

CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

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**Media Communiqué on Election-related Violence
Eastern Provincial Council Election - 2008**

9th May 2008 – 2200 hrs - Media Communiqué 1

CMEV received twelve (12) complaints today, covering a range of violations. The major election violations are highlighted below. Other complaints alleging the misuse of State resources, distribution of state benefits, intimidation of party workers and other civilians were also reported to CMEV.

Ampara District

Explosion in Ampara

An explosion took place at City Café, Main Street, Ampara Town at 5.40 pm this evening. CMEV was at the scene of the incident. The Ampara General Hospital told CMEV that 12 people have been killed in the blast and 30 have been injured, some seriously. The identity of perpetrators is unknown. Investigations are on going.

Assault and Intimidation in Dehiattakandiya

UNP Polling Agent and Branch Chairman of Dambunaruwa party office, Dehiattakandiya, K.Amarasiriwardena was assaulted by supporters of Minister Mervyn Silva on May 9 at approximately 11 a.m in the morning. One of the thugs allegedly stuffed posters into Amarasiriwardena's mouth. Amarasiriwardena alleges that they came in eight vehicles and that 'Kudu Lal' was one of the thugs.

A complaint was made by the UNP to the Dehiattakandiya Police. According to the UNP the police failed to take timely action. The UNP also claims that there have been other incidents of this nature where the police have failed to take action. The UNP organized a protest opposite the police station this afternoon.

When contacted by CMEV, the police stated that a complaint had been made and that investigations are on going.

UNP Branch Chairman, Linton Hewage was assaulted by thugs at his house which was being used as the UNP office in Bakmeedeniya on May 8 at 6.30 p.m. The thugs reportedly came in three vehicles (NA – 8284, 252 – 7323, 57 – 7768). A complaint has been lodged with the Dehiattakandiya Police (CIB/192/62).

An office clerk of the Dehiattakandiya UNP Branch Office, Mr A.M. Abeyratne was assaulted by the thugs who came in the three vehicles listed above at about 3.30 pm today. A complaint has been lodged with the Dehiattakandiya Police (CIB/194/62).

Mr H. K. Ranjith (candidate number 16 of the Independent Group Number 11) was assaulted this afternoon by the thugs who came in the three vehicles referred to above at the Independent Party Office in Sandunpura. It was reported that office equipment was damaged.

It was also reported that a gun was fired this afternoon near the Serupitiya Office of the UNP. The group which carried out the attack arrived in a Pajero number (SH – 5576). Media Coordinator of the UNP in Dehiattakandiya, Mr A.R.K. Bandara made the complaint to CMEV.

CMEV also observed that UPFA candidates' posters are still being displayed in Dehiattakandiya. Police informed CMEV that they would be removed tomorrow.

Batticaloa District

Arson in Kathankudy

Five houses owned by Usuf Lebbe Fatuma, Katch Umma, Siddique, Faleel and Iqbal in Kathankudi were set on fire between 4 a.m- 4.30 a.m on 9th May . The house owners are SLMC supporters. The attackers were identified by Mr Farouk Majeed, Deputy Chairman of the SLMC as Amirali Durgam Moodil, M. Anwer and M. Hussain, UPFA supporters of candidate M. Hisbullah.

A police complaint was lodged with the Kathankudi Police (E1B 249/35). Following the incident, the Kathankudy Police confirmed that three people were taken into custody.,

Allegations against Minister Ameer Ali

CMEV monitors reported a clash between UPFA supporters of Minister Ameer Ali and UNP supporters in Oddamavadi this evening. The clash was subsequently resolved by the intervention of the OIC Police of the area. No one was injured in the clash.

CMEV spoke to the minister who denied any involvement in the violence. Minister Ameer Ali also confirmed to CMEV that he had shut down the Kalkudah FM radio station which had been broadcasting from his son's house.

Trincomalee District

Police Transfer

ASP of Mutur, Premasiri Nawagamuwa was transferred to Trincomalee Police Station on May 8 2008. S.P Vaas Gunawardena has been appointed as a replacement.

Batticaloa District

Potential Misuse of State Resources

CMEV has reports of a number of CTB buses parked in front of the TMVP office in Batticaloa town. No one at the location could provide CMEV with an explanation for the presence of the buses at this location.

Suspension of Mobile Telephone Communication

CMEV is gravely concerned by reports that mobile telecommunication access to and from the east will be suspended from tomorrow, polling day. Were this to be the case, it would be an arbitrary restriction on the access and right to information of all citizens and of citizens in the east, in particular, on the day of their provincial polls. Given that political parties and monitors have expressed their fears about the freeness and fairness of the provincial poll, such a restriction, if implemented, would only serve to reinforce these fears and adversely impact on the credibility of the poll.

Accordingly, CMEV calls upon the Election Commissioner to take the speedy action necessary to ensure that such a violation of democratic rights does not take place.



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