

CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

මැතිවරණ ප්‍රචණ්ඩත්වය නිරීක්ෂණ මධ්‍යස්ථානය
தேர்தல் வன்முறைகளைக் கண்காணிப்பதற்கான நிலையம்

24/2, 28th Lane, Off Flower Road, Colombo 7.

Tel: 11 4062180-190, 011 2565304, Fax: 011 4714460, 0114503001.

E-mail: cmev@cpalanka.org Website: www.cmev.org

Presidential Election 2015

Media Communique 15

7th January

The day prior to polling witnessed the first fatality of the Presidential Election of 2015. Mr Shantha Dodagangoda who was critically injured in a shooting incident at Kahawatte, Ratnapura on the morning of Monday 5th January, died at 3.05 pm today at the Ratnapura hospital. Although the Pelmadulla Magistrates Court issued an arrest warrant for Deputy Minister of Power & Energy, Premalal Jayasekera, Minister Nilantha Jayakodi and Pradeshiya Sabha Chairman Vajira Dharshana de Silva on 5th January, no arrests had taken place as of the 7th.

CMEV is extremely concerned by the rise in election-related violence and violations a day prior to polls including a death threat to a CMEV monitor by a Pradeshiya Sabha Minister and continuous death threats faced by human rights defenders (HRDs). These violations demonstrate an inability among officials within the present system to take necessary steps to address the culture of impunity. CMEV urges the authorities to take all steps to ensure the integrity of the poll.

CMEV received two reports of attempts to pay for identification documents from two different districts. In Akkaraichennai, Muttur in Trincomlee District, CMEV received a complaint stating that National Identity Cards and Drivers Licenses, have been collected in exchange for approximately Rs. 1000, by unknown persons. CMEV was informed by TNA Northern Provincial Council member Mr. Janadharan that he suspects UPFA supporters are involved in this incident. In Beruwela, Kalutara District, CMEV monitor had witnessed an incident where a UPFA supporter and former Organiser of the Urban Council, Mr. Mohamed Marjan, handing out Rs. 5000 each in exchange for National Identity Cards.

After the close of the campaign, CMEV has received a number of reports of the distribution of campaign material and other propaganda activities. A poster of President Mahinda Rajapaksa had been given out with the "Tharuni" newspaper on the 7th of January at Bibile. Complaints have also been received regarding an article signed by Minister Nimal Siripala Silva with content against Common Presidential Candidate Maithripala Sirisena, being distributed by supporters of the Minister at Lower Street in Badulla at approximately 4.45 pm on the 7th of January. Copies of "Litha" (charts of auspicious times)

with the picture of President Rajapaksa, have been distributed in the Wellawaya area by supporters of the Wellawaya Pradeshiya Sabha Chairman Mr. Rohana Wanniarachchi.

Another area of concern has been attempts to influence voters through misinformation circulated to confuse and discourage voters. CMEV was informed of a specific handbill that was circulated in Kilinochchi on the 6th of January. According to the complaint, the handbill discourages voters from casting their vote, with content against Common Presidential Candidate Maithirpala Sirisena and President Mahinda Rajapaksa. The handbill is printed under the name of the 'Independent Group of the Tamil National Alliance'. The TNA has denied involvement with the issuing of such a statement.

CMEV wishes to reiterate its concern about the presence of the military adversely impacting voter turnout especially in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Throughout the 6th & 7th January, CMEV has received many expressions of concern and allegations of the intimidatory presence of the military and therefore raises this issue yet again as one of serious concern.

Incidents Reported on 7 January

7th January – Death threat to CMEV monitor in Kalaweva, Anuradhapura District

CMEV Monitor R.S.S. Doragamuwa was threatened via a phone call by UPFA Pradeshiya Sabha Minister Nimalsiri who threatened to break his arms, legs, and to murder him on the 9th of January. The threat was attributed to the CMEV monitor not supporting President Mahinda Rajapaksa, and also because of his involvement in Election Monitoring.

7th January – Military officials in possession of ballot box and ballot papers in Upparu, Muttur, Trincomalee District

CMEV received reports in the morning of Navy officials at the Koganna Navy Camp in Upparu, Kinniya, Trincomalee being in possession of a ballot box and ballot papers. CMEV has notified the Commissioner of Elections regarding this matter.

