



CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

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தேர்தல் வன்முறைகளைக் கண்காணிப்பதற்கான நிலையம்

No 17A, Pedris Road, Colombo 3, Tel: 011 3010662-4, Fax: 011 2577117

E-mail: cmev@cpalanka.org

Web: www.cmev.org

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Media Communiqué 01

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The Center for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) officially commenced monitoring of the incidence of election violence and malpractice in the 2015 General Election. Since the start of the nominations period on the 6th of July, CMEV has deployed around 200 field monitors including 22 district coordinators. Furthermore, CMEV has established 9 provincial desks operated from the CMEV head office in Colombo to collect and analyse the information that is in turn corroborated and made available to the public. Additionally, a group of around 30 foreign observers will be deployed a week prior to Election Day to work in partnership with local CMEV monitors.

A number of incidents have been reported to CMEV, in spite of the efforts by the Election Commissioner who has repeatedly informed candidates of the penalties to be faced if election laws are breached.

As of 31st July 2015, CMEV has recorded a total of 322 incidents of election related violence and malpractices. Of these, 61 have been classified as major including 5 incidents involving the use of fire -arms. Minor incidents have been recorded at 261. The highest numbers of major incidents have been reported from the Jaffna (10), Gampaha (4) and Digamadulla (3) Districts respectively.

Details of some of major incidents reported to CMEV since end of nominations period are mentioned below.

27th July 2015- Use of Firearms, Paduwasnuwara, Kurunegala

Mr.J.A Dinesh Kumara, supporter of UNP Kurunegala district candidate Mr.Thushara Indunil, was threatened with firearms by Mr. Y.M Sapumal Ruwan Kumara and Mr. S.A Darshana Sampath, supporters of UPFA candidate Mr. Dayasiri Jayasekara at around 12.30 am at Detiyamulla Junction, Hettipola. According to Mr. Dinesh Kumara, the incident happened while he was on his way to Mr. Thushara Indunil's office. The vehicle he was travelling in was blocked by three other vehicles and it was then that Mr. Sapumal Kumara approached Mr. Dinesh Kumara's vehicle with a gun and threatened him. Reacting, Mr. Dinesh Kumara said he had snatched the gun from Mr. Sapumal Ruwan Kumara's hand and proceeded to the Hettipola police.

OIC Hettipola Police Mr. S.N. De Soyza IP, confirmed that Mr. Dinesh Kumara has lodged a complaint pertaining to this incident and had handed over the weapon to the police as evidence. Vehicles bearing number plate 53-6676 (Dolpin Van), 54-7133 (Double-Cab) and NWKC 7790 (Suzuki Swift) were reported to have been used in the incident and the two suspects have been produced before Hettipola Magistrate under B425/15 and were subsequently released on personal bail.

Attempts made by CMEV to contact Mr. M Sapumal Ruwan Kumara and Mr. S.A Darshana Sampath pertaining to these charges, were not successful.

26th July 2015- Coercion and Threat, Kekirawa, Anuradhapura

It was reported to CMEV that the wife and mother of Mr. Sapumal Senanayake, Coordinating Secretary of Anuradhapura District UNF candidate Mr. P. Harrison, were threatened and intimidated at his residence around 8.50 P.M at 'Sri' Aluthwewa, Galkiriyagama in Anuradhapura. It is alleged that a group of 5 to 6 unidentified individuals arrived at Mr. Senanyake's residence when he was not at home and demanded that they be permitted inside. When his wife and mother questioned them regarding their purpose the group had said that they had come to kill Mr. Sapumal. Moreover, when the ladies had refused them entry and asserted Mr. Sapumal was not at home, they had tried to break into the house, but were unsuccessful. Afterwards they allegedly damaged the property by throwing sand and mud at the walls. Mrs. Senanayake believes the perpetrators were supporters of the North Central Provincial UNP Member, Mr. Chandima Gamage.

