

CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

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தேர்தல் வன்முறைகளைக் கண்காணிப்பதற்கான நிலையம்

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Jaffna MC & Vavuniya UC Council Elections-2009

Field Visit Report-Vavuniya

30th July 2009

The Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) made a fact finding visit to Vavuniya from 23-24th July to assess the situation there with regard to the Urban Council Election on 8 May 2009. CMEV met with political party leaders, candidates, the Assistant Election Commissioner, Police, members of the Bar Association, Chamber of Commerce, Civil Society leaders, activists and members of the general public.

One hundred and thirty five (135) candidates from six political parties and three independent groups are contesting the election for the 11 seat Vavuniya Urban Council. Most of the political parties engage in house to house visits, pocket meetings and campaigning in vehicle convoys using loudspeakers. Posters and cutouts of all political parties except the Sri Lanka Progressive Front and independent groups can be seen almost everywhere.

List of parties & independent groups and their chief candidate details are as follows:

Contesting Party	Chief Candidate
Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (ITAK/EPRLF/TELO/ACTC)	S.N.G.Nathan
United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) (EPDP+ Sri TELO+EROS+ACMC+SLFP)	Sivan Sivakumar
United National Party (UNP)	P.Ranganathan
Democratic Peoples Liberation Fornt(DPLF)-(PLOTE)	G.T.Linganathan(Former Chairman)
Sri Lanka Muslim Congress(SLMC)	A.L.M.Munawfer
Sri Lanka Progressive Front(SLFP)	Ponnambalam Sivalingam
Independent Group No. 1	Abraham Jeewarasa
Independent Group No. 2	Rasendiram Antony Daas
Independent Group No. 3	Sellaththorai Raveendran

Whilst eligible voters number 24,626, according to the information CMEV received from the field, the actual number of voters could be around 20-21,000 as many have left Vavuniya for various reasons. Accordingly, political parties informed CMEV that there could be eligible voters in new IDP locations including the Manik farm complex, since many people who went to the Vanni for matrimonial and business purposes could not return. They expressed concern about the information issued by the Election Commissioner regarding the exercise of the franchise by displaced persons reaching the affected persons and pointed to the conditions of the latter in the camps as a key factor impacting on the fullest exercise of the franchise in the election.

Election Campaign :Despite intensification in campaign activity, civil society actors also projected a low voter turn out on account of public opinion characterizing the election as one arising out of priorities that had little to do with them and their priorities relating to the IDPs and daily livelihood concerns. Another issue raised by the public is that most of the candidates and political parties are talking about subjects which are beyond their control and which do not fall under the powers and responsibilities of the local authority.

Election Violence: On 27th July, at around 07.00pm 03 TNA candidates namely P. Paramsothy (Candidate No. 04), N. Madiharan (Candidate No. 11) and P. Sellathurai (Candidate No. 12) received death threats from Kannan, a member of the Democratic People's Liberation Front (DPLF) who is in charge of the Thirunavatkulam area. A complaint (EIB 01/12) was made to the Vavuniya Police Station on this account.

The TNA & DPLF alleged that the ruling party was using the Urban Council premises for its campaigning activities. UPFA mayoral candidate Sivan Sivakumar rejected this and affirmed that UPFA campaign activities were in accordance with the election law.

The SLMC & TNA, complained to CMEV, that they were being subjected to intimidation over the phone by unidentified groups. There could be incidents of violence in run up to the poll, according to the information CMEV received from various actors. Some of them also expressed concern that there could be post election violence, if the ruling party alliance loses the election.

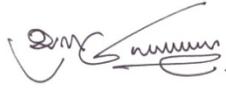
CMEV received positive responses from the political parties regarding the work of the Police, but civil society activists and businessmen were critical. They complained that the Police was not fulfilling its responsibilities in respect of the removal of posters and cut outs and the use of loudspeakers.

CMEV will monitor the Vavuniya UC Election during the campaigning period, Election Day and post election period. It will deploy field monitors during the pre & post election period and stationary monitors and mobile teams on Election Day.

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 nonpartisan organization 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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