported on it favorably.

Sakuntha Hirimutugoda, a leading member of the IYSSE in Sri Lanka, chaired the meeting, while SEP General Secretary Deepal Jayasekera delivered the main report. In his introductory remarks, Hirimutugoda said that the period following the first US-Israeli attack on Iran had demonstrated the homicidal, brutal and violent character of the war. Every other imperialist power, he noted, was backing the onslaught.

Hirimutugoda referred to the threats by Donald Trump to send Iran “back to the Stone Age,” declaring that “the whole of Iran will be destroyed overnight,” and targeting Tehran’s energy system. He warned:

If he attacks the energy system, there will be dangerous consequences. Immense destruction has already been caused. Already, 2,000 people in Iran have died. Trump is

threatening to destroy a country with a population of 90 million. Such threats can be equated with the actions of the Nazi regime in Germany in the 1930s. However, when they spoke of the Holocaust, it was done secretly, behind the backs of the people. Trump is making such threats in broad daylight, on social media and in press conferences. This exposes the total bankruptcy and advanced stage of collapse of the capitalist system.

Pointing to the international character of the war on Iran, Hirimutugoda said that stopping it is a life-and-death issue for humanity. That responsibility rests with the mobilization of the international working class. “Opposition to war in the working class has already developed, but it must be transformed into a conscious movement built on a scientific understanding of the roots of war,” Hirimutugoda said.

SEP General Secretary Deepal Jayasekera opened his remarks by condemning the US-Israeli imperialist aggression against a historically oppressed country. The aim, he explained, is to seize Iran’s oil and gas resources and establish US domination over the Middle East as a whole. He added that the war is also connected to US war preparations against China and Russia and forms part of a broader drive to establish American hegemony over the world.

Explaining that the current war threatens to push the entire planet into a catastrophic world war, he posed the alternative before the working class: “Will it act to stop this imperialist barbarism, or will capitalism bring the world to destruction through a third world war?”

Jayasekera pointed to the fact that the Trump administration and the European governments collaborating with it in the war on Iran are simultaneously waging class war at home by placing the full burden of the capitalist crisis—and the costs of war—on the working class through sweeping austerity measures. “This will intensify the developing class struggle in these countries,” he said, “and it provides an objective basis for building an international anti-war movement of the working class.”

Jayasekera exposed the claim by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna/National People’s Power (JVP/NPP) government in Sri Lanka that it is maintaining a neutral position on the war against Iran. The brief statement issued by the JVP/NPP government’s External Affairs Ministry did not even name the aggressors, the US and Israel, and merely called on all parties to “restrain”

themselves. He pointed out that President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's government is complicit in the US-Israeli war on Iran.

The speaker also addressed the so-called "non-aligned" policy promoted by the fake-left Frontline Socialist Party (FSP) and by Kalpa Rajapakshe, a senior lecturer at Peradeniya University and a leader of the Socialist People's Forum, the Sri Lankan section of the Pabloite United Secretariat. They have advised the JVP/NPP government to pursue such a policy as the best option in the present situation.

He explained that the "non-aligned" policy, first advanced in the 1960s by some former colonial countries such as India and Indonesia in an attempt to maneuver between US imperialism and the Soviet Union under the Stalinist bureaucracy during the Cold War, was neither anti-imperialist nor anti-war.

In the concluding part of his speech, Jayasekera elaborated the SEP's position against all parties of the political establishment and their pseudo-left apologists.

"Our position is a socialist and internationalist one," he said. "This war cannot be stopped by appealing to the imperialist warmongers. Only the independent mobilization of the international working class based on a socialist perspective can stop this brutal war."

He emphasized the urgent task of the working class to build independent action committees in every workplace, factory and neighborhood, organized independently of all bourgeois political parties and their pseudo-left and trade union appendages.

Jayasekera concluded:

The working class, which has the capacity to stop the war machine, must organize strike actions in sectors crucial to sustaining the war effort, such as transport, other services, ports, and oil supplies, through these independent action committees. Students and youth should join the IYSSE to develop the struggle to build an international anti-war movement of the working class. Building the SEP as a mass revolutionary party to lead the working class in this struggle against war, based on socialist policies, is absolutely crucial in this situation.

A lively question-and-answer session followed the speakers' presentations.

Questions raised by participants centered on "how to transform the SEP into a mass party," "how to tackle the suppression of socialist ideas and youth by capitalist governments," and how to organize an international anti-war movement.

In his responses, Jayasekera addressed the issues of how to stop the war and what must be done to achieve this. The SEP, the ICFI and the WSWS, he explained, propose that workers and youth build a movement based on irreconcilable opposition to capitalism and imperialism, which are the root causes of the present barbarism.

War, he explained, arises from the global crisis of the capitalist system. Therefore, to halt war on a progressive basis, an

international anti-war movement of the working class must be grounded in the struggle for socialism. The fundamental contradictions of capitalism—between the globalized economy and the rival nation-state system, and between socialized production and profit-driven private ownership—are behind imperialist war, and therefore the fight against imperialist war is necessarily a fight against capitalism.

The response of the ruling class to these contradictions, he warned, leads to the drive toward a catastrophic world war. The historical experience of the 1917 October Revolution demonstrated in practice that imperialist war can be stopped through the working class taking political power. Its impact contributed to ending World War I. In its aftermath, the European working class advanced its own struggles, deepening the fears of the ruling classes about continuing the war.

Addressing capitalist government crackdowns on workers and youth, the SEP General Secretary said that when the SEP and IYSSE confront such conditions—such as last year's ban on a meeting on IMF austerity measures at the University of Peradeniya following the intervention of the prime minister—they turn to the working class and youth, appealing for their defense. The SEP strengthens itself through such a turn. While the meeting could not ultimately be held, the party's campaign among workers, youth, and students exposed the pseudo-democratic phrase-mongering of the JVP/NPP government.

Responding to a question on the politics of the SEP and the FSP, Jayasekera explained that the SEP and its predecessor, the Revolutionary Communist League, have nothing in common with the FSP in terms of political perspective or class basis. He said that the FSP is hostile to the working class and rooted in the upper middle class, functioning to confuse workers and youth and tie them to capitalism. He pointed to the 2022 mass uprising in Sri Lanka as exposing the treacherous role of this pseudo-left party, which worked to divert the movement back into capitalist parliament and the bourgeois state through calls for an alternative capitalist "interim" government.



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