

PAFFREL

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சுதந்திரமானதும் நியாயமானதுமான தேர்தல்களுக்கான மக்கள் செயற்பாடு.

PEOPLE'S ACTION FOR FREE & FAIR ELECTIONS

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2024

Report on the Election Day 21st September 2024

The Presidential Election 2024 took place on 21st September 2024. A total of 17,140,354 persons were eligible to cast their vote through 13,421 polling stations. It is noteworthy that since the first presidential election in 1982, that at the 2024 Presidential Election the highest number of candidates (38) contested. In general the voters were enthusiastic about their participation in the electoral process, which resulted in approximately 75%-80% voter turnout Island wide.

The Presidential Election 2024 has been peaceful under the guidance of the Election Commission of Sri Lanka (ECSL) and the participation of different stakeholders including election observation organizations.

The ECSL played a vital role from the pre-election period to the polling date to ensure a free and fair election. Sri Lanka Police cooperated with the relevant entities to preserve law and order effectively and impartially throughout the process even in the situation of non-availability of an Inspector General of Police (IGP). PAFFREL appreciates the ECSL and Sri Lanka Police for ensuring a reduction of the violation of election laws, ensuring less violence and protecting the citizen's right to vote. It is the citizens with their deep commitment to democracy who deserve the ultimate appreciation for today's peaceful election.

A sizable portion of the polling stations were covered by PAFFREL, with the active participation of more than 4,000 election observers. PAFFREL has received 164 complaints (109 confirmed and 55 unconfirmed) during the Election Day. Among these, 161 complaints were in violation of election laws including illegal election propaganda and attempts to influence the voters.

Several incidents of violation of election laws were reported from Yatiyantota in Kegalle, Devinuwara, Athulugoda in Galle, Gampaha, Nattandiya, Kuliypitiya, Matara, Weligama, Bentara-Elpitiya, Balangoda, Kolonnawa, Rathgama, Kiribathgoda, Minuwangoda, Kotte, Ranpokunagama in Nittambuwa, and Kongaha Mawatha in Galle. These incidents ranged from illegal election propaganda on Election Day to transportation of voters. There were five incidents of violence which are counted as intimidation, threats, and assaults reported from Naula in Matale, Meddekanda, Bandarawela, Beragama in Matara, and Maussawa in Patha Hewahata. Nevertheless, there were no incidents or situations during the Election Day that have had a significant impact on the polling.

Unfortunately, incidents and complaints on abuse of state power, resources, and employees from the pre-election period to the polling day were significant in the Presidential Election 2024 compared to Presidential Election in 2019. This was brought on by the prevailing economic crisis, the ambiguity caused by the fact that the incumbent President was also a candidate, and the attempts of the government members, who sought to influence voters using state power.

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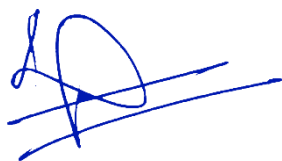
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As noted by the Mobile Observers, Long Term Observers, and Stationary Observers deployed by PAFFREL on the polling day, there were very few malpractices in polling stations. In addition to providing sufficient security by Sri Lankan Police, adequate facilities were also provided for People with Disabilities at the polling stations with some exceptions. PAFFREL has observed some accessibility issues especially in some areas of the country and calls on ECSL to take corrective measures at polling stations in the future. No serious incidents were reported on illegal election campaigns in the vicinity of polling stations, public gatherings, intimidation, and influencing and transportation of voters.

The Presidential Election 2024 saw several positive measures taken by the authorities who were directly involved with the conduct of the election process. However, the election related violence and abuse of state power, resources, and employees were less compared to Presidential Elections in 2015 and 2019. Efforts and processes which attempted to convince and manipulate voters on race, religion, ethnicity towards an election in an ethnically polarized society did not appear much. Even though digital and cyber based violence and violation of election laws were reported, hate speech on candidates and their ideologies and campaigns were not significant compared to previous elections.

Social media platforms were extensively utilized for the election campaigns in support of candidates, and citizens also were much involved and enthusiastic in the elections campaigns through social media channels. However, there were attempts made to spread fear among voters by propagating unsubstantiated allegations against some candidates. There has been a greater use of social media this election than in previous elections. The ECSL's monitoring initiatives in this regard were crucial and PAFFREL in collaboration with the Hashtag Generation supports such initiatives.

From the pre-election period to the polling day, PAFFREL continued the election observation with 40 District Coordinators, 25 Field Coordinators, 3000 Stationary Observers, 716 Mobile Team Observers, 160 Long Term Observers, 40 Campaign Finance Observers, and 25 Election Dispute Resolution Center Observers. PAFFREL continues to make interventions to ensure the democratic essence of elections. PAFFREL appeals to all citizens, political actors and authorities to be vigilant and stay calm in the post-election period.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines, positioned above the name of the Executive Director.

Rohana Hettiarachchi,
Executive Director