Ms. Niluka Nilmini Senanayake, wife of Sapumal phoned in the incident to Galkiriyagama Police and the police visited the location that night. However, OIC Galkiriyagama Police, Mr. Prasanna Welikala IP, told CMEV that they had not received a complaint with regard to this incident. He stated that Mr. Sapumal had however lodged a complaint regarding a threatening telephone call, which he had received on the 23rd July 2015, three days before this particular incident. When CMEV inquired as to why a complaint had not been lodged regarding the incident on the 26th, Mr. Sapumal responded that he chose not to lodge a complaint with regard to this incident as he wished to refrain from making accusations that would taint either Mr. P. Harrison or Mr. Chaminda Gamage.

24th July 2015- Misuse of Public Property, Avissawella, Colombo.

It was reported to CMEV that the former UNP Seethawakapura Municipal Council Chairman Mr. Susil Premalal Pinthu has used physical and human resources belonging to the Municipal Council for campaign purposes on 24th July 2015. According to reports, he had conducted door -to -door canvassing with the aid of minor staff and industrial section staff belonging to the Municipal Council. Mr. Susil Premalal Pinthu was unavailable for comment on these allegations.

Ms. Shashika Devapriya, Secretary of Municipal Council confirmed to CMEV that 75 employees had not reported to work on the mentioned day and some had even taken leave. Furthermore, she said that the industrial section employees who are paid a daily wage would not be paid if they had not reported for work.

Mr. Geethanajan Gunawardena, the local organizer for the UPFA accepted that these allegations were most probably accurate. An eyewitness Mr. Anura Obeyesinghe, an independent candidate, also confirmed these allegations to CMEV.

23rd July 2015- Assault, Illukwatha, Kandy

Democratic Party supporter Mr. Weerasinghe Mudiyanalage Saman Dissanayake of the Kandy district was allegedly attacked by an unidentified group of people around 11.00pm at Muruthalaw, Illukwatha. The CMEV monitor in the area said that Mr. Dissanayake was admitted to the Kandy General Hospital ward No. 10. When CMEV spoke to Peradeniya head of election operations Mr. C.I Kanangara, he stated that they had received a complaint and that investigations were underway. When CMEV sent monitors to the hospital to inquire after Mr. Dissanayake, he was not present and attempts to contact him were unsuccessful.

22nd July, 2015- Assault, Kandy

An unidentified group broke into the main campaign office of the UNP candidate Mr. Rauf Hakeem at No. 258, Katugasthota Road, Kandy and assaulted Mr. Salaheer who is the candidate's coordinating officer and Mr. Dananjaya Bandara a supporter of Mr. Hakeem around 7.30 pm on 22nd July 2015. Mr. Salaheer has received medical treatment for minor injuries from the Kandy Hospital. Speaking to CMEV he said the group had first damaged cut outs stored at the office and attacked Mr. Bandara and himself. CMEV was unable to contact Mr. Hakeem for comment.

Speaking to Mr. Kularathne IP, of the Katugasthota Police station; he stated that investigations were underway to collect further evidence pertaining to the identity of the perpetrators.

21st July 2015-Threat and intimidation, Medirigiriya, Polonnaruwa

Mr. W.P. Chaminda Kumara and his wife, Ms. G.G.S. Kumari, supporters of the UPFA, received death threats from a group of UNP supporters affiliated to Polonnaruwa District candidate Mr. Nalaka Kolonne. According to reports, the group was travelling in a white TATA Cab decorated with stickers of Mr. Kolonne around 1.30 am on 21st July 2015 and according to Ms. Kumari, they were under the influence of alcohol and armed with swords and batons. During the verbal confrontation that followed the death threats, the group had damaged the temporary campaign office next to the house of the UPFA supporters. When fleeing the scene, the group reportedly stole flag -poles from the campaign office.

One of perpetrators has been identified as Mr. Chinthaka and the complaint regarding the incident has been lodged at Medirigiriya Police under EIB 06/28. CMEV contacted Mr. N.P.S. Jayalath (IP) of the Medirigiriya Police Station who confirmed the incident and stated that proof pertaining to the incident has been produced to Higurakgoda Magistrate under complaint B 594/15.

