



Sri Lanka demonstration in defence of the Tamils

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Vavuniya, May 24, Supporters of the Left Liberation Front, including the Socialist Party of Sri Lanka, are joined by relatives of the disappeared in a protest against government refusal to release even the names of the thousands of Tamils it still holds.

A full year after the bloodbath that marked the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka, the government of Mahinda Rajapakse is still refusing to reveal the fate of thousands of 'disappeared'. In Vavuniya, in the heart of the Tamil region, the first anniversary of the end of the war was marked by demonstrations demanding that the government reveal the names of the those it is still holding in internment camps.



Meanwhile, the whole country is waiting for the government to reveal the budget plans that have been repeatedly delayed. With government debt rocketing to 86% of GDP last year and an annual deficit on spending of 9.75%, rather than the budgeted 7%, it is clear that savage cuts are planned.

After a recent visit to inspect Rajapakse's plans, a delegation from the International Monetary Fund, IMF, announced that it will not release the third instalment of a 'rescue' package negotiated last year. No doubt this episode was stage managed to provide justification for a budget that will see sweeping cuts in government spending on social services and agricultural subsidies alongside increased taxation and privatisation of state assets.



Having failed to present a budget to parliament, Rajapakse's is effectively ruling by presidential decree at present, taking advantage of a constitutional loophole that allowed this while elections were held. This emergency arrangement is expected to come to an end with the presentation of a budget on June 29th - only then will the full scale of the cost of the war and its aftermath become clear.

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