

CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

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Central and North – Western Provincial Council Elections

22nd January 2009

Media Communiqué No 01

22nd January 2009, Colombo, Sri Lanka: The Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) will be monitoring the upcoming Provincial Council Elections on 14 February 2009 in the Central and North - Western Provinces. We would like to inform all the political parties, independent groups and other relevant parties that CMEV hopes to adopt the same methodology and practices we employed in earlier monitoring of elections.

After completing preparatory work related to monitoring, CMEV has trained and posted 42 electoral division monitors in the field. Our operations centre is located in Colombo at the address noted above. CMEV will deploy 675 polling centre monitors and about 40 mobile monitoring teams to cover at least 70% of polling stations in the two Provinces.

CMEV solicits the full corporation from political parties, independent groups and other relevant parties to conduct impartial and fruitful monitoring exercise.

CMEV has confirmed 21 election violence related incidents up to 22nd January 2009. This is relatively low in comparison to previous Provincial Council elections. Political parties, groups and other responsible authorities need to ensure that violent trends do not increase in the lead up to and on Election Day. CMEV also notes that those in power must disallow the use of public property for campaigning and electioneering.

Insisting upon proper voter identification at the polling stations by the Elections Commissioner will minimise opportunities for malpractices. But the illiterate voters especially among the estate workers may not have a clear understanding of the notice of the Election Commissioner. Field reports from our monitors indicate that the exhibition of the notice of Election commissioner at public places where the estate workers are living is not just sufficient. We call upon the Grama

Niladharies [GN] and Estate Superintendents to take immediate steps to protect the voting rights of them.

In response to our inquiries, the Assistant Elections Commissioner in Nuwara Eliya said that steps had been taken to issue 2000 temporary identity cards. He also noted that there were nearly 28,000 people in Nuwara Eliya District without identity cards. The Deputy Elections Commissioner in Kandy told CMEV that 81,000 people in the Kandy District were without identity cards. He went on to say that after informing Estate Superintendents and the GN on this matter, he had issued 60,000 application forms to field workers to be distributed amongst people to obtain temporary identity cards. A spokesman from the Elections Office in Matale noted that upon inspection, it was found that around 26,000 people did not have the identity cards. In light of this, they had issued 4,000 application forms.

However the exact number of people who applied for temporary identity cards could only be ascertained after the closing date of applications.

CMEV reiterate that it is the responsibility of the political parties and the civil society organizations in the area to make them aware on the matter and to direct them to relevant agencies to obtain temporary identity cards. This needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.

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, FMM and INFORM Human Rights Documentation Centre.



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