

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION 2024

Postal Voting Report
07th November 2024



PAFFREL

PEOPLE'S ACTION FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

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1. Background

Postal Voting for the Parliamentary Election 2024 took place on 30/10/2024, 01/11/2024 and 04/11/2024. On 30th October and 04th November, the Postal Voting took place at the offices of District Secretariat, Election Commission of Sri Lanka, Senior Deputy Inspector General and Deputy Inspector General, Superintendent of Police and Assistant Superintendent of Police, police stations, special task force, special police units, and VIP provisions. Postal Voting for at Tri Forces Camps and rest of the government offices took place on 01st November and 04th November. For individuals who had been unable to cast their vote on these specified dates, an additional opportunity to vote in person had been provided at their respective District Election Offices on 07th and 08th November 2024.

As per Section 26 of the Parliamentary Elections Act No. 01 of 1981, voters entitled to request the facility of Postal vote for the Parliamentary Election on 14th November 2024, should be allowed to do so. This was applied to voters who are not able to vote in person at their designated polling station because they are engaged in polling duties or other essential services that must continue. On 29th September, the Election Commission of Sri Lanka (ECSL) declared that it will begin taking applications for postal voting on 01st October 2024, and terminate on 08th October 2024. Further, ECSL extended this period till midnight on 10th October 2024. The certification of postal voter lists appeared on 16th October, with the issuance and delivery of these lists to the post taking place on 23rd October.

According to the ECSL, 759,210 postal voting applications were received and 21,160 applications were rejected and 738,050 applications were accepted. Kurunegala District recorded the highest number of accepted postal voting applications, with a total of 78,036, while Mullativu District had the lowest, with only 3,947 applications.

2. Postal voting observation

1000 Postal Voting Observers were deployed by PAFFREL in all politically sensitive centres such as district secretariats, bus depots, educational offices, military camps and in police stations on the postal voting days as part of PAFFREL's efforts to guarantee a free and peaceful election. The information received from the field observers that in general, postal voting was conducted peacefully. These observers conducted extensive monitoring to assess the fairness of the election from various perspectives. Postal voting observers closely monitored blow key aspects of the voting process:

1. Election preparation
2. Voting Process
3. Election Law violations

In the election preparation process the design of polling stations to protect the confidentiality of casting voting was observed.

In the Postal Voting, almost all postal voting polling stations that were observed were made to keep the confidentiality of casting votes of persons. This shows a strong effort taken by the related entities to ensure a formal postal voting process.

The right to vote is an important and crucial and aspect of democracy. To ensure an all-inclusive election, the Election Commission, election monitoring organizations, and other relevant authorities work together. In particular, this election has focused on and observed polling station accessibility for People with Disabilities (PWDs). In this context, PAFFREL observed that 76% of polling stations had adequate facilities for the PWDs, while 24% still lacked these necessary accommodations.

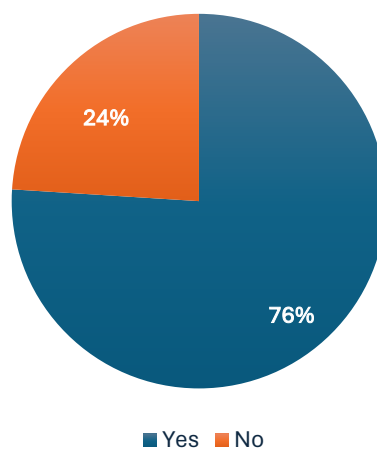


Figure 1 Availability of accessible facilities for People with Disabilities

There were no photographs of politicians displayed in postal voting polling stations. As observed, photographs of politicians have been found in only 03 polling stations located in Rathnapura, Hambantota and Jaffna.

Also, the Postal Voting Observers looked at whether the photographs of Parliamentary Election candidates were exhibited inside and surrounding polling stations. Only polling stations located in the districts such as Puttalam, Hambantota, Matara have exhibited the photographs of candidates. There were no records from the majority of polling stations in exhibiting the photographs.

There have been instances during the voting process where voters' identities have not been verified at two polling stations: the Regional Director of Health Services (RDHS) in Ampara and the Colombo South Teaching Hospital in Kalubowila, according to some Postal Voting Observers. The remaining 99.8% of polling stations have appropriately examined and verified the voters' identities.

In all polling stations that were observed by Postal Voting Observers, there were no incidents reported on taking photographs of the ballot papers.

