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United Nations Mission

In SUDAN

Rich potential

A look at Blue Nile State

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Special Focus: ELECTIONS

Diary

5 February – Newly appointed Abyei Area Chief Administrator Deng Arop Kuol arrived in Abyei to assume office. He was received by a large delegation of officials and traditional leaders, including local Misseriya as well as National Congress Party and Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) leaders.

6 February – French International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) aid worker Laurent Maurice, who was taken by unidentified gunmen last November in eastern Chad 10 kilometres from the border with Darfur, was released. Another ICRC staffer, abducted in West Darfur state in October, still remains in captivity.

7 February – Outgoing Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sudan Ashraf Qazi lauded developments in the country's electoral process, urging parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to press ahead during what would be a crucial year for the nation.

8 February – Citing lack of evidence, the International Criminal Court (ICC) declined to confirm charges against rebel leader Bahar Idriss Abu Garda, accused of directing the September 2007 attack that killed a dozen African Union peacekeepers in Darfur.

11 February – Despite positive steps by Sudanese authorities towards human rights in the country's different regions, deficiencies persisted in key areas, independent UN expert Mohamed Chande said at the end of his first mission in the country. He expressed particular concern that, eight months after the National Human Rights Commission Act had been passed, the Government of National Unity had yet to appoint commissioners.

11 February – Over 200 Sudanese political party representatives, senior members of the Political Parties Affairs Council (PPAC) and the National Elections Commission (NEC) attended a Khartoum workshop organized jointly by UNMIS and PPAC in collaboration with the NEC and UN Development Programme on "building confidence in peaceful elections".

15 February – UN-sponsored Radio Miraya officially launched its new national and regional programme, linking studios in Khartoum and Juba while it broadcasts separate programming for northern and southern listeners twice a day. Radio Miraya has not been granted an FM frequency in the north, where it is broadcast six hours daily on shortwave and on NileSat.

17 February – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and UNAMID deplored an attack outside of the South Darfur capital of Nyala that wounded seven Pakistani peacekeepers, travelling in a police convoy. Mr. Ban called on the Government of Sudan to launch an immediate investigation into the incident and ensure that perpetrators were brought to justice.

20 February – President Omar Al-Bashir reportedly revoked all death sentences issued against convicted persons of the JEM who had allegedly participated in the 2008 Omdurman attack. The President's statement came after the signing of a framework agreement between the Government and Justice and Equality Movement leader Khalil Ibrahim in Chad was announced.

21 February – Government of Southern Sudan Presidential Affairs Minister Luka Biang disclosed that the Presidency had decided to postpone state legislative elections in Southern Kordofan and allocate 40 extra seats in the National Assembly for the south, four for Southern Kordofan and two for Abyei.

24 February – The UN reported that over 1,500 people had been displaced by increased fighting in Darfur and few agencies had been able to provide them with desperately needed aid due to lack of security. The displaced had sought refuge in Thur, West Darfur, after fleeing nearby villages because of increased fighting in the Jebel Marra area last month.

28 February – A two-day conference involving ten states bordering Southern Kordofan was concluded in Kadugli with UNMIS assistance. The conference discussed security problems posed by proliferation of arms, cattle rustling, border demarcation and cross-border seasonal migration.

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FRONT COVER: Traditional music group playing in Qeissan at Ethiopian border. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.

BACK COVER: Poster inviting all Sudanese to vote.

Tribal groups, language and conflict

While civil society groups in North Darfur point to a lack of voter education and security issues, the National Elections Commission's State High Committee says elections there raise less concern than elsewhere in the country.

The head of one civil society organization noted that voter registration went smoothly in the state, but the majority of the population, especially in rural areas, still needed workshops about the electoral process.

"This election is very complicated ... voters have to deal with eight different papers (for eight elections)," said Fateh As Sinnari, Chairman of the Executive Committee of Civil Society Organizations of North Darfur, adding that most of the population was illiterate.

During voter registration in November and early December 2009, three local civil society organizations (CSOs) -- Jabal Marra, Allouttash and Heritage for Culture and Peace -- carried out voter education in the state, supported by an International Organization for Migration (IOM) grant.

According to the National Elections Commission (NEC), about 2.45 million out of an estimated 3.63 million eligible people registered across the three Darfur states, which is around 67.5 per cent.

However, working with myriad different tribal groups during registration proved difficult, representatives of the Jabal Marra organization, a local CSO involved in voter education, said in their small mud-brick El Fasher office.

"Nomads are scattered in different areas and have been ignorant about elections since 1986 (the year of the country's last multi-party elections)," said Jabal Marra Manager Ali Eissa. To reach this particular group, they cooperated with another nomadic CSO.

Also adding to the inherent complexity of upcoming elections were language barriers and ongoing conflict. Jabal Marra Finance Manager Alhadi Abdelrahman noted that elections in Darfur were further complicated by groups needing civic/voter education in their own languages, while there was no access to rebel-held areas.

Although the number of registered voters -- an estimated 700,000 out of the about 850,000 eligible people in North Darfur State -- showed interest in elections, said State High Committee Spokesperson Ibrahim Musa, some internally displaced



IDP woman coming back from fodder collecting, Tawila, north Darfur. Photo: UNMIS/Fred Noy.

persons (IDP) camps had denied entry to registration teams.

The leadership of As Salaam camp, for instance, had prohibited registration teams from entering the camp, Mr. Musa said. Inhabitants of rebel-controlled areas, including Dar Zaghawa, Umbarru and Eddalkheir, were also unable to register.

"This election is very complicated ... voters have to deal with eight different papers (for eight elections)."

Internally displaced who boycotted the process reason they would rather be registered in their places of origin instead of IDP camps. In addition, they are seeking compensation for their displacement.

Besides limited access to IDP camps, security remained a concern. The elections commission had asked for more protection in rebel-held areas, said Mr. Musa, adding that the Ministry of Interior was responsible for securing polling centres across Darfur.

