

Italy must free Tamil human rights campaigners - Progressives should support self-determination

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This statement of solidarity with the Tamil people's struggle for self-determination was agreed by the sections present at this month's meeting of the Fourth International's European Political Bureaux.

The Italian government has arrested over thirty Sri Lankan Tamils from all over the country. These arrests took place after the Tamils participated in the "Pongu Tamil" (Tamil Awakening) rally held in Milan.

The rally held in Piazza Argentina in Milan that highlighted human rights violations committed by the Sri Lankan government waging a war against the Tamils was also addressed by Burani Vainer from the Association of Democratic Jurists. The arrests were made after the Sri Lankan diplomatic made a complaint to the police authorities that the rally was organised by supporters of the banned Tamil Tigers. Although police have told media that the Tamils were arrested under suspicion of "extortion" no one has yet been produced in court. The Italian government has not made an official statement on the arrest of a large number of non-Italians on their soil.

We see these arrests as a move to undermine the legitimate demand of the Tamil nation for Self Determination and to suppress the Tamil voice against atrocities committed by the Sri Lankan government.

While strongly protesting the arrest of a group of people exercising their democratic right to demand justice we call upon the Italian government to provide access to adequate legal redress for the arrested Tamils and to make their release speedy. We also request the Italian authorities not to hand them over to Sri Lankan authorities from whom they have fled from prosecution in Sri Lanka.

We also call upon all Socialists, Anti-war and progressive forces to unreservedly oppose this repressive act of the Italian Authorities. We reaffirm our call for the lifting of the ban on the LTTE in Europe, which victimises the Tamils.

* Belgium, Socialistische Arbeiders Partij / Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire

* Britain, International Socialist Group

* Denmark, Socialistisk Arbejderparti

* France, Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire

* Germany, internationale sozialistische linke, Revolutionär Sozialistischer Bund

* Netherlands, Socialistische Alternatieve Politiek

* Sweden, Socialistiska Partiet