21st July 2015- Assault, Batticaloa

Mr. Selladurai Arasaratnam, UPFA candidate in Batticaloa was allegedly assaulted by Mr. Tharmarajah Pradeeban a supporter of TNA candidate Mr. Karunagaran. According to reports received by CMEV, the incident occurred at about 11 pm on the 21st of July 2015 at the residence of Mr. Selladurai Arasaratnam in the presence of his family and supporters.

When CMEV contacted Mr. Selladurai Arasaratnam, he stated that 4 individuals at 11.00 pm hurled verbal abuse at him and threw rocks at his home. When one of the perpetrators Mr.

Pradeeban, attempted to scale the gate and enter the garden, he was restrained by supporters of Mr. Arasaratnam. The latter, in turn, had contacted the police.

Mr. Karunagara, stated that his supporter had been kidnapped while travelling home with food, assaulted and then handed over to the police who had not realized that he was the victim as opposed to the perpetrator. When Mr. Pradeeban, was contacted by CMEV, he stated that he had lent his vehicle to Mr. Karunagara and after coming home he had been curious as to the noise coming from his neighbour's home which happened to be Mr. Selladurai Arasaratnam and it was at this point that he was hit by a chain which rendered him unconscious prior to being apprehended by the police.

In speaking to the police to clarify these varying accounts, they confirmed that Mr. Pradeeban had been taken to hospital prior to being processed. They also confirmed that the Batticaloa Magistrate Court had assigned a personal bail of Rs. 100,000, which had been settled. Mr. Pradeeban was released from custody.

19th July 2015, Threat and Intimidation, Yatiyantota Electorate, Kegalle

Mr. Irajathinam Isurajan of Ceylon Worker's Congress (CWC) of Yatiyantota electorate and his sister, Ms. Irajathinam Shiromi were awakened from their sleep, threatened and intimidated by Mr. Sanjeewa Abeykoon UNP opposition leader of Yatiyantota Pradeshiya Saba and three of his supporters. The incident occurred around 11.00 pm. Ms. Shiromi has identified Mr. Sanjeewa Abeykoon among the perpetrators.

A complaint was lodged at Seethawakapura Police division, under NCR 10/81-2015 by Ms. Shiromi. Mr. Nishanka SI, officer in-charge of election affairs at Yatiyantota Police station confirmed that a complaint was received from Ms. Shiromi the following day. The police had informed both parties to be present at the police station at 12.30 pm for mediation the day after the incident. CMEV field officers were informed by the plaintiff, Mr. Isurajan, that Mr. Abeykoon had not been present for the mediation process, as per the directives of the police.

17th July 2015, Misuse of state resources, Kelaniya Electorate, Gampaha

It has been reported to CMEV that Gampaha district candidate Mr. Prasanna Ranaweera of UPFA has used public property for election campaigning and propaganda purposes. He has used the reception hall belonging to Kelaniya Pradeshiya Saba to conduct a meeting with his supporters at around 10.30 am on 16th July 2015. Furthermore, under the guise of the dengue eradication program he had conducted house-to-house visits the following day. It has also been reported that he continues to use office stationery, appliances, and employees of the local authority for campaign activities in addition to the vehicles owned by the local authority.

When CMEV contacted Ms. Nelum Kumari, Secretary of Kelaniya Pradeshiya Saba she said that payment had been made for the use of the reception hall. However, she admitted that employees are participating in his campaign after office hours. When contacted by CMEV, Mr. Prasanna Ranaweera denied all allegations regarding the misuse of public property.

16th July, 2015- Threat and Intimidation in Kilinochchi, Jaffna

CMEV received a complaint by an independent group candidate Ms. Annaluxmi Wanasudan, affiliated to group 06 that she was threatened by a group of 3 individuals on three occasions. She said that they introduced themselves as CID officers and has tried taking a photograph of her. Further, when attempting to question her they had failed to produce any identification. Ms. Annaluxmi told CMEV that one of the individuals was known as Mr. Ramesh, who when contacted admitted that he is not a CID officer but an army officer. A complaint has not been lodged with the police regarding the incident.

