



CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

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தேர்தல் வன்முறைகளைக் கண்காணிப்பதற்கான நிலையம்

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Local Authorities Election 2018

Media Communique

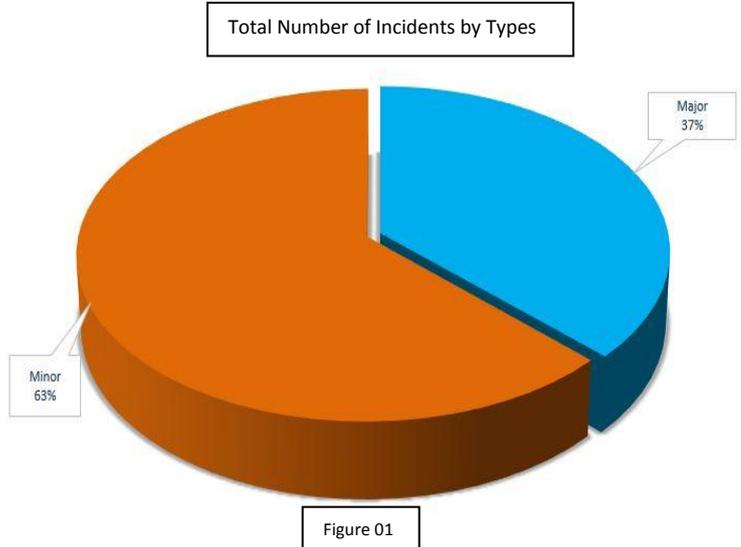
20:00 H, 08th February 2018 in Colombo

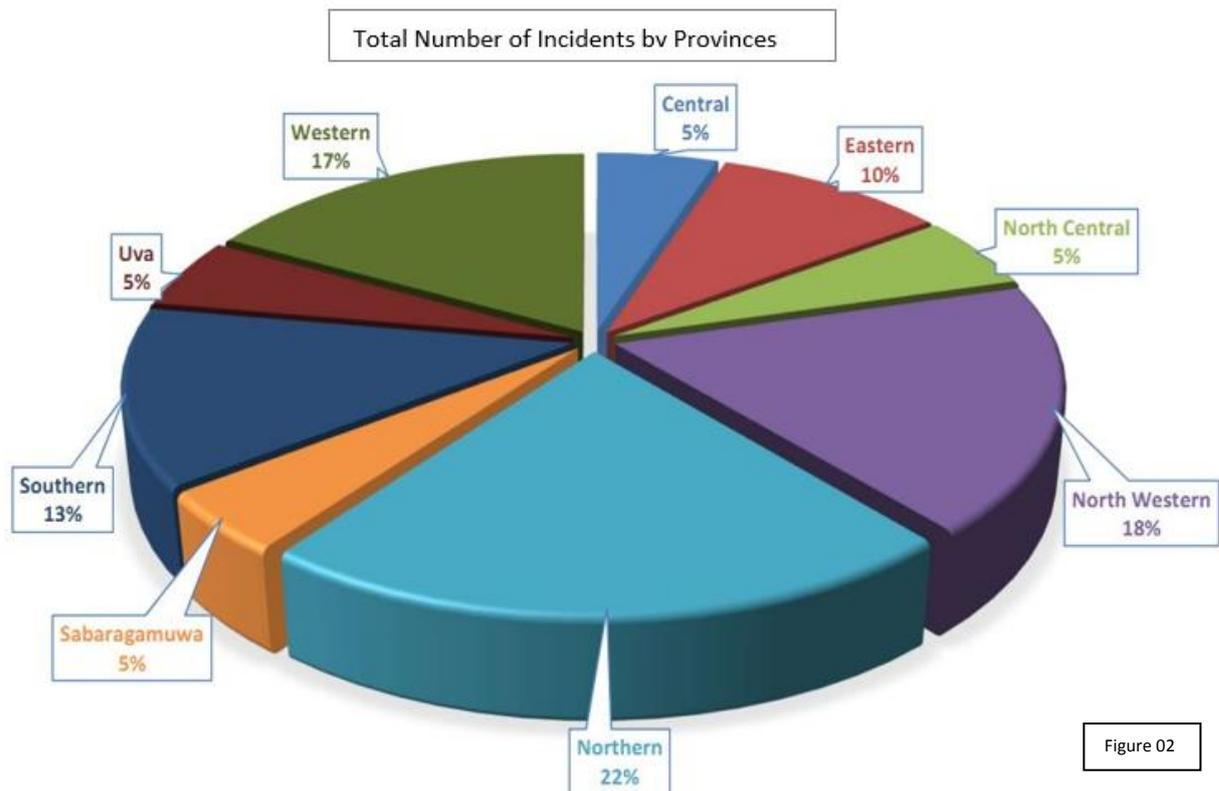
The time period designated for the campaigning propaganda leading up to the Local Authorities Election which is to be held on the 10th of February 2018, ended at 11:59 P. M. day before yesterday. The period of time allocated for door-to-door campaigning also ended at 9:00 P. M. on the same day.

