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Sri Lanka

A merciless war that has brought no political solution

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On Sunday 7th May the weapons of the Tamil Eelam Tigers were silenced and they heard of the death of their leader Vilupillai Prabhakaran. This was the end of a brutal and merciless military offensive by the chauvinistic nationalist Sinhalese government led by Mahinda Rajapaksa.

For several months the regime had unremittingly bombarded Tamil rebels and civilians in its so-called "war against terrorism". Hospitals, schools, homes were bombarded, causing more than 7000 deaths and 15000 wounded, Tamils who were forcibly moved and placed in detention camps that they weren't allowed to leave. They are all innocent civilians, but suspected of terrorism simply because their belong to the Tamil minority of the North and East of the island.

This military victory will not nevertheless put the end to a military conflict that has lasted for several decades. Since 1948, when Sri Lanka became independent, the minority in Sri Lanka have suffered systematic linguistic, cultural and economic discrimination. Up to the 1970s the Tamils of the North East repeatedly and unsuccessfully demanded the respect of their rights and culture by peaceful means. This led to a political radicalisation of Tamil youth and to the emergence of an armed struggle that lasted for almost 30 years. While we can only condemn the suicide attacks and the violence of the Tamil Tigers, the struggle for the respect for Tamil rights and culture are still pertinent.

This war against the Tamil Tigers has served as a pretext for the authoritarian Rajapaksa regime to limit democratic freedoms not only for the ethnic minorities in the country but for all citizens. The government has sent its death squadrons against independent journalists and critics of its war policy.

No lasting policy will be possible without recognition of the right to self-determination of the Tamil people. Autonomy must be granted to the regions with a non-Sinhala majority and equality between citizens must be granted as the only guarantee of peace and democracy in a multiracial and multi-cultural state.

A real democracy cannot exist without respect for the rights of ethnic minorities.

Bureau of the Fourth International

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