

CENTRE FOR MONITORING ELECTION VIOLENCE

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தேர்தல் வன்முறைகளைக் கண்காணிப்பதற்கான நிலையம்

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Presidential Election 2015:

CMEV Interim Campaign Report

About CMEV

Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (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 incidents of election related violence. Currently, CMEV is made up of CPA and INFORM Human Rights Documentation Centre. CMEV monitors all national, provincial and local elections. Through years of experience, and utilising the latest in communications technology, CMEV has established an effective island-wide mechanism to speedily capture election related information and updates in Sri Lanka, and to verify and report these in a professional, unbiased and timely manner, supplying news to a number of media organisations, both local and international. CMEV works to protect and strengthen the integrity of the electoral process and the democratic rights of the peoples of Sri Lanka.

www.cmev.org and its linked social media sites <https://www.facebook.com/electionviolence> and <https://twitter.com/cmev>, along with the WhatsApp messaging service (over +94 727772810) provide some of the most up-to-date, impartial and credible information on election violence and malpractice, as and when incidents occur.

Election Monitors

In preparation for monitoring the Presidential Election 2015, CMEV deployed 160 field coordinators based in polling divisions or electorates, while 25 field coordinators were deployed in the 25 administrative districts during the pre-election period. All field monitors report daily to the main CMEV secretariat in Colombo. CMEV officers stationed at the secretariat conduct further follow-up investigations on all reports, contacting the relevant parties including witnesses, health officials and police stations, and verifying the authenticity of claims. Additionally, over 4000 static observers will be stationed in polling stations on Election Day, similar to previous elections due to access approved by the Election Commissioner to CMEV and PAFFREL. Furthermore, arrangements are made to deploy 50 mobile groups from Colombo to various locations across the country as necessary. The 200+field/district monitors will organise an equal number of mobile visits to polling stations. In total, CMEV expects to cover 65-70% of polling stations across the country.

For the first time the Election Commissioner has granted permission to local monitors to observe the count. CMEV has been given the responsibility for 30% of the counting centres and will be deploying 66 observers accordingly. CMEV will deploy 01 observer for up to 05 rooms in which the count will be done.

Trends and Concerns

- At the end of campaigning, CMEV documented 420 incidents of violence (20th November 2014-5 January 2015), with 237 categorised as major incidents and 183 as minor incidents. Highest number of major incidents were reported from Jaffna District with 22 incidents followed by Badulla District with 19 incidents, Kurunegala 18 incidents and 17 incidents in the Kandy District.
- CMEV has recorded 26 incidents involving firearms and 03 incidents of petrol bombings.
- Targeting of election officials has been a key trend in previous elections and this has continued in the 2015 Presidential election.
- CMEV monitors were attacked and threatened in two incidents.
- CMEV recorded 132 incidents of gross misuse of State resources for election purposes. This has been a recurring trend in the campaigns of the incumbent. Although not for the first time, the intensity and degree of misuse of resources during this Presidential election is unparalleled.
- Excessive use of State media by the incumbent and very limited airtime for opposition candidates. At the same time, given the availability of resources, similar profile in respect of private media.
- A vast number of incidents of violence and flagrant violation of election laws is attributed to the ruling party where local politicians including local government members are involved. With exceptions in a few key incidents, most perpetrators have operated with impunity.
- The culture of impunity for flagrant violation of election laws has encouraged continuation of such incidents.
- A large number of incidents of attacks have targeted opposition party offices and persons connected to said offices.
- Most suspects arrested for election violence related incidents have been released without following due process. Although CMEV notes a few court orders issued in recent days that provide for police action.

- Several government employees were used (sometimes under duress) for electioneering.
- Ruling party politicians have been electioneering under the guise of providing relief to flood affected victims.
- CMEV documented police officers having attacked persons seeking voting rights. This has resulted in a situation where people are unable to complain to the Police. This coupled with the lack of due process with regards to suspects connected with election violence, has resulted in perceptions of Police unwillingness and inability to take action.
- An increase in attacks against human rights defenders and artistes in the last few days of the campaign. Women too have been targeted with a petrol bomb attack against a women's activist in Kattankudy.
- Increase of violence and intimidation of voters in the North.
- The presence of armed forces impacting voter turnout, especially in the North. CMEV has received information of public officials used in campaigning in the lead up to the elections. Several incidents from Jaffna were reported on the last day of campaigns targeting both UPFA and opposition actors.
- CMEV raised concerns with the process involved with postal voting including the application process and the situation created as a result of incremental weather. CMEV has raised concerns in terms of reform in the application process.
- Two election rallies for the Common Opposition Candidate were attacked with shots fired in Kolonnawa.
- CMEV has raised concerns as to the situation faced by IDPs and their voting rights in the context of the recent floods and heavy rains in parts of Sri Lanka. This is an issued where CMEV wrote to the EC.
- CMEV noted several instances where false ballot papers were found in Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Ampara, Monaragala, Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Anuradhapura, Puttalam and Kandy. This too has been raised with the EC in terms of its impact to confuse voters and possibly impact the integrity of the franchise.