But the State High Committee spokesperson suggested that the elections process in other areas of the country, like Southern Kordofan, may be more difficult to organize. "In Darfur, census and registration went smoothly," he said.

A few days after an El Fasher workshop for civil society groups on violence and elections, organized by the NEC with support from the UN Development Programme, CSOs seemed to take a more cautious stance.

Chairman of the Darfur Network of CSOs Mohammed Mahmoud said that competition between political parties could create violence and rebels might try to disrupt the process.

The framework ceasefire agreement signed by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Government of National Unity on 23 February in Doha was cause for optimism. But further conflict could erupt if signatories boycotted elections (as previously threatened if peace was not achieved), said Jabal Marra Manager Ali Eissa.

While the actual ceasefire agreement was expected to be signed by 15 March, JEM asked for a postponement of elections as *In Sudan* went to print.

The Darfuri population, IDPs and CSOs seemed to remain doubtful about free and fair elections taking place. But every step was significant in the present context, as a UN official in North Darfur put it. "In this environment, any peaceful change is positive ... once the society realizes the fact that they can create a change, the democratic engine will start," he said. ■

Eszter Farkas

International eyes on the vote

With the country's first multi-party poll in 24 years less than a month away, international election observers have begun pouring into Sudan.

"We are expecting somewhere in the neighbourhood of 300 election observers to cover the country," said UNMIS Chief Electoral Affairs Officer Ray Kennedy at a press conference in the southern capital of Juba on 5 March.

The European Union would be sending 130 and the African Union 50 observers, he said, but UNMIS was still waiting to hear how many the League of Arab States and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) would dispatch.

"Some individual governments like Japan will also be sending observers," Mr. Kennedy added.

The Carter Centre, which has been assessing the electoral process in Sudan since February 2008, will also be deploying international observers to monitor the poll.

The Center has had 12 long-term observers in the country since 2009 (six each in the north and south), according to Carter Center Director Graham Elson, and was expecting four more around the middle of March.

Joining them a week before the vote would be about 48 short-term observers, the director said. Unable to cover all of the country's approximately 14,000 polling stations, they would spend about half an hour at eight to 12 voting spots per day.

"If they come across a polling station with real problems – for instance, tension or disputes that could lead to violence – the observers will stay longer," Mr. Elson said.

What observers do

Election observation, according to the National Elections Commission, is one method of ensuring the transparency of an election.

"Election observers are not there to defend the interest of any particular party, they are there to defend the overall process," noted UNMIS Electoral Chief Kennedy.

Carter Director Elson stressed that the observer's task was to monitor elections, rather than interfere or supervise them, reporting on good practice as well as bad. "Some areas are quite problematic, while others are less so. We will build an overall picture."



Former US President Jimmy Carter speaking in Molujore village, Terekeka County. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.

"The elections will not be perfect. There will be problems in individual communities in Sudan ... but what we want is that the will of the people is accurately expressed."

Sanne Van den Bergh, Carter Center Deputy Director for Southern Sudan, said observers played a vital role in strengthening elections by reassuring voters they could safely and secretly cast their ballots, and that electoral fraud would be detected.

Visiting Juba on 11 February, former US president and Center founder Jimmy Carter said observers would condemn any individuals responsible for fraud or denying citizens of their vote.

"The elections will not be perfect," the former president said. "There will be problems in individual communities in Sudan ... but what we want is that the will of the people is accurately expressed."

Ms. Van den Bergh noted that Carter observers monitored elections in several key areas in addition to the actual poll, including the legal framework, election management, voter education, boundary delimitation, campaigning, media, voter registration, balloting, counting, and electoral disputes.

"These will be evaluated in accordance with Sudan's domestic electoral law and constitution, as well as its international commitments regarding democratic elections," the deputy director said.

Challenges they face

Carter Director Elson acknowledged that observers could face any number of logistical problems in a country like Sudan, considering its sheer size and physical landscape as well as weak infrastructure.

"Even before deployment, travel permits ... must be obtained. Accommodation must be identified, drivers and interpreters found. Once they are deployed, vehicles could break down, so they must have spare vehicles," Mr. Elson said.

Ms. Van den Bergh said observers understood they could be deployed in rural areas with marginal facilities and limited access to health care, running water, continuous electricity and accommodation.

"To enable observers to stay in the vicinity of polling stations, their teams will deploy with tents and camping equipment," the deputy director said.

She also noted uncertain security in areas of Southern Sudan and Darfur, which could make travel and accommodation planning difficult, but said observers were prepared for these conditions.

"Our observers are highly qualified to deal with the most complex political situations. Many have observed elections around the world in the most challenging environments imaginable," Ms. Van den Bergh said.

Observers would be given comprehensive briefings on political situations immediately before being deployed and trained to spot ongoing trends throughout the electoral process that could potentially impact its outcome, Ms. Van den Bergh said. ■

James Sokiri

Elections in the air

With Sudan's first multi-party elections in 24 years set for next month, *In Sudan* spoke with UNMIS Chief Electoral Affairs Officer Ray Kennedy about political parties, voters and electoral conditions as well as the viability of the upcoming poll.

In Sudan: How do you feel about election preparations so far?

Ray Kennedy: Well, just after I arrived here in late 2007, there was no electoral law or elections commission. I think it was really difficult then to imagine elections actually happening. In fact, lots of people said they wouldn't. But now with only 48 days left, it really does feel like elections are in the air.

That doesn't mean there won't be problems, because Sudan is an enormous country with some very difficult conditions. And the elections commission is under-resourced for such a big job. But I think we've been able to support them in vital ways and we now feel like the poll is about to happen.

How has registration of political parties gone?

I think one of the success stories of these elections is that we have 80 plus political parties registered, especially since there were previously some concerns about registration of new parties. The Political Parties Affairs Council deserves credit for doing a very good job. They've been quite outspoken in their defense of political parties' right to get their views out to the public.

Was it expected that more voters would register countrywide?

