Resolution of the Fourth National Congress of the SEP (Sri Lanka)—Part 2

The strategy and program of the SEP in the fight against the JVP government and capitalism

Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)
1 October 2026

We are publishing here the second part of the main resolution of the Fourth Congress of the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka), held from August 11–13, 2026, in Colombo. The resolution was unanimously adopted by the Congress. It will be published in three parts. The first part was published on October 1.

Lessons of the 2022 mass uprising

47. The mass uprising that convulsed Sri Lanka between April and July 2022 was among the most powerful revolutionary movements on the island since independence. It erupted spontaneously in response to the unbearable conditions confronting the masses as a result of an economic collapse, which was part of the deepening global economic crisis—that created shortages and skyrocketing prices for essentials like basic food items, fuel and medicine and hours-long electricity blackouts. The movement rapidly transformed into a nationwide uprising, with a section of protesters occupying the Galle Face Green in Colombo.

The mass movement defied every attempt by then-President Gotabhaya Rajapakse to unleash state repression, including his declarations of a state of emergency, curfews, bans on public gatherings, and his attempts to call out the military twice. Unable to quell the mass protests, President Rajapakse was forced to flee the country and resign, and his regime collapsed.

48. What erupted in 2022 as a mass uprising was the culmination of growing popular opposition to the Rajapakse government that had been developing since 2021. Tens of thousands of farmers protested throughout mid- and late-2021 against the government's ban on the import of chemical fertilizer and other agrochemicals—effectively abolishing the already meager fertilizer subsidy—accelerating the erosion of the regime's rural support base. At the same time, nearly 250,000 teachers and principals waged a more than three-month-long strike in online education from July to October 2021, signaling the emergence of broader social opposition.

49. The decisive and revolutionary role of the working class was demonstrated in the two general strikes of April 28 and May 6, 2022, which brought the country to a standstill as millions of workers across all sectors, from every part of the island—including the North and East and the plantation districts—joined the strikes, cutting across the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communal divisions systematically fostered by successive governments and the ruling elite. These actions shook the entire political establishment and culminated in the resignation of Gotabhaya Rajapakse.

50. These massive mobilisations expressed not simply popular anger toward the Rajapakse family, but deep hostility to the entire political establishment and parliamentary order, captured in the slogan "Down with the 225."[1] The demand reflected a broad rejection of all parliamentary parties and revealed the objective conditions for the working class to take power.

51. Yet, nearly four years later, working people confront intensified austerity, expanded state repression and deepening impoverishment under a JVP-led government that came to power by exploiting the betrayal of the 2022 uprising. The decisive question is: Why? The experience of the uprising and its aftermath must be examined. Two opposing perspectives emerged in 2022. The opposition parties, trade unions and pseudo-left organizations worked systematically to confine the movement within the parliamentary framework and to defend bourgeois rule. By contrast, the SEP fought for the independent political mobilization of the working class, rallying the rural poor, behind socialist policies and for the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government as part of the fight for international socialism.

52. The main opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), the JVP/NPP and the fake-left Frontline Socialist Party (FSP) promoted an "all-party interim government" to preserve capitalist rule. From the outset, the JVP sought to suppress the mass movement, recognizing the threat it posed to the bourgeois order. Addressing parliament on April 7, 2022, JVP leader and current President Anura Kumara Dissanayake warned of growing "anarchy" arising from mass opposition and assured all parliamentary parties—from the ruling SLPP to the opposition SJB—of his party's readiness to join an interim government if Gotabhaya Rajapakse resigned, in order to stabilize capitalist rule.

53. The FSP played a central role in derailing the mass movement onto a bourgeois parliamentary path. It held talks with bourgeois parties, including the SJB and Tamil parties, to establish such an interim government, after the general strikes had demonstrated the colossal power of the working class. It helped the trade union bureaucracy to deliberately limit actions to one-day protests, opposing any indefinite strikes which would risk placing the movement outside their control.?

