

PAFFREL

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சுதந்திரமானதும் நீதியானதுமான தேர்தல்களுக்கான மக்கள் செயற்பாடு.

PEOPLE'S ACTION FOR FREE & FAIR ELECTIONS

PAFFREL ELECTION DAY STATEMENT-PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (8 JANUARY 2015)

The Presidential election took place today under significantly peaceful conditions. PAFREL congratulates the Election Commissioner, the Inspector General of Police, and their respective departmental staff who were tasked with election duties for performing their tasks on Election Day itself in an exemplary manner.

On Election Day, PAFREL deployed 11,200 stationary monitors and 360 mobile teams. In addition 35 international monitors of the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) observed the elections at the invitation of PAFREL. PAFREL received a total of 150 complaints during the polling period. These complaints involved 156 violations of which 82 were confirmed as at 4 pm today. There were 2 complaints of explosions reported from the North from Jaffna and Vavuniya. There were 9 assaults including 3 serious cases which entailed hospitalization from Anuradhapura, Ratnapura and Matale. Attempts to influence voters were widespread and there were also confirmed reports of intimidation of voters in several areas including Nawalapitiya, Kandy and Gampaha.

Violations of election law that involved the abuse and misuse of state resources and personnel that had been taking place on a large scale during the period of the election campaign continued on Election Day itself. PAFREL regrets that the Election Commissioner was not vested with the necessary powers to control and rectify this situation and ensure a level playing field for the opposition.

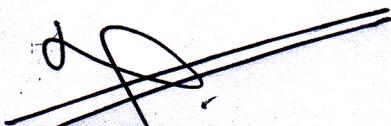
The predominant feature of this election was the gross abuse and misuse of state resources and state power that took place during the period of the election campaign prior to Election Day and even during the two day "cooling off" period prior to Election Day, and on Election Day itself. PAFREL wishes to state that violence is not the only criterion in determining a free and fair election. There cannot be violations of election law if the contest is to be free and fair.

The state media and some private media were utilized in a one-sided manner for the ruling party candidate's benefit. During the "cooling off" period, where no political activity is permitted, these media institutions broadcast accounts of the war and terrorism, including mock-ups of LTTE attacks and the government's triumph over it. On Election Day itself the Rupavahini State television broadcast false information about the defection of a key opposition member to the government. We appreciate the action of the Election Commissioner in personally going to the offending television station and ensuring it corrected its misinformation.

In addition, throughout the election campaign period, and on Election Day itself, the state welfare system was utilized in a manner that amounts to "treating" the electorate. The provision of mobile phones, rice cookers, sarees, bags of cement were recorded by PAFREL monitors as taking place on a very large scale in different parts of the country. State vehicles, officials, welfare programmes, development programmes and even the annual government budget were structured for the purpose of

treating and inducement of voters. The denial of public spaces for the opposition to conduct its election rallies was a problem throughout the period of the election campaign.

At the conclusion of a hard fought and bitterly contested election, PAFFREL appeals to the political parties, their leaders and members, to ensure that today's peaceful environment continues into the post-election period and is without violence or revenge-taking. We expect the police to perform their duties and ensure the Rule of Law prevails.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive script that is difficult to decipher but appears to be the name of the signatory.

Rohana Hettiarachchie
Executive Director