The final figures for registration were 16.5 million people out of an estimated voting age population of around 20 million, or 80 per cent. Looking back at elections in the past, I don't think that many voters had ever been registered in Sudan before. Of course, 100 per cent would be nice, but 80 per cent under these conditions was a significant achievement.

There are 12 presidential candidates and over 80 political parties participating in elections. Do you think this will be

overwhelming for voters?

Well, it would be a lot to ask voters to sit down and go through party manifestos of 84 political parties. So it will not be a perfect political marketplace with everyone knowing what is on offer.

But I think the ability of these parties to establish themselves, get out and campaign and even talk one-on-one with voters is an important step to take.

Now that campaigning has kicked off, is the country excited about the elections?

The country is excited, but also I think nervous that there could be outbreaks of violence. We should all just focus on the need for the process to be peaceful. Political parties and their supporters must learn that elections are important but not worth losing lives over.

Do you think free and fair elections are possible?

Free and fair is an ideal. I've said many times there is no such thing as a perfect election anywhere, anytime. It's always a question of how free, how fair. We expect there will be problems in various locations at different times, but I think we have to look at the big picture. We have to look at these elections in many ways as a starting point for Sudan.

Looking back, we can see that even the most free and open elections in Sudan's history haven't resulted in a government that served its full term. If these elections are seen as a credible reflection of the people's will and a good learning experience, and we can help ensure the next elections are better, we will have come a long way.

How do you feel about the SPLM (Sudan People's Liberation Movement) threatening to withdraw from elections in certain areas over problems they cite with the census results?

I would like to see everyone participating in elections everywhere. Just as there's no such thing as a perfect election, there's also no such thing as a perfect census. And according to our international colleagues in the field of census and demographics, Sudan's census, for all of its imperfections, fell within generally accepted parameters.



Ray Kennedy. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.

In the United States during the 21st century, states are still suing each other in the Supreme Court, saying, "you were over-counted, I was under-counted, give me back my seat in the House of Representatives". Why should we expect the census here to be any less controversial? But I hope solutions can be found that enable or encourage everyone to participate in the electoral process.

What is the UN role in elections?

We've been very clear throughout that our role is to support the national authorities. The National Elections Commission is the body responsible for organizing and carrying out the elections, so you might say it is our primary client.

The Political Parties Affairs Council, which is often forgotten in these discussions, has been an important player as well. We have supported the Council in several initiatives and think it has some very good ideas to help political parties explore and understand concepts related to democracy and elections. We hope those concepts become reality and help increase awareness of citizens and politicians alike as the country moves forward.

Has the National Elections Commission created a good environment for elections?

As I said earlier, we still see it as short-staffed in such a large and complex country. It has an enormous task and I think it has slowly but surely become clear to the National Elections Commission just how huge it is.

I can tell you there has been a lot of hard work over there just as there has been among my staff here at UNMIS. We are all working together to help make these elections a reality. ■

What do elections mean to you?

William Wek, 25, secondary school student, Wau

This is a time of the ballot, not the bullet. I am encouraging youth to go and elect their future leaders democratically. With the help of the United Nations and the international community, we look forward to a peaceful and successful election and full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).



Pitia Alphonse Simon, 30, university student, Wau



We are very concerned about peace and security during the elections because we have many contesting political parties with different agendas. Although as students we have different ideas and stands regarding elections, we have one common aspiration -- we want to see change in Sudan. I advise all students to vote peacefully and avoid any violence that might undermine the credibility of this long-awaited election.

Akoch Adhieu Adup, 29, secondary school student, Wau

The election will bring all the changes that we have desired for a long time. It will end the misunderstandings we had previously among ourselves. I expect Sudan to unite equally, without discrimination and under one leadership.



John Lual, 20, university student, Bor



The election is important to us youth. We are happy to vote in new leaders. We are, however, concerned that many people are not aware of election procedures.

Gabriel Malek Awan, 24, university student, Bor

This is the first time in over 20 years that we will experience an election. We have only seen elections before on television. I do not think the elections will be peaceful. If the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) and National Congress Party (NCP) disagree on the result and there is violence, there will be no support for us here. The institutions of learning in Jonglei will close and the level of insecurity in the state will increase.



Peter Machar, 23, university student, Bor



In the past, the government has been headed by the military. We need civilians to lead civilians. We hope the coming elections will change our lives for the better and that there will be democracy. Citizens will work hard to develop the country, and more institutions for learning will be constructed.

Solomon Kenyi Angelo, 25, secondary school student, Torit

What we want from the elected leaders is for them to lead everyone, without segregation or discrimination. We want leaders who will develop the whole country without favouring certain areas.

Michael Yaak Kuer, 25, trader, Torit

I urge youth not to engage in violence once the winners are announced. We have to accept whoever is elected. Let us not repeat the violent actions of other countries. We have to prepare ourselves emotionally to accept success or defeat. It should not be a surprise if we lose, for that is why there are elections.



Susana Moses Ceazar, 19, secondary school student, Torit



I expect the elected leaders to focus on making education and healthcare available for all. Without education, they would not be contesting. We need good sanitation and more water points for safe drinking water. Plans must also exist for a good system to safeguard and run the country.

Shogar Bashar, 38, university deputy student dean, Khartoum

The political contest in Sudan is now turning towards real change. Sudanese people wish for the change that will take place and are looking forward to it.

The change we want in the coming period is economic and social change. We also hope for positive changes in the east and Darfur through these elections.



Musa Mohammed Almisbah, 35, university student, Khartoum

I and the majority of my generation did not participate in the elections of 1986. Those elections were different because they focused on geographical constituencies, while the coming ones contain six levels. They are going to be challenging so there should be media awareness.

We hope this change (elections) leads to democracy and peaceful transfer of power. We hope there will be stability and internal unity.

Altahir Ibrahim, 34, law professor, Khartoum

The Sudanese voter is now facing a new electoral experience, as previous elections did not cover all parts of Sudan and awareness was not comprehensive. But the coming elections will receive attention from citizens, the United Nations and international community.

