

CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

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Uva Provincial Council Election 2014

Communique No 01

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The Uva Provincial Council election to be held on Saturday 20th September 2014, is the last in the current cycle of Provincial Council Elections. It was dissolved by Gazette Notification 1870/64 of 11th July 2014, and following this the Commissioner of Elections, with powers vested in him under the Act of Provincial Council elections, made an amendment to the numbers of members to be elected at the district level. Accordingly the number of members to be elected from the Badulla and Monaragala districts was set at 18 and 14 respectively. Postal voting has been scheduled for the 4th - 5th September. The deadline for submission of applications for postal votes was 18th August. Notably, out of the 42,037 applications for postal voting 11,380 or 27 % have been rejected by the Elections Secretariat, because forms were not properly completed or were received at the Secretariat after the deadline. However such applicants have the opportunity to vote on the day of the Election, through Polling stations. Accordingly 30,699 government servants are eligible to cast postal votes on 4th and 5th September.

Incidents of Violation of Election Law: as at 6 pm on 2014 August 26th

CMEV has been able to confirm 24 incidents of election related violence and malpractice out of a total of 62 complaints. Half of these or 12 of them are major incidents.

There is a significant increase in the violations of electoral laws over the 20 days since nominations when compared with the Provincial Councils Elections of the previous years (except the Northern PC Elections).

Whilst the Police, acting on the directions of the Commissioner of Elections, have duly removed cutouts and posters, and in general worked towards ensuring free and fair elections, in areas such as Badalkumbura and Bibile in the Monaragala District, the situation is tense and should be brought to the urgent attention of the relevant authorities.

Situation in Monaragala

CMEV notes two points of concern in the Monaragala District - undue pressure exerted by a small handful of candidates and their unwillingness to recognize the political right of others to campaign. There are serious criticisms of the campaigning in Monaragala including the introduction of a large numbers of supporters from other areas including Colombo, and the failure of the Police to control incidents that have resulted. On the 23rd and 24th August alone, firearms were used to threaten rivals and several political party offices were damaged. The majority of those affected are opposition supporters.

Tension is heightened by an armed group loitering in the area at nighttime, as alleged by some political parties. It is also alleged that this group was responsible for the incident where a number of political party offices belonging to the UNP, JVP and DP, were damaged. A similar incident occurred on 25th August. According to JVP candidate Mr. R.M. Jayewardene, while the stage was being set up for their meeting with prior approval at the premises of the Badalkumbura Pradeshiya Sabha (PS), UPFA supporters had disrupted their preparations including removing decorations and interrupting the power supply, with the authorization of Vice Chairman of the Badalkumbura PS Mr.Kapila Samarakkody. At about 10. 30pm with the support of people brought in from other areas, in various vehicles including two Defender jeeps, the UPFA supporters had begun to physically assault the JVPers. They had also fired shots into the air with a T 56 weapon. The melee had resulted in complete damage to the stage and sound equipment. The JVP had lodged a complaint (CIB 367-216) at the Badalkumbura Police Station. In the meantime the media reported that two Police officers injured in the violence had been admitted to the Badalkumbura Hospital.

On inquires by CMEV, District Medical Officer Subuddhika Keselkotuwa stated that only one Police officer with minor injuries had been in the ward, and he had subsequently been discharged.

CMEV made inquiries from the alleged perpetrator Vice Chairman Mr. Samarakkody, who rejected all the allegations and said that two UPFA supporters had also been injured and admitted to the Monaragala Hospital. He further said he had been in a discussion with Speaker Mr. Chamal Rajapaksa, and that the latter had also lodged a complaint with the Badalkumbura Police.

When CMEV contacted the Special Police operation Unit for Elections, an officer confirmed that an incident had occurred and that both parties had complained.

CMEV also contacted the Personal Secretary of the Former Chief Minister, Shasheendra Rajapaksa, Mr. Ranjan Bandara, regarding these allegations. He confirmed there was an incident and said that according to what he had heard the JVP had first assaulted the UPFA supporters and the latter had retaliated.

Such incidents do not augur well for the campaign and for polling day. Police must take necessary action promptly. CMEV appreciates the Commissioner of Elections writing to the IGP to take the necessary measures.



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