54. After Gotabhaya Rajapakse's resignation, these parties intensified

© World Socialist Web Site

the campaign for immediately forming an interim administration followed by new elections. Through these sinister manoeuvres, the JVP and all other opposition parties allowed the discredited parliament to install the pro-US and pro-IMF UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe as president. He proceeded to implement harsh IMF-dictated austerity measures.?

The SEP's revolutionary alternative

55. Against all the capitalist parties, their fake-left hangers-on and the trade union bureaucracies, the SEP alone advanced a revolutionary socialist program for the mass uprising. We emphatically urged the working class to reject the campaign for an all-party interim government, characterizing it as a trap to defend capitalist rule and suppress and defeat the mass movement. The SEP declared the workers and poor could not defend their social and living conditions within the parliamentary framework and the capitalist system. To advance their struggle, we called on workers to take matters into their own hands by forming action committees in every factory, workplace, plantation and neighborhood, independent of the union bureaucracies and bourgeois parties. We also explained the need for similar committees to be established by the rural poor in their areas.

56. The SEP continuously intervened within the mass movement under its own banner, circulating copies of party statements. On April 7, 2022, the SEP issued a statement titled "Bring down Sri Lanka's Rajapakse government! Abolish the executive presidency! No to austerity and starvation! Form action committees to fight for a socialist program of action to secure food, fuel and medicines for all!" While expressing the SEP's support for the main demand of working people—"Gota [Gotabhaya Rajapakse] has got to go!"—we directly raised the question: "But what is to replace him?" The SEP proposed abolishing the executive presidency and scrapping all draconian laws, explaining that the "purpose of these necessary democratic political changes, which can be achieved only through determined struggle by the working class, rural poor and youth, is to set into motion a fundamental restructuring of the economy along socialist lines." The task facing the working class was "to mobilize its social power and impose its own solution to the immense social and economic crisis …Workers can turn to their class allies internationally for mutual assistance, in the first instance to Indian workers who last week mounted a two-day general strike against the austerity and privatization agenda of the Modi government."

57. Armed with this revolutionary program, our party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) challenged the anti-democratic "no politics" directive issued by the organizers of the main protest site at Galle Face Green with assistance of fake lefts like the FSP. Their real aim was to exclude the SEP's struggle for revolutionary socialist politics from the mass movement.

58. The SEP firmly rejected a direct appeal from the SJB made on July 5, 2022, to join in talks aimed at reaching an "all-party agreement" to salvage capitalist rule. Rejecting the invitation, SEP General Secretary Deepal Jayasekera wrote that the crisis will not be solved by "fixing a new face to this bourgeois state machinery with an 'all-party government' as proposed by the SJB or a 'unity government' proposed by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)."

59. Analyzing the developments of the mass movement, the SEP issued a statement on July 20, 2022, launching a historic campaign for a Democratic and Socialist Congress of Workers and Rural Masses, based on delegates elected from action committees of workers and the rural masses. The statement explained: "In rejecting talks for an interim government, the SEP understood that the working class has to establish its own political power center completely independent of the anti-democratic conspiracies of the political establishment and the capitalist state. That is the significance of our call for the Democratic and Socialist Congress of workers and rural masses."

This Congress was envisaged as a revolutionary political alternative, providing a genuine voice to the exploited masses. The SEP advanced a comprehensive program: Repudiate all foreign debts; reject IMF austerity; seize the wealth of the billionaires, nationalize the banks and major corporations under workers' democratic control; cancel farmers' debts and reinstate fertilizer subsidies; guarantee jobs for all, with wages indexed to the cost of living. Implementation of these demands required a workers' and peasants' government committed to restructuring society on socialist lines.?

60. Drawing on the lessons of the 1917 Russian Revolution, the SEP explained that action committees, as they grow and prove themselves in struggle, will become organs of independent working-class political power—the contemporary equivalent of the soviets. The party emphasized that Sri Lankan workers' allies were not the opposition capitalist parties, but their class brothers and sisters internationally. We called for international coordination of workers' struggles through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) initiated by the ICFI.?

