

Sri Lankan SEP/IYSSE meeting against US-Israeli war on Iran

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) held a public meeting on April 26 at Hatton Town Hall in Sri Lanka's central plantation district, opposing the US-Israeli war against Iran and explaining the necessity of building an anti-war movement of the international working class based on socialist policies. It followed meetings in Colombo and Peradeniya and received an important response from plantation workers and others.

Workers and oppressed people in Sri Lanka, like their counterparts internationally, are bearing the brunt of the war's economic fallout, with rising energy costs driving up the price of food and other essentials. Plantation workers, who are among the most exploited sections of the working class, are being severely affected by the escalating cost of living. SEP and IYSSE members campaigned extensively in Hatton and nearby Bandaranaike, going door-to-door to speak with plantation workers, teachers, state employees and youth.

Party supporters also held a protest at the Hatton bus station to denounce the devastating attacks on Iran and highlight the connection between imperialist militarism and the intensifying assault on workers' living standards and democratic rights in Sri Lanka. The protest attracted hundreds of people, including plantation workers, teachers, and state and private-sector employees, as well as youth. Several media organisations reported on it.

The discussions revealed growing anger over the fraudulent claims of "neutrality" advanced by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna/National People's Power (JVP/NPP) government, which has refused to condemn the war and is deepening its alignment with US imperialism.

S. Logeshvaran, a plantation driver, said the conflict had reduced demand for tea exports, cutting his already meagre income. "The prices of all essentials have increased, but our salaries have not risen," he said, explaining the immense hardship facing his seven-

member family.

J. Shalmitha, a 17-year-old student from Hatton, warned that the widening war was endangering Sri Lankan workers in the Middle East. "My mother and sister are working in Saudi Arabia and Qatar," she explained. "The missile exchanges threaten their lives. If they lose their jobs or are killed, many families in Sri Lanka will plunge into poverty."

An electricity worker strongly endorsed the SEP's analysis of the war. "Following our discussion, I now understand the real nature of this war," he said. "Even after the United States and Iran announced a ceasefire, Israel launched attacks on Lebanon. This proves that America and Israel are waging an illegal war against Iran."

He said the Sri Lankan government's "neutral position," was a fraud because "it places the aggressor and the victim on the same level. In reality, the government is aligned with the United States."

He bitterly condemned the government for betraying its election promises to workers. "We thought there would be change under this government, but nothing has changed," he said, pointing to its breakup of the Ceylon Electricity Board and moves towards its privatisation. He also denounced the trade unions for remaining silent on the war, saying their refusal to oppose imperialist militarism amounts to political complicity.

School teacher Shivarangani warned that the US-Israel war on Iran could escalate into a nuclear world war if China and Russia were drawn in. She opposed the war against Iran and said only united international working-class action could stop the descent into barbarism.

After talking to SEP campaigners, Sundaralingam, a retired education officer, said: "I didn't know that the 1917 Russian Revolution played such a decisive role in ending the First World War. It is now clear to me that workers internationally must unite and fight on the basis

of a socialist program to stop war.”

Opening the Hatton public meeting, SEP Central Committee member M. Thevarajah explained that the war against Iran was “not a distant regional dispute,” but “a predatory offensive by American imperialism, backed by its Israeli ally, to seize control of energy resources and reassert US global hegemony in a period of capitalist breakdown.”

Drawing historical parallels with the outbreak of the First and Second World Wars, Thevarajah said that humanity had entered “a period of war and revolution.” He recalled that the Russian working class, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, took power in 1917 and demonstrated that imperialist war could only be ended through socialist revolution.

Thevarajah reviewed the history of the Trotskyist movement in South Asia, explaining that during World War II, plantation workers in Sri Lanka, under the leadership of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India, opposed imperialist war and fought for a United Socialist Republic of South Asia based on Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution.

By contrast, the Stalinist parties in Sri Lanka and India supported British imperialism during the war. The speaker stressed that the SEP, as the Sri Lankan section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), continues the BLPI’s revolutionary internationalist struggle against imperialism and capitalism.

The main report was delivered by SEP Political Committee member Pani Wijesiriwardena, who warned that the US-Israeli war on Iran had brought humanity “to the brink of a catastrophic world war.” This conflict, he said, was not simply a clash between Iran and Israel but part of a broader agenda of US imperialism to dominate the Middle East and its vast oil and gas resources, as part of a far wider unfolding conflict against China and Russia.

The speaker condemned the destruction inflicted on Iran, comparing it to the wars carried out by US imperialism in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria over the past quarter century. He denounced the JVP/NPP government’s claims of “neutrality” as a fraud which attempted to conceal its alignment with US imperialism and international finance capital.

Wijesiriwardena explained that imperialist war could not be stopped through appeals to capitalist governments, the UN, or the political establishment. “The only social force capable of stopping imperialist war is the

international working class,” he declared, calling for the building of an international anti-war movement based on socialism.

During the discussion session, one participant asked whether there was a “way of stopping the war soon,” arguing that the SEP’s program appeared to be a long-term project.

Wijesiriwardena responded that the question of ending the war—whether sooner or later—depended on whether the international working class was mobilised against it on a socialist program. It is the only revolutionary social force capable of overthrowing world capitalism and bringing the war to an end.

The speaker explained that calls by various middle-class groups, such as the Frontline Socialist Party in Sri Lanka, for building a broad front and appealing to imperialism to halt the war were futile and politically disarmed workers. For decades, these fake left groups, along with the trade union bureaucracies, have sown scepticism about the revolutionary role of the working class.

“Only the International Committee of the Fourth International and its sections are fighting for this Marxist-Trotskyist program and perspective. The working class is now coming into struggle in the US itself and in other countries. Fighting for this program is not a ‘long-term’ project but the only viable program to end the barbarism of imperialism,” Wijesiriwardena said.

“There is no instant solution,” he continued, “but there is an urgent and concrete program workers can begin implementing immediately, and that is to fight the global capitalist system, the root cause of war. This struggle is inseparable from the fight for socialism.” Workers’ resistance alone would not resolve the crisis without a clear understanding of the nature and background of imperialist war, he added.

Wijesiriwardena also called for the formation of independent rank-and-file committees in workplaces and neighbourhoods to organise industrial action in key sectors, as part of mobilising workers in every country. He urged all participants to join the International May Day event to be held by the ICFI and the *World Socialist Web Site* on May 1.



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