



# PAFFREL

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சுதந்திரமானதும் நியாயமானதுமான தேர்தல்களுக்கான மக்கள் செயற்பாடு.

## PEOPLE'S ACTION FOR FREE & FAIR ELECTIONS

### PAFFREL Election Day Statement - Local Government Elections 2018

The much awaited local government elections took place today, 10 February 2018, under generally peaceful conditions. These elections were the largest in the country's history, over 57,000 candidates competing for 8325 places in 340 local authorities with a total voter population of over 15 million. This was the first time in over four decades that the local government elections for the entire country were held on a single day. These elections had been postponed for over two years and were held at the mid-point of the government's term of office. This resulted in these elections taking on the character of a fiercely contested national election in which the campaign themes were more national than local. These elections also took on a special character by bringing in new features such as the ward-based first-past-the-post system, a 25 percent women's quota and counting of votes in polling stations themselves.

In these circumstances it stands to the credit of the Elections Commission and Police, which are the two main institutions involved in the conduct of elections, that the pre-election campaign period, the two day cooling-off period, and the election day itself should have been generally peaceful and without serious disruptions.

PAFFREL deployed 168 long term observers from the time of the announcement of elections, and 4000 stationary observers and 230 mobile teams on the day of Elections. Our observers recorded nearly 1000+ incidents of violations during the campaign period. A relatively large number of incidents (141) were reported during the cooling-off period. 211 incidents were reported during election day, among these, 22 incidents of violence, 4 candidates were assaulted, (i.e. - 3 UNP candidates from Eravur, Rambukkana, Kandy & 1 EPDP candidate from Jaffna), 6 incidents of attacks on party supporters, 2 incidents of attacks on candidates' vehicles ( i.e. - Batticaloa & Puttlam ) and 10 people were hospitalized. But these were isolated incidents and thus PAFFREL commends the police for making no distinction between the ruling and opposition party candidates and arresting those from both sides, and for acting promptly on PAFFREL's complaints.

On the other hand, there was a serious problem of bribing of voters by distribution of consumer items and other goods which was indulged in by many candidates all over the country. Therefore PAFFREL propose campaign finance limitation regulations to be enacted. Though no incidents were reported regarding harassments against female candidates on Election Day, the campaign period was marred by social & religious harassments against women candidates. These are problems that need to be given more attention to prevent similar violations in the future.

PAFFREL wishes to commend the Elections Commission for the efficient and impartial conduct of these elections, for establishing innovative mechanisms such as the special complaints unit to deal with gender harassment and for acting on our complaints and supporting our work in the field. Furthermore PAFFREL commend political parties, Independent groups and majority of candidates for adhering to the Election Law and demonstrating satisfactory level of integrity. The independence that the Elections Commission and Police demonstrated during these elections is a positive reflection of the strengthening of institutions of governance which are the pre-requisite for free and fair elections.

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