Sudan will witness total change because the coming government will be legitimate and recognized by the international community. This will reflect positively on Sudanese people as there will (then) be foreign cooperation.

Nawad Idris, 18, student, Kadugli
 For my peers and I, this will be the first elections we experience. We are eager to go through the elections and we talk about them, even buy newspapers to read about them.
 Elections can bring about a change in social life, education and health. We are optimistic about them.



Moatassim Othman, 28, merchant, Kadugli
 You can read about elections in the press, people talk about them and hope they will be free and fair. If they can elect the president freely and fairly, they will respect him and the situation will be peaceful.
 People are living peacefully now, they have seen the town develop. Things will never deteriorate (again) as much as during the war, as people have changed mentally and refuse war as an option.



Sundus Haider, 30, primary school teacher, Kadugli
 Youth generally know very little about elections, as they're not publicized properly in the press, except for those who are politically organized.
 If elections take place in a free and fair manner, people expect positive results. Otherwise there might be problems. If ... the 25 per cent requirement for women's participation is fulfilled, women can actively work for their goals and improve their position in society. Women in rural areas will also benefit if they are well represented.



Sandos Elnour, 33, UNMIS protection officer, Juba
 The participation of women in elections will raise their status and change the public perception that women cannot lead. If elected, women representatives will address women's issues that have been overlooked by men for many years. However, my female colleagues say elections will be difficult for women candidates because they have little support from both men and women.



Alfred Awad, 40, teacher, Juba
 Previously the gun was the only tool for seizing power in Sudan. This election means saying goodbye to war. We will no longer use the gun but the ballot to acquire power.
 We want new minds and ideas in the government. Electing leaders of our choice means that they will be accountable to us. Consequently, we will achieve development in Southern Sudan in the health, education, water and sanitation and roads sector. Employment opportunities will increase and corruption will be reduced.



Gadis Guya, 38, driver, Juba
 If we conduct elections in good spirit and if citizens exercise their right to vote, we will have better schools and hospitals, safe water and good roads. Security will improve and we will live in peace like other countries. However, I fear that some people may reject the election results, which will lead to protests.

Najeeb Attahar, 26, merchant, Ed Damazin
 Everything is stable in Sudan. However, there are some factors acting against the law and trying to deny us our fundamental rights. But my family and I strongly feel this is a temporary phase ... there will certainly be peace and elections will be held on time.
 We are expecting nothing but peace from the political parties. Only peace will take us down the road of development. After elections, what matters is how positively losing parties react. When there is a peace, life will automatically improve in all aspects.

Abdul Azeez Yasin, 19, unemployed, Ed Damazin
 I have registered for elections and I am aware of my rights. My friends and I do not talk much about elections, but we are eager to witness change. Our main concern is that Sudan must not go back to war at any cost.
 We will support whichever party wins the election. As long as leaders are not doing anything against the interests of people they rule, all will surely be fine. Presently there is hardly any development, but we hope lots will take place, as the winning party will try to prove itself.



Khalid Ali, 25, schoolteacher, Ed Damazin
 Development will certainly take place for the country and for the people after the elections. As citizens, we must ensure maximum participation in elections and help make democracy stronger. Sudan needs a leader with vision and a ruler with broader shoulders to take on all its burdens.

Abazer Mohamed Omer, 19, basic school student, Malakal
 We are ready for the elections in April. Those who are elected should provide water, food, and improve the quality of life in Southern Sudan. I especially want them to end the plight of women who have to carry unsafe drinking water for long distances by providing clean drinking water in homes.



Teresa Amum Ayang, 20, basic school student, Malakal
 The elected leaders need to unite the people by replacing tribalism with nationalism. As a girl, I am adversely affected by the conflicts caused by politicians. They should give us, the youth, a chance in life.



Sandra Odhong Tupo, 18, basic school student, Malakal
 In Malakal, some people do not want elections because they fear there will be violence. I am confident that these elections are necessary. I do not expect that there will be any violence.



Putting women in office

Serving tea to a customer at a small eatery in Juba, Ashraqua Joseph said she hoped the country's upcoming poll would change her life for the better.

Returning to the southern capital with her six children five years ago, the 42-year-old widow tried to make ends meet by opening a cafe with her sister, but the income they make is meagre.

"What I get is not enough to pay school fees and feed my family," said Ms. Joseph, stressing that the country's first election in 24 years should lead to a better understanding of women's difficulties.

"The coming leaders should think of our problems. They should provide ... financial loans so that we can earn a better income," the café owner said.

Regina Osa Lulo, Director General for Gender and Child Welfare in the Government of Southern Sudan Ministry of Health, voiced a similar view.

"A woman leader should be able to ensure that women's needs are supported," said Ms. Lulo, adding that women should avoid running for parliament to satisfy selfish, personal whims.

She urged women to use the April poll to elect people of their choice. "There are lots of things women strive to have such

as clean water, roads, maternal health care and food security. We need women who can talk about these in parliament."

Jersa Rike Barsoba, member of the National Election Commission's Southern Sudan High Committee and coordinator of state high committees, noted that elections were also a chance to prove women's competence in the public arena.

"Previously there was a conception that the place of women is in the kitchen, but now people have learned that women can lead sometimes better than men," the state coordinator said.

Demonstrating their keenness to hold office, 784 women had been nominated for different elected posts, Ms. Barsoba said.

"This is the first time women have registered for candidacy in such a huge number. Women are not contesting for the 25% quota women's list alone, but the party and geographic lists as well," she said.

Some 60 women were standing for election in Western Bahr El-Ghazal state alone, said Linda Ferdinand, Chairperson of the non-governmental organization Women Forum for Election. "We have a strategic plan to support

"Previously there was a conception that the place of women is in the kitchen, but now people have learned that women can lead sometimes better than men."

our women candidates to win elections at the level of state, regional and national assemblies."

