

04th February 2010

News Director/ Editor

## **Presidential Elections 2010**

### **Interim Report on Pre Election, Election Day and on Post Election period ending 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2010**

PAFFREL is submitting this interim report to take into account the immediate post- election context and to make our recommendations regarding the independent monitoring process at forthcoming elections.

#### **Pre Election Period**

During the pre election period several serious incidents were reported. There were 757 incidents reported to PAFFREL out of which more than 300 incidents were serious in nature. There were 4 killings and 127 assaults and 185 incidents of attacks of party offices and over 150 were hospitalized. The statements made by the Election Commissioner indicated clearly that the cooperation he expected from the relevant authorities were not up to his expectation.

Daily many incidents of violations of election laws and procedures were reported. These were evident due to actions undertaken by the main political contestants. Further state resources were utilized at these elections on a large scale. It is regrettable to note that all attempts made by the Election Commissioner to persuade the state media to give fair coverage to the opposition candidates were futile. Similarly the guidelines given by the Election Commissioner to the private media were also not adhered to by some of the private media organizations.

#### **Election Day**

As we stated in our Election Day report, the environment on the day of the Presidential election itself was peaceful. However, on the day of elections 71 election related violations were reported to PAFFREL and 35 of these have been confirmed, of which we consider four to be serious. on the day of the poll in the Mulgirigala polling division around 6.30 am when the polling agent of NDF was On his way to the polling centre, No.14 at Komadiya, he was assaulted and his copy of the voters list was removed from him. Another polling agent of NDF was prevented from discharging his duties by removing the voters' list from him in Weligampola, Nawalapitiya polling division on 26.01.2010

In the early hours of the day of poll there were explosions took place in Jaffna District, and a hand bomb exploded at the polling station No. 28 of Manipay. Other incidents such as transportation of voters, illegal propaganda and attempts to coerce the voters were also been reported.

The over all average turn out of casting the vote at the elections though stood at 74.5, in the North it stood at a very low level. In the District of Jafna it stood at 23.6 %. In Kilinochchi and Mulaitivu in percentage terms it stood at 7.2% and 14% respectively. While we do not regard this as a satisfactory feature we found several reasons during our observations for this low voter turnout in the North. The voter interest as regards the Presidential Elections was at a very low level. Further non availability of transport facility on schedule on the day of elections prevented a significant number of IDPs from exercising their vote. The shortage of transport was very serious around the areas where IDPs were located.

Since the updating of the electoral list in the North had not been properly undertaken for nearly two decades, it is of much concern to have the list updated with the number of voters who are actually living in these areas. According to reports there are about 400,000 voters in the administrative district of Jaffna. But according to the electoral register of 2008 the figure stands at 630,548. Hence the percentage actually voted based on the electoral register we believe is not accurate. We understand that the Department of Elections has carried out an enumeration exercise in 2009 and finalization of the updated voter register is being done presently.

### **System of Counting.**

Complaints are being made regarding various violations and malpractices observed at the time of counting and in the process of announcing the election results. PAFFREL also had received complaints regarding the illegal attempts made by outsiders to enter the counting stations of Anuradhapura and Matale. Similarly an assault of an election officer at the Anuradhapura counting centre had also been reported. Incidents of this nature should not take place at an election and officers should be in a position to discharge their duties without an interruption. Hence it is the responsibility of the relevant authorities to see to it that incidents of this nature should not recur. Since PAFFREL was not directly involved in monitoring the counting process it is not possible to make any comments regarding this matter. However the doubt that has been created among political parties and people should be cleared through a mutually acceptable process.

### **Post Election violence**

Over sixty (60) incidents had been reported to PAFFREL after the commencement of the election results and among them were 2 killings, a shooting incident and torching of 4 commercial stalls and 27 other types of incidents. In addition 10 assaults, and 4 intimidations, have also been reported. A majority of incidents reported were from the District of Hambantota. There were also reports of similar incidents from Ratnapura, Kandy, Moneragala, Anuradhapura and Badulla. In certain areas celebrations were held with the serving of milk rice and oil cakes. PAFFREL sees that it is the responsibility of the District and Divisional political hierarchy to prevent post election violence and to maintain peace in the areas. Therefore our request to the supporters of winning political party to refrain from inflicting mental or physical violence on those neighbors, relations, and friends who hold opposing political views and to inculcate peaceful action into our political culture.

## Recommendations

We request the following actions to take place before the forthcoming general elections

- 1) Those responsible to implement the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the constitution and set up Independent Commissions, including the duly empowered Election Commission
- 2) Take necessary steps to use the 2009 revision of the electoral register for the district of Jaffna for the forthcoming Parliamentary General Election.
- 3) Since the use of national identity is essential at future elections, for those who are not having the relevant documents to get an identity card, to initiate action to issue them with a permanent identity card.
- 4) Give duly accredited election monitoring organizations the right to be an integral part of the entire election process, including the post-polling activities and to be present at counting centres.
- 5) Initiate discussions between all parties currently represented in Parliament regarding the safeguards and procedures to be adopted at forthcoming election.



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