

50 die violently in Sri Lanka. (1989, January 27). *The globe and mall*.

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Reuter

COLOMBO

Sri Lankan police said about 50 people, including an election candidate and five members of his family, were killed on Wednesday in the worst day of violence so far in the campaign for parliamentary elections next month.

Military sources said troops will help to protect candidates.

Those dead also included supporters of the ruling United National Party and the opposition United Socialist Alliance, a left-wing rebel and a government clerk, a senior police officer said yesterday.

"It was the worst day of violence for political parties contesting the Feb. 15 poll," he said.

In most of the killings, victims were dragged from their homes and shot in the street. "Some were killed while watching television," the officer said.

Police blamed the left-wing People's Liberation Front, a mainly Sinhalese group based in the south, for the attacks. But political analysts say rival political groups could be responsible.

Alliance candidate Nissanka Karunatilake and five members of his family were killed when gunmen burst into their Central Province home, police said.

Eight candidates and several of their supporters have been killed since the parliamentary election campaign began on Jan. 10.

The armed forces have taken a back seat since newly elected President Ranasinghe Premadasa lifted the state of emergency on Jan. 11, after campaign promises to restore peace on the island shattered by a Tamil separatist rebellion and a left-wing uprising.

The government placed security forces on alert on Wednesday and said troops and police would deal firmly with "subversive elements and other disgruntled supporters of political parties" whom it accused of "trying to resort to violence and cause disruption."