

# CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

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*Southern Provincial Council Election – 2009*

**MEDIA COMMUNIQUE NO. 01**

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## **Background**

CMEV has commenced its monitoring in all three districts of the Southern Province. Twenty-one (21) election monitors have been deployed- 4 in Hambantota, 7 in Matara and 9 in the Galle district. They will monitor the pre and post election process. On Election Day, monitoring will be carried out by 10 mobile teams comprising of special observers. Monitors will also be stationed in selected sensitive polling stations.

With the dissolution of the Southern Provincial Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2009 by gazette notification No. 1613/1, the election campaign commenced, followed by the submission of nominations during the period 21<sup>st</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 as per the provisions of the gazette notification No. 1613 / 39.

There are 1091 candidates representing 52 political parties and independent groups in all three districts of the Southern Province contesting in this election. The total number of members in the Southern Provincial Council is 55.

A CMEV team visited all three districts of the province from 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> September 2009. Party offices of the UPFA, UNP and JVP were visited and discussions had with the available political team leaders and coordinating officers of each district.

Further discussions were held with Additional Commissioners of Elections, Senior Superintendents of Police and other officers as well as civil society activists involved in ensuring the proper implementation of election laws and regulations.

## **Situation Analysis**

There is a decline in the number of incidents of election related violence in all three districts. This is particularly the case in respect of inter-party violence. However there is considerable intra-party violence amongst UPFA candidates, in particular, as well as the abuse of state resources by the ruling alliance. All the political parties expressed some satisfaction with the work of the Police, but opposition parties were critical of the Police on the issue of posters and unauthorized party offices.

The use of posters, cut outs and banners in flagrant violation of the election laws is commonplace with candidates of the ruling coalition being the chief culprits. The most unfortunate situation in relation to the implementation of election laws is the failure of the Police to fulfill its responsibilities. Section 74 of the Provincial Councils Elections Act No. 2, 1988 empowers the Police to act regarding the display of handbills, posters, placards etc. in public places. Another factor in the inability of the Police to perform its duties under the law is the lack of resources – the department of elections is supposed to provide the resources to the police to remove posters and handbills displayed in public places.

CMEV reiterates its call to all political parties to ensure that the conduct of the election campaign in the Southern Province takes place with no further abuse of public property, recourse to violence and violations of election laws and in an atmosphere that enables all voters of the province to exercise their franchise freely and fairly. CMEV urges the authorities to ensure that all actions are taken so that there will be no effective disenfranchisement of voters and abuse of public resources.

CMEV was formed in 1997 by the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), the Free Media Movement (FMM) and the Coalition against Political Violence as an independent and non-partisan organisation to monitor the incidence of election related violence. Currently CMEV is made up of CPA, FMM and INFORM Human Rights Documentation Centre.



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