A candidate for office in neighbouring Warrap State observed that women were well-represented there in the 25 per cent women's list, adding that this was due recognition for the active role women played during the country's long-running civil war.

Coordinator Barsoba noted that women had also turned out in large numbers to register for voting. "I observed the registration in some areas and saw more women queuing to get registered than men in some of the ... centers."

Encouraging women to participate in elections, several organizations had conducted voter education and leadership training over the past few months, noted Parliamentary Affairs Undersecretary Julia Aker Duany.

"In 2009 we had a women's leadership conference, which brought 221 women executives and members of parliament together under one roof to go through voter education, including how to be good candidates," the undersecretary said.

UNMIS gender unit had held a workshop on mainstreaming gender perspectives in elections in January, and had also conducted training of trainers sessions on voter education in the 10 southern states, noted coordinator Barsoba.

Almost 200 women candidates were targeted for public speaking and campaign management training in Blue Nile, Khartoum and Southern Kordofan states in March, according to UNMIS Khartoum Gender Affairs Officer Nakatiwa Mulikita. The unit was also planning to hold a forum for presidential candidates in collaboration with the UN Development Fund for Women. ■



Story and photo: Negus Hadera

Sudanese Parliamentary Elections, 1953-1986: A Historical-Analytical Study

By **Ahmed Ibrahim Abu Shouk and Al-Fatih Abdullai Abdel Salam,**
August 2008, **Abd El-Karim Mirghani Cultural Centre**

An in-depth look at Sudanese elections and contemporary politics, Sudanese Parliamentary Elections, 1953-1986, devotes a chapter to each of the country's five parliamentary polls, which occurred in 1953, 1958, 1965/1967, 1968 and 1986.

The authors leave out parliamentary elections under Sudan's military regimes (from 1958 to 1964 and 1969 to 1985), citing lack of efficiency, freedom and credibility as prime reasons for failing to examine these elections.

One of the book's main aims is to document the history of parliamentary elections in the country.

In the authors' view, historical election documents "should be reviewed with a strategic and a thorough vision ... to provide an open space in which others' views can be heard, as the country is not just owned by politicians." Rather, it is a vast nation with diverse and multiple cultures, ethnicities, political colors and religions.

The book also examines the history of elections in light of international election standards. "(This) allows us to understand the shortcomings that negatively impacted the exercise in Sudan, blamished the mechanisms of devolution of power and opened the way for military institutions to be part of the senseless conflict."

Finally, the study aims to assist the reader in learning past lessons at this crucial time in Sudan's history -- the post-Comprehensive Peace Agreement period. Without digesting these lessons, "the forthcoming elections will be a mere political make-up of a type that non-democratic regimes use to hide their evil totalitarianism", the writers state.

The book provides the reader with a scientific reading of the political landscape of previous parliamentary elections, along with legal and constitutional bodies as well as administrative procedures governing them.

In addition, it examines the administrative role played by successive elections commissions in "a country that hoped to bring about a model of good

governance for Third World countries".

Considerable space in the five chapters is devoted to party platforms and electoral campaigns adopted to attract voters. Each chapter indirectly discusses the level of freedom evident during elections by highlighting issues raised by parties (peace, corruption and democracy) as well as reflecting methods used in electoral campaigns.

The book cites a wide range of references, including historical archives, books, studies, reports, releases and legal documents. It uses newspaper articles to complement information in election commissions' reports, as these lack discussions of controversial and sensitive issues.

The conclusion focuses on challenges ahead of forthcoming elections in Sudan. The authors note that the current constitution and election bills benefited from previous legislations, leading to a new governance system and electoral procedures.

"The Interim Constitution brought about a qualitative development as it changed the Sovereign Council, which was predominant in previous parliamentary governments, to the Presidency of the Republic headed by an elected president," the writers state.

They also observe that the mixed electoral system and allocation of 25% of parliamentary seats to women is a clear departure from the simple majority system introduced by British colonialists and applied in all earlier elections. Another new development noted by the writers is the decision not to designate constituencies for university graduates.

The study stresses that professional credibility of National Election Commission members requires a political atmosphere of freedom and that "annulment of restrictive laws on freedom represent a priority in the current stage, and will help in conducting free and fair elections".

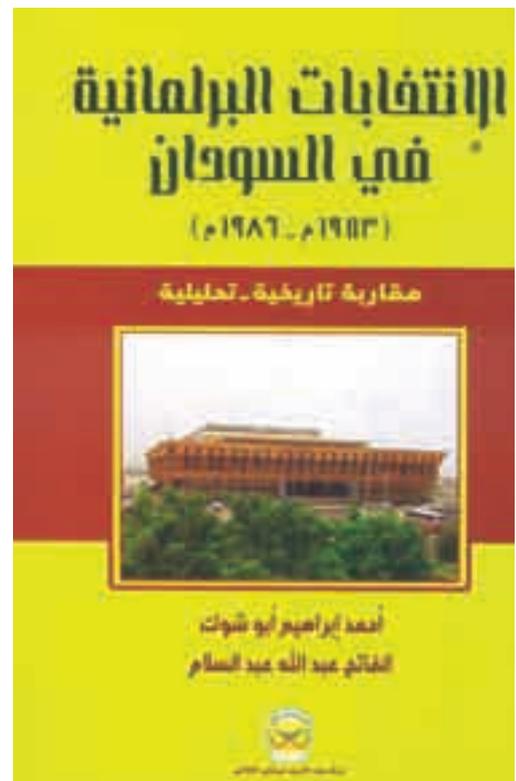
Although the book was written before the census, the conclusion stresses the importance of carrying out the exercise throughout Sudan and for Sudanese abroad during preparations for the elections.

Other challenges highlighted are voters' education and transformations that have occurred in the political landscape during recent years.

Finally, the book includes eight annexes with statistical analyses of the 1953 direct and indirect legislative council elections as well as other elections covered. It also includes several tables and charts with information on constituencies, candidates and voters.

