

LTTE member faces court over assault on SEP member in Sri Lanka

By K. Ratnayake
27 November 2002

Karthigesu Amirthalingam, a member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), is due to appear in the local magistrates court on Kayts Island in northern Sri Lanka on December 4, over an attack on Sri Lankan Socialist Equality Party (SEP) member Nagarajah Kodeeswaran. He has been charged with assault using a weapon and causing injury.

The attack on Kodeeswaran, during which he received serious wounds to his head, shoulders and hands, took place on October 8, following a series of death threats against the SEP. LTTE Kayts area leader Semmanan publicly warned on September 6 that the LTTE would mete out the “proper medicine” to SEP members and referred to the fate of former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, who was assassinated in 1991 by a suicide bomber.

The threat followed the refusal of the Ampihainagar Fisherman Cooperative Union—a local fishermen’s organisation formed at the SEP’s initiative—to hand over funds to construct an LTTE area office. Kodeeswaran is the union’s treasurer. Semmanan’s message was repeated by his deputy Arunthavan, who barged into a union meeting in late September.

Police only detained and charged Amirthalingam after the SEP and the *World Socialist Web Site* launched an international campaign to defend the party’s democratic rights. However, despite dozens of letters, emails and faxes of protest, the LTTE leadership has yet to make any statement calling their local leaders to order and guaranteeing the right of SEP members to conduct their political activities free of intimidation and threats of physical violence.

In fact, the LTTE officials on Kayts Island have continued to ride roughshod over the rights of the SEP and local fishermen. On November 13, deputy area leader Arunthavan attempted to seize control of the

Ampihainagar Fisherman Cooperative Union by convening a meeting of the LTTE’s supporters within the union to elect a new executive.

The bogus character of the meeting was underscored by the fact that only 13 of the total union membership of 102 were present. In all, about 40 people attended, including a number of fishermen from other areas who had yet to join the organisation. Neither the SEP nor its supporters were informed.

In the course of the meeting, the union president Velmurugan, a LTTE member, insisted that “people who are members of another party, cannot be part of the administration of this union.” He falsely claimed that SEP members, who hold the posts of union treasurer and secretary, had formally resigned from their posts. The gathering then selected seven new committee members.

The proceedings were supervised by Arunthavan, who encouraged those present to use physical violence to enforce the hijacking of the union. “Now a new administration has been elected for the union. Go and ask for the union’s documents from the secretary and the treasurer. If they don’t hand these over, go with clubs and demand the documents,” he said.

The SEP lodged complaints with the commissioner for cooperatives and the Kayts police, pointing out that the LTTE and its members were flouting the rights of union members and the cooperative’s constitution. The police convened an inquiry and were forced to concede that the election had not been conducted properly. However, they have simply passed the matter on to the cooperative commissioner, who has taken no action as yet.

The LTTE’s actions over the past three months on Kayts Island make a mockery of claims by the LTTE’s chief negotiator Anton Balasingham that his

organisation would respect the democratic rights of other parties and organisations. He was speaking in Thailand where he headed the LTTE's delegation involved in peace talks with the government to end the country's long running civil war.

The LTTE's threats and physical violence against the SEP are a sharp warning to the working class as a whole—Tamil, Muslim and Sinhala. The LTTE is seeking to become the junior partner to the Colombo government in implementing a peace deal that is a power-sharing arrangement of the ruling elites aimed at intensifying the exploitation of the working class. The methods used against the SEP will, in the future, be directed against any form of opposition or protest by ordinary working people.

The SEP once again appeals to all those who defend democratic rights to send letters of protest demanding that the LTTE repudiate its threats against the SEP and guarantee that the party can conduct political work free of further intimidation. The SEP is also calling for urgent donations to its 50,000 rupee [\$US500] defence fund being raised to cover legal and other campaign costs.

The WSWS has recently received copies of a number of new letters and statements that have been sent to the LTTE.

T.K. Aldeniya, a general council member of the Ceylon Mercantile Union (CMU) and branch secretary of its Ceylon Theaters, wrote: "As we know the SEP and its forerunner, the Revolutionary Communist League, has a long history of struggle against war on oppressed Tamils in the north-east carried out by the United National Party (UNP) and Peoples Alliance (PA) regimes.... I request that you accept the democratic rights of SEP to carry out its political work ... and stop all attacks on its members immediately."

Rev. Baddegama Samitha, a member of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and MP for Galle District, issued a statement calling for an end to "all pressure on the Kayts fishermen's union that the LTTE is exercising, as well as the harassment of its members".

"It must be mentioned that the SEP and the trade unions that are connected to it have nationally and internationally and correctly stood with great force and consistency not only for the democratic rights of the Tamil masses but have also defended the LTTE whenever it was subjected to repression. The LTTE

must desist from repressing an organisation that has befriended it; it must stop from thereby obstructing the liberation of the Tamil people and in the last analysis the working class."

Letters and statements should be posted or emailed to:

Jaffna

Ilamparithi
LTTE Jaffna Office
Potpathy Road, Kokuvil
Jaffna

Colombo

LTTE
c/- Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission
PO Box 1930
Galle Road
Colombo 3
Email: slmm-hq@mfa.no

They can also be posted or faxed to:

London

The LTTE
c/- Eelam House
202 Long Lane
London SE1 4QB
United Kingdom
Telephone: 44-171-403-4554
Fax: 44-201-403-1653

Please send copies of all statements to the WSWS at:

Email: editor@wsws.org
Fax:
United States: 248 967 3023
Britain: 0114 244 0224
Australia: 02 9790 3501

Donations can be sent to:

Account Number 1472834301 at the Kirullapona Branch of the Commercial Bank of Ceylon
94A Pamankada Road
Kirullapona
Colombo
Sri Lanka

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>