Significance of Presidential Polls 2015

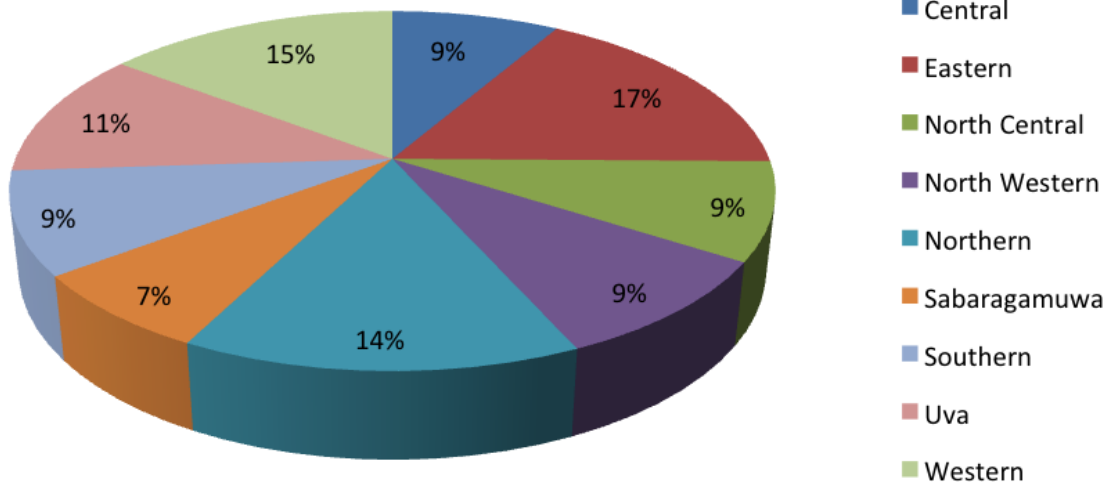
- First time an incumbent President is seeking a third term.
- An incumbent President has never been defeated at a Presidential election.
- The coalition against the incumbent is large and diverse
- Second Presidential election in the post war context

False information attributed to CPA

A survey that first appeared on a pro-incumbent social media site attributed its findings, falsely, to CPA. The post portrays a victory for the incumbent based on a survey conducted by CPA. Neither CPA nor CMEV, at any point of time, has conducted or released a survey of this nature. The content on the website is completely false and has no basis in the work or output of CPA or CMEV.

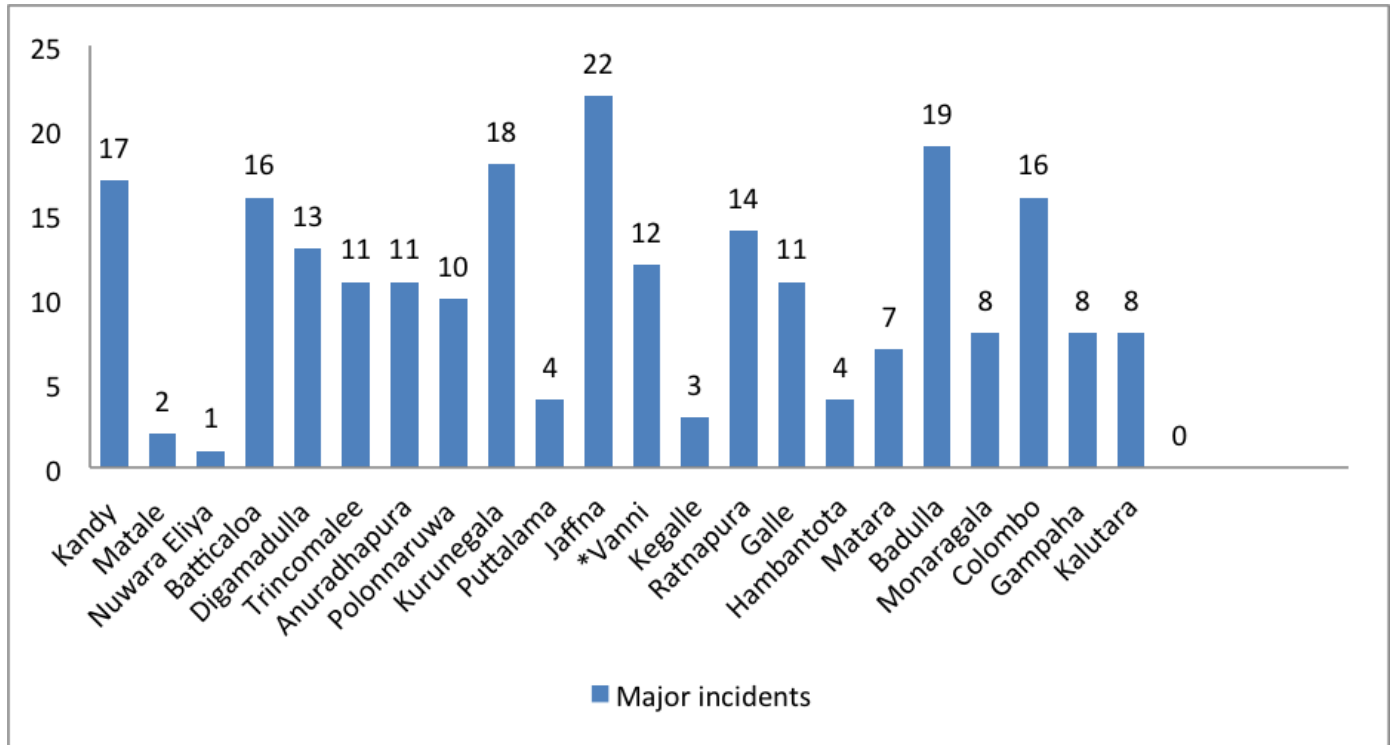
For further information with regard to incident reports please refer to CMEV website: www.cmev.org