CMEV also previously communicated to the Commissioner of Elections and the Assistant Commissioner for Trincomalee District that approximately 100 ballot boxes were being filled at approximately 1.00pm by two high level naval officers at the Sober Island Resort, Trincomalee, which can only be accessed via boats departing from the Trincomalee Naval Base. The Assistant Commissioner subsequently informed CMEV at 4.00pm that he had sent personnel to the Sober Island Resort to check on the allegation and found it to be false.

7th January – Ballot papers and a ballot box held by Navy in the Koganna Camp, Kinniya, Trincomalee District

CMEV was informed of an incident where the Sri Lanka Navy is allegedly to be in possession of a ballot box and ballot papers, which is reportedly being kept at the Koganna camp, in Upparu, Kinniya, under

the protection of Senior Navy officials. This incident too was reported by CMEV to the Election Commissioner.

7th January – Text message circulated in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu

CMEV received complaints regarding a text message, which has been circulated in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu from a blocked number, asking the recipients to vote for President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

7th January – Message to Nalanda College Old Boys' Association

An email sent from President Mahinda Rajapaksa on the 7th of January to the Old Boys' Association of Nalanda College was forwarded to CMEV. The message focuses on the shared Nalanda connection between President Mahinda Rajapaksa and the recipients in a general appeal to alumni to fight for the security of the nation that was won in the civil war, by supporting President Rajapaksa at the Presidential Election.

7th January – Blockage on Road leading to Polling Center

CMEV received a report of a road blockade impeding access to a Polling Center, in Baddegama in the Galle District. The Polling Center, Mabotuwana Nawala Kanishta Vidyalaya (Polling Center No 25) is currently not accessible by a vehicle due to the presence large stones left on the road leading to the center by the Vanduramba Pradeshiya Sabha, with the explanation that it is in the process of tarring the road. An alternate route to the Polling Center would take more time. The stones are effectively blocking access by Polling Center Officials and monitors.

7th January – Fake Ballot papers distributed in Arasadithivu, Kokkadicholai, in the Batticaloa District

CMEV received a complaint regarding an incident where supporters of Mr. Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan, better known as Karuna Amman, have distributed fake Ballot Papers, where Common Presidential Candidate Maithripala Sirisena's symbol has been changed from a Swan to a Three Wheeler, on the 7th of January.

7th January – Message against Common Presidential Candidate Maithripala Sirisena circulated via SMS in Kattankudy, Batticaloa

CMEV received a report regarding the circulation of a text message with content going against Common Presidential Candidate Maithripala Sirisena, being sent and circulated by number **0768385917**, in Kattankudy, Batticaloa. According to reports, a text message stating that Common Presidential Candidate Maithripala Sirisena was Deputy Defense Minister when 50,000 Tamils were killed in 2009, and therefore advising the public not to vote for him, was circulated.

7th January – Bribery at Dehiaththakandiya, Ampara District.

CMEV received a complaint regarding an incident where a relative of Parliamentarian Mrs. Sriyani Wijewickrama was distributing money in exchange for the promise that citizens will vote for President Mahinda Rajapaksa. According to the complaint, the money was distributed to a number of people at No. 31, Gurugammanaya, Dehiaththakandiya. When CMEV contacted ASP Mr. Chandrapala regarding the incident, he stated that it was a meeting for officials of the Polling Center, and no bribery had taken place.

7th January – A market declared open in Gampala, in the Kandy District

A complaint has been received by CMEV regarding an opening of a public market near the New Road, in Gampala. According to the complaint, Prime Minister Dimu Jayaratne, along with his son, Parliament Minister Anuradha Jayaratne has been present and had declared the market open. During the campaign period CMEV highlighted the use of development projects to carry out election propaganda, and it is an issue of concern that this is continuing even after the campaign period has ended.

7th January – Gathering of information for state assistance in Handapanagala, Wellawaya, Monaragala District

CMEV received a complaint regarding an incident in Handapanagala, Wellawaya, Monaragala District on the 7th of January, 2014 where Mr. Sepala, a Samurdhi Officer had been distributing forms which were issued by the Divi Neguma Department of the Ministry of Economic Development, to Three Wheeler owners of the Handapanagala area. The Samurdhi Officer had reportedly stated that the information was required by the Divi Neguma department of the Ministry of Economic Development, under the Budget of 2015, proposed by President Mahinda Rajapaksa, so as to provide life Insurance and a pension scheme for three wheel drivers in the future. CMEV is currently attempting to obtain a copy of the distributed form.