Retracing to the nominations which were accepted for this election under two stages, it can be observed that in the first stage, the nominations were called for ninety-three local authorities. In the second stage, the call for nominations was expanded for the remaining 248 local authorities as well. Accordingly the candidates received the opportunity to mobilize their

election campaigns during a time period between 54 – 62 days. 57,252 candidates are contesting from the entire country to the upcoming elections to be held in just a day.

The voter registration list of the year 2017 will be utilized to avail the voters to partake in the selection of the local authority members out of the contesting candidates. The number of electors qualified to vote at the elections amount to 15,760,867. Therefore, the upcoming election records the highest number of candidates and at the same time, the representation of women also amounts to a significant portion of the said number of candidates. In comparison with the previously held elections, a relatively less number of incidents have been reported during the pre-election period this time. Out of those incidents reported to CMEV, several highlights have been mentioned below. Upon carefully reviewing those incidents, it is possible to present numerous significant observations with that regard as well.





One of the most frequently observed violation of election laws could be identified as the various instances in which the candidates had lured the voters by offering and distributing various goods among the electors. Moreover, there are ample instances reported about members of parliament and the politicians representing provincial councils utilizing funds allocated by the government, to construct roads and such public buildings and claim those constructions as their community services targeted at increasing the numbers of votes for their respective parties.

Among other most frequently recorded incidents so far, exceeding the maximum number of supporters (11 persons) that can be involved in canvassing door-to-door election campaigns in many parts of the country rank the next highest.

Several incidents which substantiate the above mentioned observations are as follows.

06th February 2018, Gampaha District, Threatening and assaulting a supporter of a political party while engaging in illegal election campaigning:

A UNP supporter has been threatened and assaulted by a group of supporters from SLPP near the Kirindiwela market in Gampaha district. The said UNP supporter who has been thus threatened and assaulted, is an individual known as K. A. Lalith. The assault has taken place at around 2:30 P.M. by Gayan Jayatilake and Thilina Jayatilake, the siblings of a candidate known as Milan Jayatilake who's contesting for SLPP from Dompe Pradeshiyasabha.

The incident has taken place while Milan Jayatilake has been engaging in illegal election campaigning with the involvement of over 100 supporters of SLPP. Although a large number of supporters had been engaging in door-to-door campaigns in this manner, it is pathetic to observe that the Sri Lanka police have not taken any measures to enforce the relevant laws with regard to this incident.

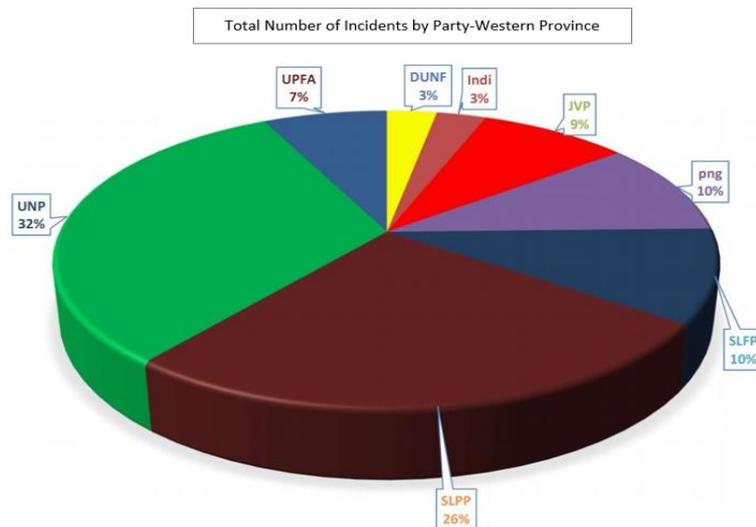


Figure 03

After admitting the victim of this assault at the Wathupitiwala hospital subsequent to the said incident, Milan Jayatilake has verbally threatened the person who had been kept to assist the victim at the hospital over the phone.

As soon as the victim of assault was hospitalized, one of our observers has reached

the hospital and it has been revealed that Milan Jayatilake has made continuous attempts through his supporters to forcibly discharge the victim from the hospital and send him away. One of the said supporters has connected Milan Jayatilake over the phone with the person who was assisting the victim at the hospital. Thus Milan Jayatilake has leveled death threats to the said person who was assisting the victim.

Upon further investigation it was reaffirmed that the said candidate has been continually engaging in illegal election campaigns with the involvement of supporters in large numbers. Moreover, when a security officer of the Kirindiwela bus depot kindly informed the said candidate to remove a hoarding which displayed his photo that had been set up there, the candidate has verbally assaulted the said security officer with expletives.

Although such campaigns were not to be seen during the nomination period, many candidates have begun mobilizing such illegal campaigns more often as the day of election is getting closer. The primary reason for such an increase is the lack of proactive involvement of the police officers to enforce the laws with that regard.

The announcement dated 10th January 2018, issued with the signature of the chairman of the Elections Commission while referring to the Inspector General of Police Mr Pujith Jayasundera and senior Deputy Inspector General Mr. C. D. Wickramarathne, can be considered vital in this regard.

