

# Joint Open Letter by the Main Election Monitoring Groups

**To:** Leaders and Secretaries of all political parties  
Contesting the Uva Provincial Council Election 2014  
And the Inspector General of Police (IGP)

12th August 2014.

Dear Sirs,

**Request to take appropriate action to prevent violations of election law and ensure the safety of election officials**

As you are aware, there have been several reports of threats to election officials in provincial council elections held in the recent past. Evidence of many such incidents surfaced during the provincial council elections in the Southern, North Western and Western provinces – incidents in Homagama, Kesbewa (Western PC) Weligama, Matara (Southern) and Mahawa (North Western) being examples. In comparison with other elections conducted in the last decade, the number of such incidents is high.

The latest such incident of this nature, has been reported from the Badulla district on nomination day (06<sup>th</sup> August 2014). A former Uva PC minister (Anura Vidanagamage) and his brother, a ruling party Member of Parliament from the Badulla District (Thenuka Vidanagamage) had organized a large vehicle parade with the intention of traveling to Badulla from Mahiyanganaya. When this large group of supporters with over 150 vehicles entered the Loggal Oya area, a few police officers attempted to stop them under instructions from Mr. Chaminda Namal Thalangama, Deputy Commissioner of Elections, Kurunegala, who has been deployed to the Uva Province for special duty by the Election Commissioner. UPFA supporters threatened the Assistant Election Commissioner and the police officers, who attempted to stop them. Further they deleted all photographic images and video footage on camera, taken by the Deputy Commissioner of Elections. Due to this unprecedented incident, the election officers who had been verbally abused and threatened feared for their safety and returned to Badulla using alternative routes. A section of UPFA supporters arrived at Bandarawela through Haliela and Badulla while another section gathered in the Meegahakiula area, seriously violating election laws. There have also been reports of other incidents of violations of election laws by UPFA and UNP supporters holding vehicle parades. Our main concern however, pertains to the incident reported from the Loggal Oya area.

The Department of Elections had issued a circular (PCE/2014/UVA/4B) on July 31<sup>st</sup> requiring that political parties, government officers and law enforcement authorities ensure that processions and vehicle parades do not take place during the election period, especially during August 5th and 6th 2014. The Department had also urged politicians not to disturb students sitting the GCE (A/L) examination between August 5 and 29, 2014. Further the Department of Election has been issued a “code of ethics in terms of section 8(8) of the Parliamentary Elections Act No.1 of 1981 as amended by Act No.58 of 2009. Accordingly, it is expected that political parties and leaders of Independent Groups will make their candidates aware of the code of conduct and make suitable arrangement to ensure that they observe the said code.

As already reported, all Assistant Commissioners of Elections are frustrated and deeply concerned about violations of election laws and in particular of this nature. It is of pivotal importance to ensure their safety and provide them the necessary support to carry out their duties without fear or favour. In this respect, we note a number of special concerns, which should be given immediate attention. Firstly most of the vehicles used in that particular vehicle parade were "Defender" vehicles of the type typically used by politicians and elements attached to the security forces. Secondly a number of the supporters involved are from cadre given to the politicians as their security officers from the Ministerial Security Division (MSD). Unless immediate measures are taken to prevent this type of incident in the future and political actors commit themselves to upholding elections laws in word and deed, the integrity of the poll on 20th September will be gravely compromised.

As such, we call on you to take all measures to ensure the safety and security of election officials and to issue strict instructions to candidates to desist from any actions, which affect the holding of free and fair elections. We also urge the IGP that in addition to providing for the security of election officials, he act decisively in respect of the misuse and abuse of public property and state resources as well as of MSD personnel and vehicles. The appointment of unbiased and professional police officers is of particular importance in areas such as Mahiyanganaya. Furthermore, MSD personnel should be directed to wear their police uniforms at all times when on duty during elections.

A genuine and demonstrable effort by political leaders, especially from the ruling alliance is vital to uphold the integrity of the electoral process.

We will be releasing this letter to the media in the public interest.

Please be assured of our cooperation

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,



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Mr. Rohana Hettiarachchi – PAFFREL



Mr. Keerthi Tennekoon – CaFFE