7th January – Kiribath (Milk Rice) Dansala to be held on the 8th of January opposite a Polling Center in Bibile, in the Monaragala District

CMEV received a complaint regarding a Kiribath Dansala which is scheduled to take place on the morning of the Presidential Election, opposite the Badullagamma Vidyalaya (Polling Center No17) in Bibile, a Polling Center in the District of Monaragala. CMEV was informed that the Bibile Pradeshiya Sabha Minister Buddhika Seneviratne, has been the main organiser of this Dansala which is to take place at the Cooperative Society Building, opposite the Polling Center.

7th January – No security at Polling Center in Lingannagar, in the Trincomalee District.

CMEV monitor in the Trincomalee District reported that at Konalingam Maha Vidyalay (Polling Center 31) apart from the Senior Presiding Officer and two Junior Presiding Officers, there was no Police or any form of security available for the Polling Center. The CMEV monitor noted a small gathering of unidentified persons within 50 meters of the polling center.

Several major incidents were reported from 6th of January including attacks

6th January – UNP supporter’s business place attacked in Hali Ela, Badulla

CMEV received a complaint with regard to an incident where the business place of a UNP supporter, Mr. Muthubandara was attacked on the 6th of January, at Hali Ela, Badulla. According to the victim, the perpetrators had attacked “Anuradha Hotel” twice. Following the first attack, he had seen the attackers leaving the premises in a white Defender vehicle. The second attack was approximately 30 minutes after the first. The victim had identified the vehicle number plate as WP KB – 6570. The attackers had struck the victim with an iron pole and fired shots. According to Mr. Muthubandara, the perpetrators are supporters of Minister Dilan Perera. He had received treatment at the Ettampitiya Hospital. A complaint was lodged at the Ettampitiya Police station under the complaint number EIB 48/16.

6th January – UNP Supporter’s house attacked in Ettampitiya, Badulla District

CMEV received a complaint regarding an attack on the house of a UNP supporter, Mr. V. Weerasinghe. According to the complaint, the house, which is situated in Ettampitiya, was attacked during the early hours on the 6th of January, damaging the windows, walls and the roof of the house. According to the victim, the suspects are alleged to be employees working under Minister Dilan Perera at the Foreign Employment Bureau. A complaint has been lodged at the Ettampitiya Police.

6th January – Family member of UNP supporter attacked in Mahiyanganya, Moneragala District

A complaint was received by CMEV regarding an incident of threat and intimidation of a UNP supporter, Mr. Janaka Abeyratne, on the 6th of January at approximately 6.00 pm when a mob came in search of him. Mr. Abeyratne alleged that the attackers had been unable to find him but instead found his father, Mr. D.M. Abeyratne. The senior Mr Abeyratne claims that the mob included UPFA Mahiyangana Lead Organiser and Uva Provincial Council Agricultural Minister Anura Vidanagamage along with Parliament member Mr. Thenuka Vidanagamage and UPFA supporters who had allegedly threatened to kill his son and had struck him in the abdomen with a gun. When speaking to CMEV, the victim stated that he had explained the situation in detail to the OIC of the Mahiyanganaya Police Mr. C.I. Wickremasinghe. However, speaking to CMEV, the OIC stated that the victim had informed the Police that he did not know who the attackers were. No complaint has been lodged with the Police.

6th January – House of Beliatta UNP Communications Secretary attacked in Beliatta, in the Hambantota District

CMEV received a complaint pertaining to an incident where the house of the Secretary of the Beliatta UNP Communications Department, Mr. S.H. Kamalsiri, was attacked on the 6th of January at approximately 11.45 pm. According to the complaint, shots had been fired and had hit the walls, as well as a three- wheeler, which was parked on the premises. Mr. Kamalsiri had made a phone call to the 119 emergency hotline when the incident took place, to which they responded by advising them to stay indoors until help was sent. The Police had arrived 20 minutes later but had been unable to apprehend or identify the attackers. A complaint was lodged at the Police under the entry number EIB 224/147.

On the 6th of January, UPFA supporters were seen openly holding political meetings in the Batticaloa District, including a meeting held at 4.30pm at the Pentacostal Church located on the Polonnaruwa-Batticaloa Road, where armed military personnel and vehicles were visibly in attendance.

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 and INFORM Human Rights Documentation Centre.

CMEV reports and communiqués can be accessed online at www.cmev.org



Dr. P. Saravanamuttu
Co – Convener