

CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

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Presidential Election - 2010

Media Communiqué No. 23

On 25th January 2009, the eve of Election Day, CMEV received the following complaints as of 11.45 pm.

Rathnapura District, Rathnapura Electorate

Type of Violation: Election Offence

According to a fax received from the Common Candidate Media Unit, several ballot boxes were found at the UPFA main office, located at Bandaranayake Mawatha in Rathnapura. It was alleged that a large group of UPFA politicians were stuffing these boxes with fraudulent ballot papers. The fax was also copied to the Assistant Election Commissioner.

When contacted, Senior Assistant Election Commissioner Rathnapura Mr. M.A.P.G Perrera told CMEV that he visited the location with two Police Officers and a representative of the District Elections Commissioners Office at approximately 10.00 a.m. He stated that a large group of politicians were not at the location as alleged, and there were also no ballot boxes found following a thorough search of the premises. He added that the only unlawful material found at the location were a few specimen ballot papers, and said that he asked persons in the party office to destroy them immediately. He also said that he first received information regarding the incident from UNP Member of Parliament Ms. Thalatha Athukorala, and as such he had asked her to come and meet him if she wished to see the material that was at the UPFA office, as he had brought back a specimen ballot paper with him.

Rathnapura District, Eheliyagoda Electorate

Type of Violation: Election Offence

According to UNP supporter Mr. Upul Priyantha, between approximately 10.00 am and 4.00 pm today, a special Samurdhi payment of Rs. 3,600 was distributed amongst Samurdhi recipients of the Ellawela GN Division. A promotional leaflet requesting persons to vote for the incumbent President was also distributed along with this payment. According to Mr. Priyantha, the payment as well as leaflet was distributed by Samurdhi Naiyamaka for Ellawela Mrs. Vinitha Nandani.

When contacted, Mrs. Nandani told CMEV that the payment was made under a Samurdhi Assistance Program, and a leaflet regarding the program was distributed amongst the recipients, and not a promotional leaflet of the President. She added that it was not a special payment, but the regular Samurdhi assistance payment. When asked if she had a copy of the leaflet, she said that she did, and abruptly hung up on CMEV. She did not answer

subsequent calls. CMEV has received copies of leaflets that were allegedly distributed. They are very clearly promotional material for the incumbent President, bearing his campaign slogan, party symbol and cross.

When contacted, the Eheliyagoda Police PC Premalal told CMEV that they knew nothing of the incident.

Polonnaruwa District, Polonnaruwa Electorate

Type of Violation: Threat and Intimidation

According to UNP supporter Mr. H.M. Senevirathne, at 11.30pm on the 24th of January and at 2.00am on the 25th of January UPFA Dimbulagala Pradeshiya Sabha chairman Dhammika Nishantha Kumara and approximately 15 others who arrived in a vehicle, allegedly attacked the home of UNP supporter Mr. G. Abeywardena in 87 Nidhanwala, Daminna with stones, causing damage to the windows of the house.

Kurunegela District, Hiriyala Electorate

The Gokarella Police confirmed that they had taken into custody 23 persons who were traveling by a private bus. OIC Vitharana stated to CMEV that the Police are investigating an allegation that this group was carrying arms. He was unwilling to provide CMEV with any information as to who had made the complaint. OIC Vitharana stated that those in custody claimed that they were Sarath Fonseka supporters and that some were on their way to an almsgiving and others to a pooja. At 11.45 pm he added that they had been transferred to the Kurungela Police Station and will be questioned by the Crimes Branch.

Sub Inspector Ranga attached to Minister and UPFA Organiser Salinda Dissanayke alleged that these persons are retired and serving military personnel and deserters. The lawyer for the UNP in the district Felician Perera informed CMEV that an arrest had been made and that he was in the process of obtaining more information about the arrest. Police spokesperson I.M. Karunaratne stated that 20 persons were taken into custody at around 7.45 pm by the Gokarella Police on suspicion of carrying illegal weapons. He also claimed that there are deserters and retired army personnel in the group, but no serving officers.

All CMEV reports and communiqués and the CMEV Incidents Google Map can be accessed online at <http://cmev.wordpress.com>. Live hourly audio updates/ podcasts in English, Sinhala and Tamil can be downloaded at <http://drop.io/cmevelections>

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 nonpartisan organization 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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