



CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

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As a consequence of the historic allocation of 25% female representation in this election, the minimum number of female candidates that would be elected to all the local authorities throughout the country will amount to over 1985.

CMEV has the following observations to make with regard to this, in the campaign so far. These observations are based on field reports received by CMEV.

1. Party secretaries and party organizers have not effectively used this provision to the full.
2. Promises made to potential female candidates regarding nomination have not been fulfilled.
3. Sexual favours have been demanded from potential women candidates in exchange for their confirmation as candidates.
4. Exploiting the lack of information/knowledge of candidates of the new electoral system with regard to nomination.
5. Chief organizers of parties curtailing the freedom of women candidates to organize their election campaigns in collaboration with constituents and local party leaders.
6. Lodging false complaints against women candidates and hindering their election campaigns by deploying supporters to dissuade voters from voting for women candidates.

Below is a summary of some incidents involving women candidates.

15th January 2018, Puttalam district,

A series of viral videos containing insults and hate speech condemning the involvement of female candidates disseminated through social media. The cleric known as Niyaz Maulavi is alleged to be responsible for tarnishing the reputation of women candidates, including the use of profanities against women's participation in electoral politics.

As a religious cleric, he demands that his followers not vote for women. Female candidates in the Puttalam district and in the Northern and Eastern provinces, in particular are being targeted.

The Co-Convener of CMEV Dr. P. Saravanamuttu has written to the Elections Commission and the Inspector General of Police, requesting them to take prompt action with this regard.

15th January 2018, Puttalam District

A surprise raid was carried out by four (04) police officers on the residence of C. A. Rinuza Ilma, a female candidate contesting from the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress. Police officers attached to Norochcholaï police station raided the house on a complaint received via 119 police emergency hotline. The complainant had indicated that a large-scale operation of counterfeiting banknotes was being carried out at the house of the said female candidate and that a large number of computers at that location were being used for this purpose. Although it was a surprise raid, the female candidate has emphatically insisted that a women police officer also should have partaken in such a raid.

The police officers were unable to find anything suspicious. Subsequently the candidate whose house was raided, arrived at the police station with another candidate named Zilia Buto and attempted to make a complaint. Yet the police officers on duty refused to accept her complaint claiming that the officer responsible for taking complaints was on leave. However, after informing one of the Election Commission members, Prof. Rathnajeewan Hoole, the complaint had finally been accepted by the police under the complaint no. CIB I 16/125. Against her objections, Police officers had edited her complaint on the grounds of relevance.

20th January 2018, Monaragala district

K. A. Renuka Damayanthi , a female candidate of an independent group contesting for a seat in the Wellawaya Pradeshiya Sabha, was hospitalized after sustaining injuries as a result of a confrontation between candidates of the independent groups and supporters of the political parties.

Ms Damayanthi had been a former supporter of United People's Freedom Alliance. Although she had been hoping to be a Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) candidate, she has not been given nomination. Hence she submitted nomination as a contestant of an independent group.

The 119, emergency response unit has received a complaint from Mr. R. M. Lalith Rathnayake, one of the neighbors of the said female candidate claiming that she has been displaying the picture of the former president Mahinda Rajapaksa as campaign material at her residence and on her vehicle. The complainant is a supporter of SLPP. The confrontation has started while the police officers had been at her residence to investigate the above complaint. It resulted in R. M. Lalith Rathnayake assaulting candidate Damayanthi. The

assault caused facial bleeding to her and she has been admitted to the Wellawaya hospital where she is still receiving treatment.

Candidate Damayanthi's husband V. P. Aruna Chaminda Kumara has retaliated by assaulting Pushpa Shiromala, the wife of Lalith Rathnayake . Ms Shiromala has also been admitted to the same hospital and is receiving treatment.

R. M. Lalith Rathnayake and Aruna Chaminda Kumara have been arrested as suspects and have been presented to the magistrate under B Report 11060. They have been remanded till 23rd January 2018.

12th December 2017, Batticaloa district, Manmunaipattu Pradeshiya Sabha, Ariyampathi South electorate (No. 4)

An attack with stones had been leveled at The house of UNP candidate K. Jeyachandrika was stoned by an unidentified gang on the night of the 12th of December 2017. She has lodged a complaint at the Kattankudi police station under the complaint no. CIB III 98/148. No suspects have been identified.

21st of January 2018, Gampaha District, Negombo Municipal Council

It has been reported to CMEV that Muthukudaarachchige Namali Susanthi, representing United National Freedom Front, has been subjected to verbal assault and intimidation. The incident took occurred at around 12:00 P.M. near the supermarket located at Kaduwapitiya junction in Negombo. The person alleged to have been involved in the said verbal assault and intimidation is a supporter of another candidate representing the United National Party.

Candidate Susanthi has lodged a complaint at the Negombo Police Station under the complaint no. EIB 60112.

26th January 2018, Gangawatakorale Pradeshiya Sabha, Kandy district

Ms N. M. Udayangani Kumudukumari, an expectant mother employed at the Internal Audit Division of the Coconut Cultivation Board, has been nominated for the Gangawatakorale Pradeshiya Sabha by the Jathika Janatha party without her knowledge and her signature has also been forged.

When the leader of Janatha Jathika party was contacted he apologized for the mistake and declined to comment on it when CMEV contacted him.

Other Observations:

Providing guidelines to minimize the disturbances caused by election rallies in residential areas.

CMEV has been consistently monitoring election rallies held since nominations were called. One of the observations made was that most rallies are being held in the middle of the road in residential areas. Rallies addressed by the leaders of the main political parties, are also held in highly congested areas where large crowds often gather. CMEV has written to the Elections Commission requesting the introduction of guidelines specifying criteria for the relevant authorities to follow when granting permission for political rallies.

Impact of social media in elections

Social media has been identified as a more modern and cost-effective means of campaigning. It is therefore important to minimize the negative elements like hate speech, if prevention through use of the law is not possible. It was also observed the government employees who took part in postal voting recently, had posted photographs of the ballot paper on social media such as facebook. CMEV has requested the Elections Commission to take action in respect of such officials including their suspension from election duties.

Activities of a deputy minister in Matale district and violations of election law by leading politicians

A Deputy Minister from the Matale District is alleged to be organizing around 15 pilgrimages during which the residents of the area have been urged to vote for his party. Furthermore, it is alleged that the said minister has asked the residents to vote for his party in exchange for gifts.

The Assistant Commissioner of Elections in Matale had distributed an information pamphlet stating that if such pilgrimages include an element of election campaigning, the participants of the said pilgrimage, will face consequences of breaching their civic duties of refraining from aiding and abating illegal election propaganda.

CMEV has received reports about two government ministers distributing forms for employment and housing in the Kegalle and Hambantotta districts respectively. Furthermore, a parliamentarian from the Gampaha District has continually been campaigning within the district with promotional material bearing his photograph in a manner that negatively affects the integrity of the upcoming election. A member of Uva Provincial Council is alleged to be violating various election laws with the intent of ensuring the victory of his wife who is a candidate in the upcoming election.