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Media Monitoring Report

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Voting Watch: Day 5

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Link

- Interview: independence of NEC questioned
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Highlights

NEC informs Carter Centre elections to be rerun in some constituencies

The NEC announced that voting is proceeding in a satisfactory manner and the voter turnout is increasing within and outside Sudan, Al-**Sahafa** reports. The Commission said it would take necessary measures with regard to the complaints it received from the North and the South. It also informed the Carter Centre that legislative elections in some constituencies where voting was suspended due to technical errors would be repeated. The Commission also announced that voting would end today and vote count would start tomorrow.

Polling generally peaceful all over South Sudan

Sudan Tribune website 14/4/10 - As polling for the first multi-party democratic elections in 24 years enters its fourth day, voters continue to peacefully cast their votes in Southern Sudan, contrary to the previous fears that violence might flare up during the exercise.

Frustrations by voters whose names are still missing or transported to wrong locations by officials of electoral commission, including some reports of intimidations and even arrests are still being talked about, but manageable complaints.

In Juba, voters affiliated to different political parties or supporters of independent candidates have been queuing to vote hand in hand and avoiding any situation that would incite violence.

Though many foreigners left the region for fear of elections-associated violence, those that have remained behind appreciated the calm during the exercise...

Sudan election should not legitimize Bashir, Says Ambassador Frazer

VoANews.com 14/4/10 -The former US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer says Sudan's general election scheduled to end Thursday reinforces the status quo which will allow President Omar Al-Bashir and his National Congress Party (NCP) to further dominate the country's politics.

Ambassador Frazer said the NCP seems determined to maintain its grip on power in order to continue its policies of marginalizing other regions as well as ensuring that power and wealth remain in Khartoum.

"It is a process that was harmed, I think fundamentally, by the National Congress Party and its manipulation of the process, from the census to the voter registration to the distribution of polling stations and materials to benefit the NCP. Secondly, it has been harmed by the opposition's last decision to boycott and to withdraw from the polls," she said.

Ambassador Frazer said some observers initially had high hopes for the election. "Some feel that these polls had to go forward because of the CPA. They certainly were seen by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement as the mechanism for democratic transformation, but in fact I think they have resulted in maintaining the status quo...with the NCP returned to power and the opposition further disenfranchised by their own action," Frazer said.

Ambassador Frazer said the international community should pay close attention to reports from the poll observers. "First we will have to hear what the observers say...but I also think that the world needs to understand from the point of view that the (election) is manipulated by the NCP

from the outset that it doesn't any further give Bashir any kind of democratic credential or mandate. In fact he cannot come out of these elections with any greater legitimacy given that he went in as a war criminal and he will come out as an indicted war criminal," Frazer said.

Bashir party asks rivals to join Sudan government

Reuters 14/4/10 - Sudan's ruling party on Wednesday offered an olive branch to opposition groups boycotting the country's elections, saying it would invite them to join the government if it won the vote.

The country is four days into presidential and legislative polls intended to help restore democracy in the oil-producing state more than two decades after a military-led coup. Doubt was cast on the elections' credibility after some parties boycotted large parts of the voting, threatening protests and accusing incumbent president Omar Hassan al-Bashir and his northern National Congress Party (NCP) of vote-rigging.

Analysts say the boycotts undermined Bashir's plans to show he could win a competitive ballot to fend off International Criminal Court charges against him over war crimes in Darfur.

"If we are declared winners in the elections ... we would extend the invitation to all parties, even those who have not participated in the elections, to join the government because we believe this is a critical moment in our history," senior NCP official Ghazi Salaheddin told reporters.

"We are facing important decisions like self-determination in the south and would like to garner as much support and as much consensus as we can."

Bashir's rivals gave a mixed reaction to the offer, which did not specify what parts they might play in a new government.

The elections were set up under a 2005 peace accord that ended more than two decades of north-south civil war and also promised southerners a referendum in January 2011 on whether they should declare independence.

The overwhelming majority of southerners are believed to favor separation. However, many have warned there is a risk of conflict in the build-up to the vote. Bashir's NCP and other northern parties have vowed to campaign against separation, with some analysts saying the north is reluctant to lose control of oilfields in the south.

Salaheddin said the offer to join the new "inclusive" government was made to all parties, mentioning in particular the opposition Umma, which is boycotting most voting, and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which threatened a boycott then re-joined the race. "Any politician in his right mind would not decline such an offer," he said in a recording of the briefing to journalists heard by Reuters.