61. Explaining the unprecedented political situation, the statement continued:

> The crisis of capitalism in Sri Lanka and globally is far deeper today than sixty years ago. The mass popular uprising of the past three months has shaken bourgeois rule to its very core. But as Leon Trotsky once explained, the strength of the bourgeoisie is that it understands its weakness. If political power is left in its hands, it will ruthlessly defend its interests by imposing the IMF's austerity agenda and crushing any popular opposition.
>
> Trotsky also explained that the weakness of the working class is that it does not understand its strength. The mass popular protests have displayed great militancy, determination and courage. But if working people remain shackled to the political establishment and place their faith in a capitalist interim government, the outcome will inevitably be a disaster.

62. The failure of the working class to break from the influence of capitalist parties and trade union bureaucracies and adopt the SEP's perspective resulted in catastrophic consequences. Wickremesinghe unleashed unprecedented repression, declaring a state of emergency and invoking the Prevention of Terrorism Act against protesters. On July 22, 2022, he sent 1,000 armed police and military personnel to violently dismantle the Galle Face encampment. He imposed savage IMF austerity and invoked the Essential Services Act to outlaw strikes in key sectors.?

63. The failure of the working class to take up the revolutionary socialist path advanced by the SEP did not negate the significance of the SEP's principled political intervention within the mass uprising or the objective revolutionary capacity of the working class. It was primarily the tragic consequence of the destruction of socialist and Marxist culture and consciousness within the working class through decades of criminal betrayals carried out by the Stalinist and social democratic bureaucracies, the Pabloites and other revisionist currents. This underscores the enormous significance of the initiative taken by the ICFI in its 1992 plenum, held following the dissolution of the Soviet Union the previous December, to rebuild socialist and Marxist culture within the international working class.

© World Socialist Web Site

The JVP's rise to power

64. The 2022 betrayal enabled the JVP's rise to power. In September 2024, JVP leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake was elected as president with 42.3 percent of the vote, and in November the JVP/NPP won a landslide parliamentary victory, getting 159 of 225 seats with 61.6 percent of votes—a meteoric rise from 3.1 percent in 2019. The JVP exploited popular rage against the traditional parties of political establishment, falsely presenting itself as an "anti-establishment" alternative, while the international media grotesquely labeled it as "left-wing" and "socialist".?

65. During the election campaigns, the JVP promised to "renegotiate" the IMF agreement, protect the poor, increase wages, implement democratic reforms, abolish the executive presidency and repressive legislation like the PTA, build "national unity," release political prisoners detained during the civil war and its aftermath and return military-occupied civilian lands in the north and east to their original owners. All these promises have proven to be lies to garner votes. In meetings with business representatives, JVP leaders assured the ruling class they would enforce the IMF program in full. The JVP-controlled trade unions halted even limited strikes and protests a few months before the 2024 presidential election and are now acting as tools of its administration.

66. The JVP's unmasking was swift. On November 23, 2024—the first day the new parliament convened—Dissanayake announced his government would implement the IMF program in full, abandoning the election promise to renegotiate. The February 2025 budget slashed state employee allowances while offering minimal wage increases, continued VAT increases and regressive taxation and allocated 4.5 trillion rupees—nearly half of government expenditure—to debt servicing. The government broke its promise to abolish the PTA and other repressive laws, and instead has used them against workers, youth and political opponents. It has introduced a new "Protection of the State from Terrorism Act" with repressive powers which in some ways go beyond those of the PTA.

67. The JVP government abandoned any remnants of its past anti-imperialist rhetoric and has integrated Colombo even more closely into the US military-strategic offensive against China and strengthened ties with Israel—continuing the policies of Dissanayake's right-wing predecessor, Wickremesinghe. The JVP government's response to the criminal US-Israeli war on Iran is revealing. Its foreign ministry issued a statement expressing "deep concern" over the threat to regional stability and international peace and calling for "maximum restraint" and "de-escalation," but refusing to name the aggressors—the US and Israel—or the victim of the unprovoked war—Iran. It took the same stance over Israel's US-backed genocidal war in Gaza against the Palestinians, issuing impotent calls for de-escalation and restraint, without naming the US and Israel.

To be continued

The Sri Lankan parliament has 225 members.

---

[1] The Sri Lankan parliament has 225 members.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site