Sudanese Parliamentary Elections is a rich source of information, highly recommended for all readers. ■

Ayman Mohamed





Traditional music and dancing in Qeissan, Blue Nile State.



Descendants of Sultan of Funj in Fazughali at site of last Sultan's residence.



Below: Weekly market in Keili.



Below: Cattle drinking from seasonal river near Baw.



Rich potential

Located on Sudan's eastern border with Ethiopia, Blue Nile State covers 38,500 square kilometres and hosts a population of 832,112 (2008 national census).

Lying in fertile, wooded savannah, the state is blessed with vast clay plains, the Ingessana Mountains and Blue Nile River. It receives ample rainfall and has rich potential for fruit and vegetable growing as well as livestock grazing and fishing.

Among the state's major agricultural crops are cotton, gum Arabic, oil seeds and groundnuts.

A significant battleground during the country's 22-year civil war, Blue Nile State was a key infiltration point of Sudan People's Liberation Army troops crossing into the country from camps in Ethiopia. It was chosen as site of the pilot demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programme that launched in February 2009 with UNMIS support.

The state merited special treatment under the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which granted it and neighbouring Southern Kordofan State a "popular consultation" mechanism.

The process will empower those states' legislatures to appoint parliamentary commissions for assessing and evaluating CPA implementation in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan. Laying groundwork for the mechanism, the National Assembly passed the Popular Consultation Act on 30 December 2009.

According to the Act, popular consultations must be completed by 8 July 2011, six months after Southern Sudan holds its referendum on continued unity with the north or secession.

As the CPA period enters its final phase, endorsement of the peace accord through popular consultations would signify definitive settlement of the political conflict in Blue Nile State.

Photos: Tim McKulka

Traditional musician preparing instruments in Qeissan near Ethiopian border.



Photo Gallery



Construction workers heightening Roseres dam on Blue Nile near Ed Damazine.



Rock formations south of Ed Damazin on road to Kurmuk.



Turbine room for electricity generation at Roseres dam.



Above: Mosque in Baw. Below: Sunflower farms south of Ed Damazine.



Panning for gold in Khor al Bodi near Kurmuk.



Fishing in the Yabus River.



Human rights behind bars

The advent of peace in Southern Sudan has produced few advances in the status of prisoners' human rights.

Access to qualified legal counsel remains quite limited, living conditions in many detention facilities have worsened and poorly trained prison officials often resort to physical assault to control unruly inmates.

"The prisons' physical infrastructure is in an advanced stage of deterioration," said Robert Leggat, the head of the UNMIS corrections advisory unit in Southern Sudan. "Their dilapidated nature (endangers) both the health and security of the detainees."

Owing to a shortage of living quarters, juvenile inmates must share rooms with adult prisoners of the same gender at the prison in the Upper Nile State capital of Malakal, according to UNMIS human rights officer Alfred Zulu.

The power sharing protocol of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement enshrines the right to a fair trial for any Sudanese citizen facing criminal charges.

But witnesses for the prosecution often go unchallenged in a courtroom proceeding in Mr. Zulu's experience, and defendants who don't speak Arabic are at a serious disadvantage in trials held in Upper Nile State.

"The men do not understand the proceedings, and most of them are illiterate villagers," he said. "There are no fair trials, there is no due process."

The deputy director of the prison in Juba recently admitted that 385 inmates housed in his facility were still awaiting

"We feel it unsafe to continue to use the death penalty as a tool for punishment, given the level of poverty and the lack of education and awareness among many Southern Sudanese."

their first appearance in court, and some of them have been in custody since 2007.

The deference often shown to traditional customary laws in some parts of the region can land people in jail on tenuous grounds that most modern courts would reject out of hand.

"You find people who are imprisoned in (the Unity State capital of) Bentiu because of crimes committed by their relatives or friends," said UNMIS Child Protection Officer James Gatgong.

In Southern Sudan, 75 inmates languish on death row. Mr. Zulu said that the vast majority of inmates at Malakal prison who have been sentenced to die have not lodged appeals because they are unaware that such a legal option exists or they cannot afford to hire an attorney to pursue that course of action.

Of 12 prisoners who have been hanged in Southern Sudan in the past three years, the two most recent executions occurred in Malakal last November.

"We feel it unsafe to continue to use

the death penalty as a tool for punishment, given the level of poverty and the lack of education and awareness among many Southern Sudanese," said Mr. Zulu.

The UN Human Rights Commission approved a resolution in 1999 in favor of a worldwide moratorium on capital punishment. The resolution urged countries that have not yet abolished the death penalty to restrict its use by limiting the number of serious crimes that are punishable by execution.

About 250 prison officers have received training on record management, the treatment of prisoners, juvenile justice and criminal proceedings since January 2009, according to Dennis Phiri, a corrections advisor at the UNMIS team site in the Western Equatoria State capital of Yambio.

But much more needs to be done for the human rights of prisoners themselves. To relieve overcrowding in some penitentiaries, said Mr. Zulu, criminals convicted of minor offences should repay their debt to society through community service or other kinds of punishment instead of mandatory imprisonment.

UNMIS Child Protection Advisor David Kibiriti sees a pressing need to place greater emphasis on the rehabilitation that prisons can offer inmates during their time behind bars.

"Our role is to ensure that all prisoners are fairly treated," said Mr. Kibiriti, "not as prisoners, but as humans who are going to survive."■

James Sokiri and Francis Shuei Diu



Juba prison drawing class for juveniles.



Participants at UNMIS training on juvenile justice, Yambio.

A UN Flagship for Southern Sudan

UNMIS is building a new permanent UN headquarters in Southern Sudan at a site along the Juba-Yei road near the hills of Jebel Kujur.

The future United Nations House will sit on a 1.2 million square metre parcel of land donated by the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) during the September 2007 visit to Juba by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

When the complex is completed, it will provide office space for about 1,200 UNMIS staff members and up to 800 employees from other UN agencies.

