

Sri Lankan plantation action committees hold public meeting to demand reinstatement of sacked workers

20 March 2022

Plantation workers' action committees in the Alton, Glenugie and Abbotsleigh estates in Sri Lanka's central tea plantation district are holding an online public meeting at 3 p.m. on Sunday March 27 to demand the reinstatement of 54 plantation workers who have been victimised and sacked by managers at the three sites.

On March 22 last year, the Horana Plantation Company sacked 38 workers from the Alton Estate in Maskeliya, falsely accusing them of assaulting a manager and assistant manager. Police charges and court cases have been filed against 24 of these workers.

In September and November, 11 workers from Katukelle estate, Talawakelle, were suspended from employment and cases were lodged against them following a six-day strike in protest against increased workloads and wage cuts.

Another five workers from Vellaioya estate, near Hatton, have been dismissed in the same manner. For their reinstatement, they were forced to sign a repressive work agreement which includes increased productivity targets.

The plantation workers' action committees at Alton, Glenugie and Abbotsleigh, which were formed on the initiative of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), demand the dropping of all charges, an end to the frame-up trials, and the unconditional reinstatement of all sacked workers.

These attacks were unleashed with the full backing of the plantation unions: the Ceylon Workers Congress, the National Union of Workers and the Lanka Jathika Estate Workers Union. None of these unions have defended the victimised plantation workers, instead deliberately isolating them and conspiring with plantation management.

The witch hunt of plantation workers is part of the escalating Sri Lankan government and big business assault on the wages, living conditions and jobs of the entire working class. The economic catastrophe caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented rise in the cost of living have pushed all workers and the oppressed masses into great hardship.

Plantation workers, who are among the most oppressed sections of the Sri Lankan working class, face harsh living and working conditions that have been imposed by the estate companies in collaboration with the trade unions.

This meeting will discuss the independent, anti-capitalist program needed to mobilise workers to defeat the brutal company and government attacks. We urge workers, youth and WSWs readers to participate in this meeting and join the struggle being waged by the plantation action committees and the SEP.

Registration here.



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