

Statement on the Sri Lanka bombings

International Secretariat, League for the Fifth International Fri, 26/04/2019 - 07:52

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Socialists everywhere should unconditionally condemn the recent bombings in Sri Lanka which, at the latest count, killed more than 200 entirely innocent people. Such terrorist attacks inevitably benefit reactionary forces, both internationally and within Sri Lanka itself, whether such forces are backed by the state or not. Already, the government of Ranil Wickremasinghe has declared a State of Emergency, imposed a curfew and blocked social media throughout the island.

It is widely reported that the attacks were carried out by members of National Thowheed Jamath, a small, Sri Lanka-based, Islamist grouping better known for vandalising Buddhist temples. The assumption that international support would have been required for them to mount such an operation is strengthened by the claim of responsibility by the Islamic State, IS. Whoever was actually responsible, the motivation of that claim is clearly to provoke a backlash against the island's muslim community and to strengthen islamophobia everywhere.

Mobilising to prevent any such backlash, for example, from Buddhist extremists such as the fascist Bodu Bala Sena, must be the highest priority for socialists and trade unionists, indeed all sincere democrats. No doubt many will look to the forces of the state for protection but these are unreliable defenders. It is clear that elements within the security apparatus knew of the Easter bombings in advance, knew perfectly well how deadly they would be, and yet did nothing to prevent them.

To suggest this was just a failure of communication is absurd. This can only have been a conscious decision not to act by those who knew. That decision had nothing to do with either Islam or Christianity, that decision was driven by a political calculation to deepen the already existing divisions within the government coalition. To rely on such forces to defend muslim communities would be folly indeed.

Instead, those communities and their allies need to organise their own defence through democratically controlled local and district committees. Where the likes of IS hope to attract a few individuals, enraged by the predictable Islamophobic backlash, socialists should seek to mobilise the entire community, draw in activists from other communities and promote a working class political alternative to all the bourgeois parties.

The likely involvement of IS also underlines the importance of the international context. The rivalry between the different world powers, especially the USA and China, means that, even if they had no direct hand in these bombings, they will surely be looking for ways to take advantage of the situation, backing their chosen puppets on the stage of Sri Lankan politics. Ultimately, the carnage in Colombo, Negombo and Batticaloa was the collateral damage of decades of war in the Middle East. That has created a global conflict that can only be resolved on a global scale - as well as a workers' party in Sri Lanka, we need a global party of the working class, a Fifth International.

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