

“Google is censoring websites to block dissident views critical of the US establishment”

India: Students and workers in Kolkata oppose Google censorship

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During recent weeks, the ICFI/WSWS supporters in India have campaigned against Google’s censorship of the *World Socialist Web Site* among students and workers in Kolkata, capital of the Indian state of West Bengal. They circulated copies of the open letter by David North, the chairperson of the WSWS International Editorial Board.

On April 25, 2017, Google announced changes to the algorithms of its search engine to make it harder for users to access what it called “low-quality” information, such as “conspiracy theories” and “fake news.” What has really happened is a substantial reduction of search results from the WSWS and other anti-war, progressive and left-wing sites.

ICFI/WSWS supporters visited the two major universities in Kolkata—Jadavpur University and Presidency University—and spoke to students about the significance of the WSWS/ICFI campaign against Google censorship, as well as the Indian government’s attacks on democratic rights and the US war drive against China.

The campaigners particularly discussed the treacherous role of India’s main Stalinist parties—the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) and the Communist Party of India (CPI)—in blocking any independent political movement of the working class against bourgeois rule. The CPM-led Left Front ruled West Bengal for 34 years before being ousted in 2011 by the Trinamool Congress (TMC), a right-wing, regional party.

Students expressed their support for the WSWS/ICFI campaign and signed the WSWS online petition

opposing Google’s censorship. Many were concerned that Google was blocking their right to access information. Mainak Sarkar told the campaigners: “They don’t want people to know about a possible third world war because of the catastrophe it will cause.”

Soumen Chowdhury commented on the ICFI/WSWS campaign to build an anti-war movement of the international working class: “It is a good step to save humanity. The governments are creating these misdirections and influencing the opinion of the people. They are censoring the websites to block dissident views critical of the US establishment.”

At the Presidency University, **Aryama Bhattacharya** said: “This act by Google is the suppression of freedom of speech. The US government took control of the oil fields in Iraq. They have advanced weapons which can cause unforeseen consequences in the event of a global war”.

Bhattacharya referred to the killing of Gauri Lankesh, a female journalist, in Bangalore on September 5. Lankesh had been a target of Hindu extremists for exposing and denouncing the Hindu right, including the ruling Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) of Prime Minister Modi. Her murder was believed to be the work of Hindu communalists.

Bhattacharya said: “Free speech has been suppressed. It is not only Lankesh. A few days ago there was a journalist in Manipur who was also killed. It is a demonstration of power by the government. Since they are in the majority they say ‘this is what we can do!’ Like America is saying ‘this is what we can do’. It is

time for people's eyes to be opened.”

Ujan, a student of the Presidency University, spoke about the Stalinist Left Front and the TMC in West Bengal. “The Left [Front] never represented what communism stood for. They didn't think of poor people and only cared about their votes. They only claimed to be 'left'. Even after the defeat of the CPM-led government by the TMC, nothing changed. They are just less educated variants of the CPM. Any opposition is not permitted.”

When asked about the Modi government, Ujan said: “He [Modi] knows how to sell and market frivolously through the corporate media. He is also beefing up communal hatred to shift the focus from the economic and administrative failures of his BJP government. Anyone who is opposing Modi is being brought down. Anyone who is criticizing the government is being labelled as an anti-national.

“Since coming to power, with the help of the corporate media, he has painted a picture for the general public that he is doing great things. But in fact, Modi has been sucking the wealth of the country and giving it to investors,” he said.

Ujan also spoke about the killing of journalist Lankesh. “This revealed basically the fascistic nature of the Modi government—anyone opposing them must be brought down! Anyone with anti-government views is branded as anti-national and attacked. Nationalism has nothing to do with caring for people. Nation, boundaries, flags and anthem are not about the people.”

Commenting on Modi's bellicose campaign against Pakistan, Ujan said there was a connection between whipping up nationalism and intensifying the attacks on working people. “Modi tries to scare the people with the claim that Pakistan is going to attack us. The enmity has been developed in our country that Pakistan is our enemy. This propaganda contributes to communal hatred.

“By whipping up nationalism and communalism they are deliberately trying to divert public attention from their aggressive attacks against the people. While the main focus is on these communal and nationalist issues, we don't see how gradually they are depriving us economically,” he said. “The Modi government has rolled out demonetisation measures under the fraudulent name of combating terrorism and then introduced the GST [Goods and Service Tax].”

“I don't believe any political party because they all have actually become bourgeois. There is no fundamental difference between the left and right. There is no left alternative in this country to fight against communalism and bourgeois governments. There must be an uprising of the poor and workers, but that cannot be done under the leadership of the CPM or other parties. We should join the working class in the revolutionary movement,” Ujan concluded.

On October 8, the ICFI supporters intervened at the screening of a protest film in memory of Gauri Lankesh organised by an artistic group known as the “People's Film Collective.” They handed out copies of the WSWs article on the assassination of Lankesh and spoke to participants about the campaign against Google censorship.

A. Balaji, a bank employee, said: “The freedom of speech is under increasing attack everywhere. We need to create more awareness about this issue. This campaign for the defence of basic democratic rights must grow broadly among all sections of people, including in schools. In this country, the Modi government has been carrying on relentless attacks on democratic rights. The killing of Gauri Lankesh by Hindu communalists is the latest attack on freedom of speech.”

A. Venkatramana, a teacher, commented on the role of the Stalinist parties: “The Lefts have alienated themselves from the masses. We must fight sincerely against communalism and in defence of fundamental democratic rights. But here what we see is the pathetic condition of the Left parties because of their insincerity.”

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