The Election Commission emphasised that any photograph, brochure, symbol or signs should not be exhibited at the premises of polling stations in order to promote the candidates and leaflets should not be distributed for this purpose. PAFFREL observed whether such activities were conducted by parliamentary election candidates and supporters in polling stations. Only one incident occurred at the polling station located at Divisional Education Office, Kattankudy, Batticaloa. And leaflets were distributed by two supporters attached to the New Democratic Front on the road near the polling station. Police have reached the place where the incident happened and filed a police complaint.

Also, the security status of the polling stations of postal voting was also observed. 99% of the polling stations were secured by the police & forces. Only a few polling stations such as District Forest Office Walawwatta, Divisional Education Office, Mallagam, Thelippalai, Urban Council, Minuwangoda, Divisional Secretariat, Negombo, Mihintale Pradeshiya Sabha, Mihintale Veterinary Office and Wariyapola Divisional Education Office was no inside or outside protection provided by the security entities.

As the findings of the postal voting observation, there were relatively few cases of election law violations at postal voting polling stations of the 2024 Parliamentary Election. This is a noteworthy indication of a free and fair election and the establishment of democracy in general.

3. Complaints received during the Postal Voting

During the days of the Postal Voting, the Complaint Receiving and Mitigation Unit of PAFFREL received several complaints. From 30th October to 04th November, a total of 724 complaints were reported and 711 of complaints were confirmed (see Annex I). It Included 08 complaints on Act of Violence, 08 complaints on Abuse of State Power, Resources and Employees and 695 complaints on Violation of Election Laws.

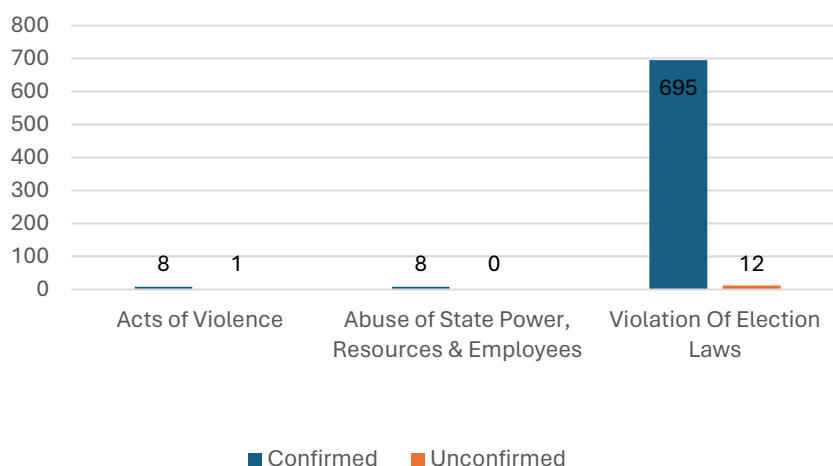


Figure 2 Election Complaints during the Postal Voting days received by PAFFREL

Among these complaints, there are some significant incidents on violation of election laws and acts of violence related to the Postal Voting of the Parliamentary Election 2024 as follows:

- On 30/10/2024, a complaint was received regarding approximately 10 vehicles belonging to a candidate contesting for the Parliamentary Election from the Samagi Jana Balawegaya in the Kalutara District. These vehicles have been seen roaming around polling stations with slogans " *Yuthukame Manapaya* (preferential vote of gratitude)".
- On 30/10/2024, a complaint was received stating that voters who arrived at the Postal Voting polling station at Matara Rahula Vidyalaya were informed that voting would not take place today, causing them significant inconvenience.
- On 01/11/2024, a complaint was received that voters are being pressured to vote for a particular party by an officer-in-charge and an assistant officer at the polling station located at the office of the Deputy Provincial Director of Agriculture, Sri Bodhi Mawatha, Gampaha.
- 01/11/2024, a complaint has been received that a vehicle with stickers related to the election campaign of a parliamentary candidate from the Samagi Jana Balawegaya in the Ratnapura district is roaming near the polling station located at Weligepola Divisional Secretariat, Balangoda.
- 01/11/2024 a complaint has been received that a vehicle with stickers related to the election campaign of a parliamentary candidate from the Samagi Jana Balawegaya in the Ratnapura district is roaming in the Northern Kalutara area.
- On 03/11/2024, in the Jayanthipuran area, supporters of the Tamil People's Party were attacked by a group from the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal party while putting up posters. A complaint has been filed regarding the conflict between the two groups. The report also indicates that two supporters of the Tamil People's Party were admitted to Batticaloa Hospital, and the Batticaloa police have arrested two individuals involved in the attack.
- On 03/11/2024, a complaint was received and the Laggala Police announced the deployment of a special police team to arrest an individual involved in a dispute at a hotel located within the environmentally sensitive Knuckles area. The individual in question is reportedly an organiser for the Dambulla electorate of Samagi Jana Balawegaya, a candidate of the Parliamentary Election (Chief Inspector, Police Station, Laggala said that in relation to this incident, two friends of the parliamentary candidate Dambulla constituency organizer have been arrested and in addition to this, investigations have been started to arrest one of his brothers).
- On 04/11/2024, a candidate of Samagi Jana Balawegaya in Monaragala District was attacked with Chilli Powder and also assaulted by an unidentified group

