

## News

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**Threats and violence have crippled West Bengal SIR; the 2025 election rolls are uncertain: ECI to Supreme Court**



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Threats and violence have crippled West Bengal SIR; the 2025 election rolls are uncertain: ECI to Supreme Court

*In Sanatani Sangsad & Anr v. Election Commission of India, the ECI informed the*

***Supreme Court that West Bengal's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls had been tainted by violence, intimidation, and persistent political meddling, making it impossible for election officials to carry out their mandated responsibilities.***

The poll board claimed in its affidavit that while the SIR's enumeration phase went "seamlessly and without incident" in other states, there were multiple instances of violence, intimidation, and obstruction against election officials in West Bengal.

***Additionally, the ECI has asserted that the validity of the 2025 electoral rolls is in doubt due to the fact that approximately 1.51 crore notices are being sent out by electoral registration officers and that over 58 lakh voters have been identified as absent, dead, or shifted in the current SIR. Therefore, it has been argued that the same cannot be employed for future assembly elections.***

In the case filed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta had previously informed the Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul Pancholi that the ECI's counteraffidavit would also be pertinent because it brings on record allegations of animosity, intimidation, and violence experienced by election officials in the State.

***According to the affidavit, local police authorities have a "pervasive reluctance" to register cases based on complaints from booth level officers (BLOs). In certain cases, first information reports (FIRs) are only registered after district election officers intervene, and arrests happen much later. According to the Commission, the State deliberately disregarded ECI directives on FIR registration and disciplinary action, even in the face of formal letters and inquiry.***

The gherao of the Chief Electoral Officer's office in Kolkata on November 24, 2025, is one of the most significant occurrences mentioned by the ECI. The affidavit claims that protesters caused "serious hindrance" to official work by attempting forcible entry, breaking police barricades, vandalizing the office, obstructing officials, locking the facility from the outside, and preventing officers from entering and exiting.

***The demonstrators allegedly remained camping in the premises for a total of 28 hours after the ECI wrote to the Commissioner of Police in Kolkata over the security breach, but they were not evacuated.***

The affidavit also states that, despite the protesters committing crimes that are punishable by law, no formal complaint has been made regarding the Gherao event, and no protesters have been taken into custody.

***The Commission has also noted that, as a result of a threat assessment by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, the Chief Electoral Officer of West Bengal is the only electoral official in the nation to receive "Y" category security.***

Additionally, incidents in the districts of Hooghly and South 24 Parganas were noted in the affidavit.

***The document highlights what it characterizes as overt political threats directed at election officials. A sitting minister's declaration that he would "break the legs of the Election Commission," an MLA's caution that removing names during the SIR would be like "playing with fire," threats to physically restrain BLOs, and public declarations encouraging people to enact their own laws are some examples.***

The Chief Minister allegedly targeted election officials and named a micro observer during a press conference on January 14, according to the Election Commission.

***Since nine micro-observers stationed in the 55-Farakka assembly constituency in Murshidabad submitted a collective letter withdrawing from SIR duties that same day, citing violent assaults and inadequate security, the affidavit claims that such statements have had immediate repercussions on the ground.***

In spite of these circumstances, throughout the enumeration phase, the BLOs collected more than 7.08 crore enumeration forms, or 92.40 percent of the total. It has emphasized that the continuous notice period is crucial for establishing eligibility and fixing mistakes, and that the integrity of the electoral roll depends on its completion without fear or intimidation.

2.09 crore entries in the 2025 draft electoral roll are being examined overall, the Commission said the Court.

***In light of this, the Commission has asserted that the forthcoming assembly election cannot be held using the electoral records of 2025 since doing so***

***would cast doubt on both the election as a whole and the legitimacy of the elected government.***

Lawread