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Rajendra Acharya,
Regional Secretary,
UNI APRO Office,
Singapore.
10.7.2021

Dear Brother,

Very Urgent Request to send message of Solidarity

We hope you are doing well and keeping safe in the present pandemic situation.

You may be aware that the Sri Lankan Government is using a militaristic approach in the present situation on all fronts as far as Students, Workers and Peasants are concerned. All protests are curtailed or banned under the pretext of Covid-19 and in many cases the workers are penalized by curtailing their movements. The public transport is minimum and or nonexistent and the workers are forced to find their own way to work whereas some employers provide transport. No meetings are permitted under the health guidelines and restricts gathering of people, TU meetings are prohibited, without permission from the PHI (Public Health Inspector). (But the government party members are having their own way and have meetings, parties and festivals without any interruptions or restrictions)

On the other hand, the government is bringing legislature in various sectors which are detrimental to the vast majority of people and curtail democratic rights. On the 7th of July in a state corporation (State Engineering Corporation) terminated the services of 9 workers for demanding their wages for the month they worked and were suspended. Two workers climbed to the top of the building in protest and later was forced by Police to come down and were sent to 14 days quarantine along with the Trade Union Leader **Comrade Duminda Nagamuwa** who contested the Presidential Election in 2019.

The government has appointed 25 army commanders to 25 districts of the island and continuing to appoint ex-army Commanders or officials as head of ministries and government agencies. The most recent attempt to bring legislature to establish a military academy (apart from what is already existing) which curtail the free education system, the University students and the teacher protests were curbed under the pretext of health guidelines. Limited number of participants at meetings (not more than 25) and various other conditions to be observed.

The Teachers Union and some students Union were having an agitation against the new bill to be passed in the parliament on 8th of July. General Secretary of the Ceylon Teachers Union **Comrade Joseph Starlin** and two other Union leaders (whom you see in the attached pictures) along with 31 others were arrested on the 8th of July and produced before court. The judge released them, but the Police refused to let them go and took them by force to a remote center 330 km off from Colombo without even their personal belongings such as clothing, toothbrush, towel, and essential items.

From the pictures you could see how tense the situation was at the agitation point and the inhuman and cruel way the Police acted and treated even the few women who were present. This was not warranted at all.

We request you to send a letter of solidarity with the struggle that continues against undemocratic high handed and cruelty that is imposed upon peaceful demonstrations and arbitrary detention of Trade union leaders under the pretext of CoviD-19.

The letters DEMANDING THE RELEASE OF TRADE UNION LEADERS AND STUDENT ACTIVISTS and of your concern about Democratic rights of the people and workers in Sri Lanka can be sent to the following.

1. President of Sri Lanka - Mr. Gotabhaya Rajapaksa -
Email: ps@presidentsoffice.lk

2. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka - Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa.
Email: info@pmoffice.gov.lk

3. Minister of Labour - Mr. Nimal Siripala De Silva
Email: minister@labourmin.gov.lk

Please be kind enough to send us a copy of your letter for our records.

Yours fraternally,



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Haripriya Hettiarachchi
Secretary
UNI SLAC