around 3:00 AM in the Dambagalla area. The injured candidate has been taken to the hospital, and the police have begun an investigation to identify the suspects.

- On 04/11/2024, a complaint was received regarding the handling of ballot papers at the polling station located at the Education Office in Kattankudy, Batticaloa. It was reported that the ballot papers of Muslim voters were sealed after they marked their votes, whereas the ballot papers of Tamil voters were not sealed after voting. This issue was resolved through the intervention of the Election Dispute Resolution Center, Batticaloa.

Crucially, the ECSL was providing adequate facilities and resources in polling stations and was acting appropriately to guarantee a free and fair election on the designated days of the postal voting. In order to guarantee safe and peaceful polling station operations, the Department of Police also has provided sufficient protection.

However, there haven't been any incidents or circumstances that have significantly affected the election during postal voting. PAFFREL is appreciative of all the officers who were involved with election-related duties throughout the postal voting days at all polling stations across the country, in addition to the ECSL and Sri Lanka Police.

Throughout the Parliamentary Election 2024, PAFFREL will continue its election observation mission and monitor the entire electoral process.

Contact Us

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Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/paffrel/>

Twitter: <https://x.com/PAFFREL>

Threads: <https://www.threads.net/@paffrel>

Annex I Complaints received from 30th October to 04th November 2024



Parliamentary Election 2024 - Pre-election period

Violations of law under each category - Islandwide

From 2024-10-30 10:00:00 To 2024-11-04 16:00:00 - [By Recording Date]

| Label | Type of Violation | Confirmed | Unconfirmed | Sub Total |
|-------|--|------------|-------------|------------|
| 1 | Murders | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | Grievous Assaults | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 3 | Assaults | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| 4 | Abductions | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | Attacks with Explosives | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | Shootings | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | Threats & Intimidation using Firearms | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | Damage to Immovable Property | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | Damage to Movable Property | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | Intimidation & Threats | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| 11 | Attacks on Political Party/ Candidate Offices | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| | Acts of Violence | 8 | 1 | 9 |
| 12 | Misuse of state property | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| 13 | Use of State Vehicles for Election Campaign Purposes | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 14 | Attempts/ influencing State Officials | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 15 | Appointments, Transfers & Promotions for State Officials targeting the Election | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| 16 | Use of State Officials & Security Sources for Election Campaign Purposes | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 16-1 | Provide government aid in political gain | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Abuse of State Power, Resources & Employees | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| 17 | Destruction & sabotage decorations, posters & cutouts of political parties | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 18 | Disrupting Campaign Activities of Opponents | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 19 | Carrying out Illegal Election Propaganda | 570 | 4 | 574 |
| 20 | Threatening & Disrupting Work of Election Monitors | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 21 | State Officers acting in Favor of Political Parties & in Breach of Official Duties | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| 22 | Carrying out Unlawful Meetings & Processions | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 23 | Maintaining Illegal Party Offices | 85 | 2 | 87 |
| 24 | Giving Incentives with Political Objectives | 25 | 5 | 30 |
| 25 | Using Vehicles without Number Plates | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 26 | Favouritism & Misuse of State & other Media | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 27 | Attempts to Influence/ Influencing by Security Sources & State Officials | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 28 | Spreading of fake news | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 29 | Carrying out Election Campaign Activities Harassing & Inconveniencing the General Public | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| 30 | Influencing Voters | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 31 | Irregularities relating to Ballot Papers | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 32 | Transportation of voters | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 33 | Giving incentives to voters | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| 34 | Obstructing election officials and activities | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 35 | Assaulting voters/ using force to turn voters away from polling station | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 36 | Casting votes illegally/ attempts to impersonate | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 37 | Other Incidents | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| | Violation of Election Laws | 695 | 12 | 707 |
| | TOTAL | 711 | 13 | 724 |

* During the above period, we have received 707 complaints/incidents in relation to 724 Electoral law / general law violations.