14th July 2015, Assaulted, Mahiyangana Electorate, Badulla.

It was reported to CMEV that UPFA candidate, Uva Provincial Minister Mr. Anura Vidanagamage and his supporters assaulted Mr. Hemantha Warnasooriya, the brother of Mr. Nishantha Warnasooriya. He had clashed with Mr. Vidanagamage near a guest-house owned by Mr. Nishantha Warnasooriya in Soraborawewa around 4.30 pm on 14th July 2015. Mr. Hemantha was admitted to Mahiyangana base hospital with minor injuries following the incident. He confirmed to CMEV that he lodged a complaint with the Mahiyangana Police who when contacted by CMEV stated that it was a private clash that had been successfully settled. Police refused to provide details of the complaint. CMEV was unable to contact Mr. Anura Vidanagamage for comment with regard to this incident.

14th July 2015, Assault, Damage to Property, Threat and Intimidation, Kalawana Electorate, Ratnapura

It has been reported to CMEV that UNP opposition leader of the Kalawana Pradeshiya Sabha, Mr. Shanaka Molligoda, has assaulted UPFA candidate, Mr. Priyantha Athukorala. The dispute began when Mr. Athukorala arrived at his campaign office at the Kalawana CTB bus stand - which has been confirmed to the CMEV as being illegal- after he was informed that his cutout were removed and destroyed by Mr. Molligoda and his supporters. This occurred at around 10 pm and according to Mr. Athukorala it was at this point that he and his supporters were assaulted and shot at by the UNP supporters. The shooting also damaged his vehicle.

According to Mr. Meril Rupus Silva, UNP supporter present during the incident, they were preparing the premises for a meeting with Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe on the following day. He confirmed that it was UNP supporters who had removed Mr. Athukorala's cut-out, as it was located in front of the stage which was being constructed.

Following a complaint made by Mr. Athukorala at Kalawana Police station, case CIB 02, the police had taken into custody Mr. Dasanayake Pathirana, a UNP supporter, who had been the main perpetrator in the assault on Mr. Athukorala. According to Mr. Athukorala, UNP supporters had gone to the Kalawana police station and forcibly released Mr. Pathirana from custody. When CMEV contacted the Kalawana police to clarify the allegation they stated that this situation had arisen due to a private dispute and no individual had been arrested.

On being contacted by CMEV, Mr. Rohan Dias DIG, Sabaragmuwa Province he stated that three police officers including Mr. Gayan Buddhika OIC, were suspended as a result of this incident. CMEV was unable to contact Mr. Molligoda .

13th July, 2015- Threat at District Secretary Office, Matara Electorate, Matara

CMEV has received reported of an incident where Mr. Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena, Mr. Dullas Alahapperuma and Mr. Chandrasiri Gajadeera have been allegedly threatened by Mr. Dikkuburage Suraweera a supporter of Minister Managala Samaraweera while they were leaving the Matara District Secretariat after handing over their nominations. The incident occurred around 10.30 am in front of Districts Secretaries Office. The incident was confirmed by the CMEV monitor who was at the scene. Mr. Dullas Alahapperuma has lodged a complaint against Mr. Dikkuburage Suraweera at the Matara police station (EIB 01)

11th July, 2015, Assault of UNP supporters, Galigamuwa Electorate, Kegalle

It was reported to CMEV that Rambukkana UPFA provincial council member Mr. Kanaka Herath and his supporters allegedly assaulted Mr. Janaka Bandara, a UNP supporter. The incident happened at around 7.00 p.m. on 11th July, 2015 at “NASEVANA” restaurant, Pindeniya in the Galigamuwa Electorate.

According to Mr. Bandara, the assault occurred after he was accused of covering all of Mr. Kanak Herath’s posters with the posters of Mr. Kabir Hashim. Mr. Bandara said that Herath supporter Kosala had attacked him and when he attempted to flee another supporter by the name of Kumara, had hit him with a pole across his left shoulder. He said after the incident he had lodged a complaint at the Pindeniya police station.

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.

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



Dr. P. Saravanamuttu
Co – Convener