Major Incidents (Provincial breakdown)



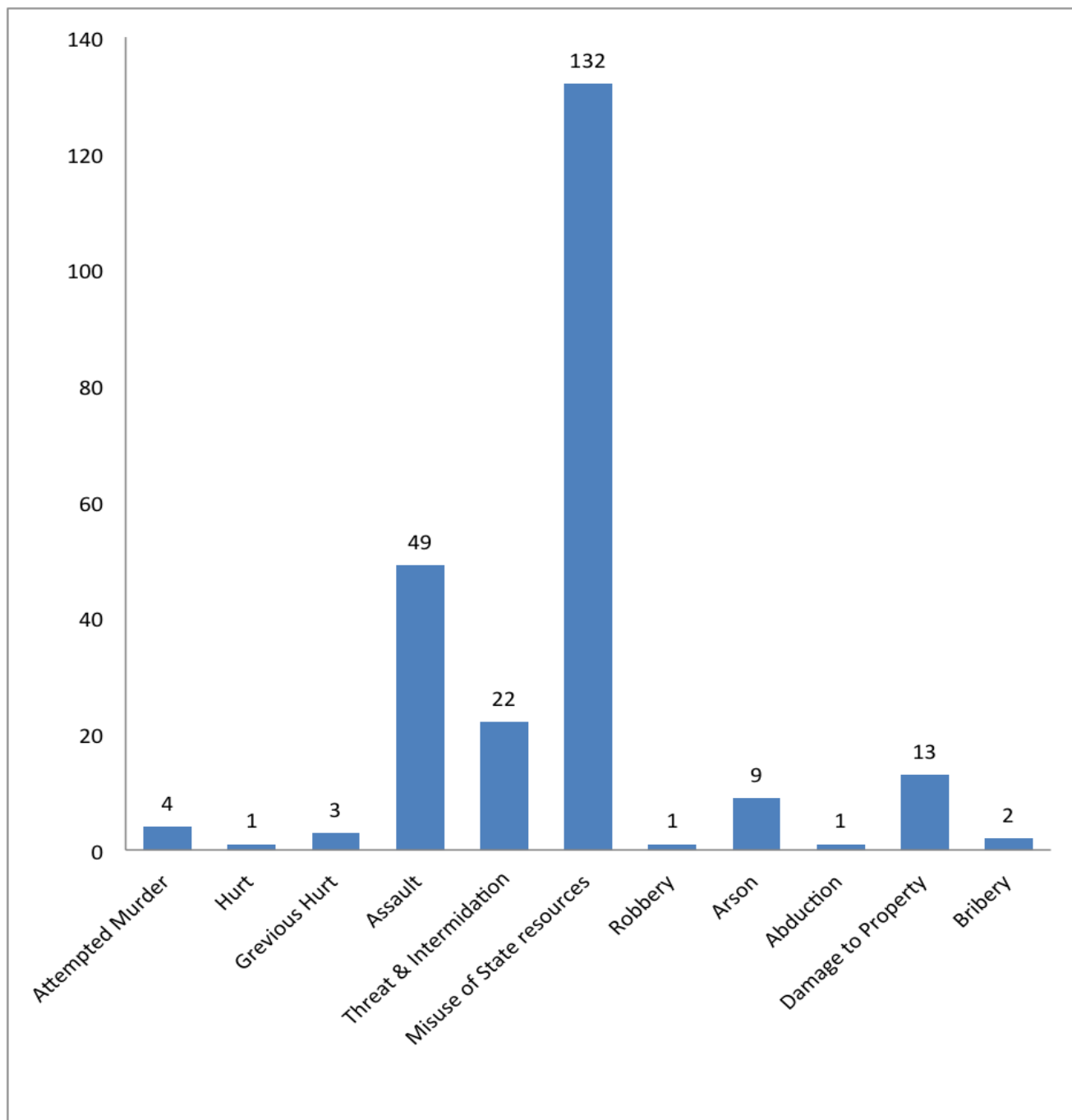
Central	20
Eastern	40
North Central	21
North Western	22
Northern	34
Sabaragamuwa	17
Southern	22
Uva	27
Western	35

Incidents according to Electoral Districts



(*Vanni Electoral District includes- Mullaitivu, Mannar, Vavuniya)

Major incidents by category of offences



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