



PAFFREL

**Parliamentary General Elections -2010
Election Day Communiqué - 8th April 2010**

Polling on Election Day took place in a generally uneventful manner, except for a few significant incidents. During the hours of polling, PAFFREL deployed 8339 stationary observers, 1256 mobile observers in 314 mobile teams and also had 16 international observers most of whom were drawn from the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL). Our stationary and mobile observation teams covered all polling stations in the entire country.

A total of 140 incidents were reported of which 86 were confirmed. Most of these confirmed incidents, amounting to 50, related to illegal propaganda on the day of elections. Another 13 incidents related to threats and hindrances to voters. Our figure tallies with the 142 incidents noted by the All Party Operational Unit established by the Elections Department.

The following serious incidents were reported.

1. In Nawalapitiya electorate it was reported that polling agents of opposition parties were threatened and forced to leave by supporters of the ruling party in all 16 polling stations in the electorate. Our stationary observers who were present in 9 of those polling stations, and our mobile teams that visited the other 7, observed that there were no opposition polling agents in those polling stations. They also observed large numbers of people wearing blue caps congregating in front of the polling stations.
2. In the Vavuniya District there was confusion amongst the displaced voting population (IDPs) as to where they should go to cast their votes. Some of them took buses to Kilinochchi to cast their votes, as they had done at the Presidential Election in January, only to find that their polling stations had been shifted to Vavuniya. In other respects voting in Vavuniya was orderly.
3. At polling station, Vavuniya 81, at approximately 9.15 am a private bus laden with passengers appeared a few yards from the entrance of the polling station. The passengers alighted and proceeded to vote. A few that our observers spoke to said that they were from the town of Kachchini about 12 km distance. They said that a candidate had arranged for the transport and also provided them with little pieces of paper with party symbol and the number of the candidate and the name of the candidate.

Although the environment on Election Day was peaceful and calm, and the level of pre-election violence was less than what took place at the Presidential Election of January 26 2010, the election process as a whole continued to display the infirmities that PAFFREL and other independent observation groups have previously noted at this election and preceding ones as well.

These infirmities include the inaction of the Police in dealing with violations of electoral laws pertaining to illegal propaganda and the misuse of the state machinery by candidates and supporters of the ruling alliance to further their election propaganda work. We regret that the police were reluctant to take deterrent action against government supporters who were violating election laws even on the day of elections.

Another major flaw in the election was the high visibility transfer or punishment of public servants and police personnel prior to the election by the government without the consent of the Election Commissioner. Once again PAFFREL makes the point that the 17th Amendment to the Constitution needs to be implemented to better guarantee a reduction in the level of political interference and a better system of checks and balances that would ensure free and fair elections.

PAFFREL is concerned about the relatively low voter turnout at this election. The turnout is estimated to be in the range of about 55 percent, which is considerably less than the 76 percent turnout at the last General Election in 2004.



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