The said announcement issued by the Elections Commission which is referred to as LAE/2018/AD/POL stipulates that the number of participants in a door-to-door elections campaigns should not exceed eleven supporters and in the event of exceeding the said maximum number, such campaigns should be stopped and apprehended with immediate effect in accordance with laws and cases must be filed against the perpetrators.

It has been revealed through comprehensive investigations that Sri Lanka police has adopted a more lenient approach in such matters in spite of specific directives being issued in the aforementioned manner. There have been 12 complaints of similar nature received by CMEV within the day,.

The continuation of the proactive contributions which had been being provided to the Elections Commission, by Sri Lanka police towards ensuring the commencement of a free and fair election thus far, is vital at this decisive juncture and will be instrumental in commencing the Local Authorities Election which is to be held soon.

6th February 2018, Anuradhapura District

Causing damage to the house of a female supporter of a political party and levelling death threats

The house of Wasantha Kumari, an SLFP supporter, residing in Kekirawa district in Anuradhapura area, has been attacked with stone pellets at around 6:30 P.M. by the supporters of a UNP candidate.

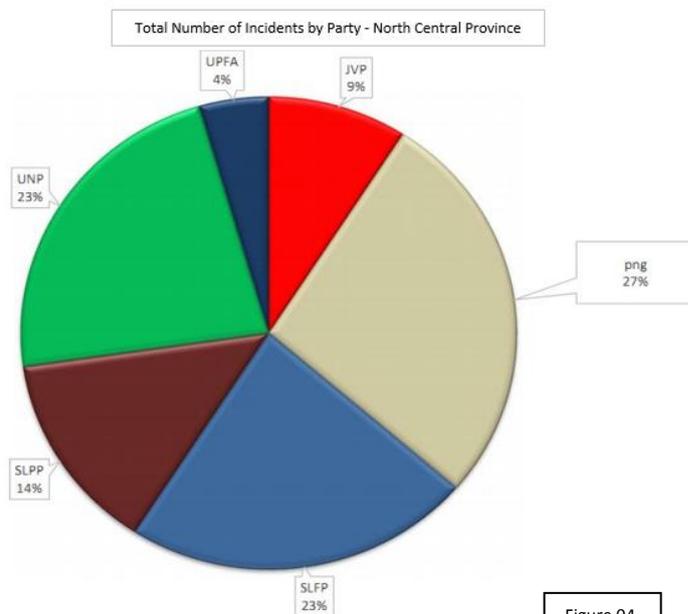


Figure 04

Subsequently, the said attackers have arrived in front of her house and intimidated her with death threats as well. The important factor regarding this incident is that the said female supporter, who was thus victimized, has a child with a deteriorating health condition (Cancer) and her husband is known to have been a farmer who had been away, working at a Chena cultivation at the time this attack and intimidation took place. Therefore the said female supporter had

been in an extremely vulnerable situation at the time. CMEV instantly took steps to inform the law enforcement authorities and the Elections Commission with this regard soon after receiving the incident report.

30th January 2018, Kalutara District, Levelling death threats at a political party supporter

Piyadasage Chaminda Kumara, a supporter of SLPP from Thambuththegama Pahalagama area, was subjected to death threats of a candidate contesting from SLFP for Thambuththekgama Pradeshiyasabha.

6th of February 2018, Religious leaders engaging in the promotion of election candidates.

In spite of the specific instructions and impositions of the Election Commission to dissuade religious leaders from promoting election candidates, numerous incidents have been reported to CMEV regarding such involvements of the clergy in promotional activities of different sorts, in relations to political party candidates.

Three religious leaders from Pohoddaramulla area have dispatched letters to promote the SLPP candidate Roshan Abegunawardene who's contesting for Kaluthara Pradeshiyasabha . One of the most significant issues arisen with this regard, is the fact that, the religious shrines of which the incumbency is held by the three religious leaders who has got involved in the aforesaid illegal promotion, have been designated as polling centers in the area.

The political parties and candidates who behave in a violent manner in the prevailing peaceful election background, must be inevitably brought before the law.

In comparison to the local authorities elections which was held previously in three stages amidst innumerable breaches of laws and incidents of violence, the citizenry has been witnessing a peaceful, free and fair election this time. It is necessary to take measures in order to prevent the violations perpetrated by the candidates who suddenly emerge while disrupting the peaceful atmosphere that's prevailing at present.

Ratnapura District, A Government employee with active political involvement, being allocated for Election Duties.

An individual serving as a teacher in a school at Eheliyagoda area is reported to have been engaging in active politics in the capacity of a secretary of an organization that promotes UPFA candidates in Rathnapura district. He has also been assigned for election duties since he is a government employee in spite of his political activism mentioned above.

In a context where the government employees are assigned for election duties relying on their political impartiality, such allocation of duties therefore warrants a greater scrutiny of the existing systems with regard to selecting poll workers in a free and fair election held in an impartial manner.

During the silent period of the election that began since 07th of February, 32 incidents have been reported to CMEV with regards to violations of laws applicable in that period.