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Sri Lanka/16th World Congress

On the situation in Sri Lanka

- News from around the world -

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Last May the national struggle of the Tamil people suffered a total defeat at the hands of the Sri Lankan government. The defeat, which was a product of the "war on terror" was the most comprehensive defeat suffered by a national liberation struggle for many years. It is a defeat not just for the Tamil people but for the whole of the left and progressive forces in Sri Lanka.

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In the last two months of the war, the armed forces committed relentless and indiscriminate artillery and air attacks killing some 40,000 civilians, including many women and children.

Mahinda Rajapaksa, who was reelected last January, has no intention of resolving the Tamil national question for which the Tamil people have struggled for decades.

After the war, some 300,000 civilians were forced to flee from the war zone and were locked up in internment camps behind barbed wire fences. These internally displaced persons (IDP), as they were branded, have been allowed since December to go back to their original homes but the Rajapaksa government has not given the means for a real settlement. People are still waiting for financial assistance and also food support, medical and sanitary aid. To this day around 100,000 civilians are still remaining in the camps.

Besides this situation, the Rajapaksa government uses open and brutal repression to silence its opponents and the media. There are 12,000 political prisoners behind bars, some of them for years, without any legal inquiries and most of them are Tamils. Not less than 20 journalists have been killed in the last three years. Many of them have fled the country in fear of their lives.

The government must seriously address a political settlement for the Tamil national question. The first step should be to build a power-sharing arrangement.

We also demand that:

• All political prisoners be released unconditionally,

• The Sri Lankan government stop suppression of media freedom,

• The Sri Lankan government assure the IDP a safe settlement in their home and secure the livelihood.

We congratulate our comrades in the NSSP for the courageous stand they have made, and continue to make, in the face of Sinhala state repression and regret that some on the left internationally were unable to lend more support to this struggle.

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27th February 2010