About \$10 million was earmarked for the project in the 2009-2010 UNMIS budget. The first construction phase of four office buildings is scheduled to finish during the second half of this year.

Accommodation for staff members will be erected during the second phase of construction. Cottage industries will be established at the site to manufacture the required building materials and provide training in various construction skills for up to 300 Sudanese workers.

"We hope to use demobilized soldiers as part of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme," said Patrick Carey, the deputy director of mission support for UNMIS in Southern Sudan.

"We will train them in skills such as bricklaying, carpentry and masonry, and they will be employed to build the living quarters."

The current UNMIS compound near Juba International Airport will continue to function as the mission's main logistics base in the region.

The new United Nations House complex will hopefully dispel any lingering doubts about the international organization's continued presence in Southern Sudan.

"We are excited about this project because it reflects the United Nations' long-term commitment to promote peace and economic development in Southern Sudan," said Ashraf Qazi, outgoing Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sudan, during a groundbreaking ceremony at the site on 2 February.

"This newly dedicated site will stand as an enduring symbol of the United Nations' intent to make its engagement with the people of Southern Sudan a lasting and fruitful relationship."

A senior GoSS official also welcomed

the construction project.

"We are happy that the headquarters is affirming its commitment by having concrete buildings for the United Nations," said GoSS Minister of Presidential Affairs Luka Biong Deng, who represented GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit at the groundbreaking ceremony.

The pre-fabricated structures used to house UNMIS staff at the mission's first Southern Sudan headquarters near Juba hotel as well as its present location had raised questions among local residents about the longevity of the mission and the UN as a whole in the region.

"There were logistical challenges when the mission started in 2005, yet we had to move quickly to establish our offices throughout Sudan," said Mr. Carey. "That is why we put up temporary buildings for offices and accommodation."

Logistical and operational considerations delayed the beginning of construction work at the United Nations House site until the fourth quarter of last year.

"When the land was donated to us, de-mining had to take place," said Mr. Carey. "Subsequently, the exact location of the land designated for use changed, and further de-mining was needed. In addition, the planning and procurement process also took time."

Though the current mandate of UNMIS is scheduled to end next year, the new facility outside Juba will serve as the flagship of the organization in Southern Sudan well into the foreseeable future.

"There is little doubt that there is going to be a significant UN presence in Southern Sudan for many years," said Mr. Carey, who recently visited the UN regional headquarters in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, which could serve as a model for the new complex in many aspects.

"Even if UNMIS leaves in due course, UN house can be used by other UN agencies still operating in Southern Sudan," the deputy director said. ■

Story: Emmanuel Kenyi

Photos: Tim McKulka

"We hope to use demobilized soldiers as part of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme."

Construction site of new UN House.



Security guard watching over construction of new UN House.



SRSG Ashraf Qazi (center) planting a tree during groundbreaking ceremony.



SRSG Ashraf Qazi (center right in suit) and GoSS Minister for Presidential Affairs Luka Biong Deng (center left in suit) touring construction of UN house.





Kasim Abid.

Vision of reality

Sitting in the Goethe Institute's garden on a mellow, winter morning, renowned Iraqi director Kasim Abid told *In Sudan* what he was teaching Sudanese film students -- the need for vision as well as technique.

Kasim Abid – who divides his time between London and Baghdad – arrived in early January at the invitation of the German cultural centre in Khartoum to hold an intensive documentary filmmaking workshop for aspiring Sudanese participants.

It was his second time in the country, Mr. Abid said, as he had first visited Sudan in November 2008 to show his award-winning, two-hour-long documentary *Life After the Fall*, which recounts his return to Iraq and his family after some 30 years abroad.

Along with his own work, the director has also presented some of his students' documentaries at the Independent Film and Television College in Baghdad, a school he founded with his colleague Maysoon Pachachi, which spurred the idea of the Khartoum filmmaking workshop.

Even though application was restricted to people under 30 years old, more than 85 people signed up to attend the workshop, which was scheduled to run for three months, with theoretical and practical classes five times a week.

The principle behind the course was "to give students a guideline on how to make a documentary film ... starting from the idea and ending with the story on screen," Mr. Abid said.

Of 23 selected students, most were graduates of art schools and had various story ideas, including a portrait of local artists or of the lives of two Nuba wrestlers. A female student's proposal for a Khartoum tea ladies story, however, had to be dropped.

"We received information that this is a red line," the director said, and that crossing it could have jeopardized not only the workshop but the institute's reputation

as well.

Certain subjects had to be avoided, the filmmaker said, adding that life was full of stories to be covered and the message could be conveyed in an indirect way.

"Cinema is a language ... and you can play with (it) and get away with a lot of things," Mr. Abid said.

His Sudanese students were bright and committed, but in some ways might start off handicapped due to the lack of cinemas in the Sudanese capital, he noted.

"Cinema develops from watching as well ... you develop your taste from watching (films) – you can learn a lot," the director said, explaining that filmmaking was a long process involving knowledge of the history and styles of cinema and different movements.

Sudanese students might have had little exposure to such background and were still searching for the most dynamic and original ideas suitable for documentaries, Mr. Abid said. They were committed, however, and "want to learn and do something".

As he once told the British newspaper *The Independent*, one of his favourite Chinese proverbs advised, "Light a candle instead of cursing the dark." Whether or not the Sudanese were ready to act for change, Mr. Abid said he wished elections would "achieve something positive ... to give some sort of freedom of expression to the people (so that they can express themselves) without fear".

Enabling young minds to speak out, however, had to go hand-in-hand with educational reform, the filmmaker believed, as students needed to learn how to think critically.

The education system in Iraq and across the Arab world was based on dictation and memorizing materials up to this day, Mr. Abid said, remembering an event from his personal life that turned out to be a revelation.

Coming events

Khartoum

Lives of German youth

The Goethe Institute will be putting on an exhibition featuring the lives of German youth, beginning the third week in March and running for two months. Through photos, print, CDs and film, the event will portray German youth working, studying and enjoying their leisure time.

Documentary film workshop

Ongoing since 1 January, but still open for registration, the Goethe Institute's documentary film-making workshop will wind up at the end of March. The students taking part (currently 24) will then present films they have produced, which focus on family issues and internal immigration in Sudan.

The Museum of African Music

30 and 31 March, 7.30 p.m. - 9.30 p.m. Khartoum International School will be holding a senior school concert entitled "The Museum of African Music in the American Experience".

Mode and fashion show

Beginning the middle of May and running for a week, the Goethe Institute will be conducting a "Mode and fashion show" workshop. The event will be jointly run by Sudan University of Science and Technology and German expert Karin Leiberg.

KICS variety show

29 April, 7.30-9.30 p.m. Join Khartoum International School for a musical "variety show" evening with Bobby D's 33rd Annual Silver KICS Band and the Bronze KICS Band. The school will be recording several pieces from each band to be placed on YouTube website.

Juba

Salsa Dance Classes

every Thursday evening, 7.30 p.m. Learn how to dance Salsa Thursday evenings at De'Havana. A one-hour tutorial class is followed by open floor dancing from 8.30 p.m. All are welcome. Tutorial costs 10 SDG (\$5) per person.

His then six-year-old daughter asked him to take her to the library, where she needed to search for books related to a school assignment. Partly she was playing with the books but she also took notes, the director said. "This is how you learn to use your mind, how to find your idea, to have a vision about reality."

Through theory and practice, he was aiming to teach his Sudanese students how to develop their own way of thinking and take a critical viewpoint, without being limited to strictly religious or political thinking.

"You won't be a filmmaker unless you open your mind ... and have a vision of reality." ■

Eszter Farkas

NEWS BRIEFS

WFP boosts food delivery to Upper Nile

With food insecurity rising after last year's poor harvest, the World Food Programme (WFP) almost doubled its delivery of rations to Upper Nile State from 16,000 to 27,000 metric tons on 1 March, according to a UN official.

The agency allocated 70 per cent of the tonnage to general food distribution and 30 per cent to returnees/refugees and other micro projects, said UNMIS Return, Recovery, Reintegration Officer (RRR) Tito Awando.

"In case of emergency, WFP will do contingency stocks, which can be accessed easily when required," added the RRR officer, who also acts as focal point for an integrated team addressing humanitarian needs in the state.

The WFP distributed rations based on census figures to a total of 858,869 individuals in all Upper Nile counties except Renk, which has a food surplus, Mr. Awando said. The main beneficiaries were the elderly, lactating mothers, terminally ill and disabled heads of families.

Based on the 2009/2010 South Sudan Annual Food Security and Livelihood Assessment (ANLA), food security in the region has further deteriorated as a result of drought and insecurity.

Some 4.5 million people or 70 per cent of households are currently food insecure in Southern Sudan, compared to 40 per cent last year, according to the ANLA report.

Deaf learning to vote and sign

Training for deaf people and their families in voting and international sign language began on 22 February in Juba, Central Equatoria State.

The training aimed to boost awareness of the electoral process among the state's deaf population, so that they could participate in upcoming April elections and communicate through sign language.

Organized by Southern Sudan Deaf Development Concern (SSDDC) and sponsored by UNMIS, the 10-day workshop's initial session at Juba Christian Centre was attended by 25 of 150 targeted participants.

Although Sudanese are set to vote in the country's first inclusive elections for 24 years, many in both the deaf and hearing populations are ignorant of the voting process as well as electoral candidates.

Mathew Dominic, team leader for UNMIS Electoral Assistance Division in Southern Sudan, emphasized that every single vote counted. "It is important for us to recognize this fact and ensure that PWD (Persons with Disabilities) have equal opportunities for voter education."

GoSS receives \$30m water and sanitation grant

In February, the World Bank and Government of Southern Sudan Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning signed a \$30 million grant agreement to improve access to safe water and sanitation services in Southern Sudan.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Laurence Clark, World Bank Manager of the Southern Sudan Programme, said, "This project will go a long way to reduce the prevalence of waterborne diseases and community clashes over water points."

The safe water component includes the drilling of new boreholes and maintenance of existing ones as well as construction of water reservoirs and warehouses for equipment storage.

For the sanitation services aspect, public latrines will be constructed in community schools and health centres. Sanitation and hygiene equipment will also be supplied, including 20 vacuum tankers.

In another effort to save water, Alphonses Pitya, Public Health Inspector of Kator payam (township) in Juba, announced that any homestead found with leaking taps would be penalized 100 SDG (\$45).

UNMIS gets new Humanitarian Coordinator

Replacing Ameerah Haq, Georg Charpentier of Finland has become the new Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan.

With extensive humanitarian and development experience in African issues, Mr. Charpentier has served with the Organization since 1984. His latest post was DSRSG and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Côte d'Ivoire.

He has also served as UN Resident Coordinator and UN Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative in Burkina Faso, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Burundi, Senior Deputy Resident Representative in Ethiopia, and UNDP Resident Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator in the Congo.

From 2002 to 2004, Mr. Charpentier was the UNDP Deputy Director of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery in Geneva, where he participated in several inter-agency missions covering transition and recovery, small arms and demobilization in Somalia, Sudan, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

Former Force Commander returns to Sudan

Former UNMIS Force Commander Jasbir Singh Lidder of India recently took over the reins as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Sudan (political).

Bringing to the post extensive experience on the ground in Sudan, Mr. Lidder also has a distinguished career with the Indian military, serving most recently as commandant of an elite infantry school.

Previously, the new DSRSG served for more than two years as UNMIS Force Commander, where he mediated the relationship between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

He also assisted in conflict-resolution activities and protection of civilians. In addition, Mr. Lidder played a major role in the transition from the African Union Mission to the Sudan (AMIS) to the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID).





Elections 2010

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