Umma gave the offer a cautious welcome, saying it was interested in holding talks with the NCP and other parties, although it was too early to commit to joining a coalition. "Let us talk about dialogue first, how to solve Sudan's problems," said Umma vice-president Fadlalla Burma Nasir.

Salaheddin's statement was dismissed by Yasir Arman, the former presidential candidate for the south's dominant Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), who pulled out of the race last month along with most of the party's northern candidates.

Arman accused the NCP of jumping the gun by offering deals before the results were known.

"This is proof that they know the results in advance ... We don't need an invitation from Ghazi."

The SPLM, predicted to win most positions in south Sudan, was always likely to join a coalition after the election. Under Sudan's constitution, the president of south Sudan automatically becomes first vice president of the whole country.

There were further signs of confusion in the voting, which is due to end on Thursday. The National Elections Commission said it was considering re-running ballots in a few constituencies to correct errors in voting forms.

Youth activism group Girifna said NCP officials beat and detained two of its members as they investigated voting irregularities in the Khartoum district of Um Bedda on Wednesday.

Kiir calls for participation of Juba Alliance in the new government

Al-Sahafa reports that while the national Umma Party cautiously welcomed the NCP's offer for participation in the upcoming government, Turabi-led PCP said it would not join an NCP Government. According to the paper, SPLM Chairman Salva Kiir Mayardit has stressed the need for participation of the Juba Alliance in the new government.

"No grave fraud in elections, it is just errors" – Turabi

In an interview to **Al-Jazeera** Channel yesterday, PCP leader Hassan Al-Turabi said the current elections did not witness "grave rigging but there are technical errors", **Al-Sahafa** reports. He said the opposition forces had wasted the time trying to adopt a common position on elections, adding that the South is now 90% moving towards separation. Al-Turabi also defended his party's position to participate in elections, saying it was the best option. He said those who have boycotted elections have actually given the regime the legitimacy it is looking for.

Nine NCP leaders killed in Raja

Nine NCP leading figures were killed in Raja Locality in West Bahr el Ghazal, **local dailies** report. According to **Al-Rai Al-Aam**, the incident took place on Tuesday and the NCP chairman in the Locality Hamdoun Jamoun was among those killed. Reportedly, an altercation with SPLA personnel over voting led to the killing.

However, **Al-Raed** newspaper reported that 10 NCP leading figures survived an attempt on their lives orchestrated by the SPLA at "Narous" constituency in eastern Equatoria state. The paper also reported that the NCP HQ in Juba was attacked by armed group yesterday in which several guards of the premises were wounded and were taken to the hospital for treatment.

In another development, **Al-Rai Al-Aam** reports that SPLA soldiers kidnapped 35 agents of NCP presidential candidate Al-Bashir in the South yesterday.

Sudan ruling party says nine members killed in south

Reuters 15/4/10 - Sudan's ruling party said today that the southern army had killed nine of its officials during the first open elections in 24 years.

"Three days ago at night some (southern army) soldiers came to the home of the president of the National Congress Party in Raja, and killed him and eight other people - they are also members of the NCP," Agnes Lokudu, head of the northern-dominated NCP in south Sudan, said. Raja is in Western Bahr al-Ghazal state in south Sudan. Lokudu said the killings were politically motivated by anger that many people in the area had voted for the NCP.

The ex-rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which dominates the southern government, denied the involvement of the south Sudan army. "This was a passionate crime to do with a wife - a feud that led to a shooting between the husband and lover," Suzanne Jambo, head of the SPLM's external relations office, said.
"This is not political."

Sudan's elections, entering the last of a five-day voting period on Thursday, had been largely free from major violence. A wave of opposition boycotts in much of the north left little competition for incumbent President Omar Hassan al-Bashir.
South Sudan's president and SPLM head Salva Kiir is also likely to be elected president of the semi-autonomous south.

But tensions have been high in the south between parties and independents opposing the SPLM who have complained of arrests and harassment.

Attack on 3 polling centers in South Kordofan State

Miraya FM 14/4/10 -Three polling centers were attacked Wednesday morning in Southern Kordofan State. A group called the Sudan Liberation Army Front has claimed responsibility. In a press statement to Radio Miraya, the field commander of the group, Abu Baker Mohammed Kadu, said the attacks targeted the areas of Danffara, Heigleig and Al Demulowiya in Al Deab municipality.

Five stolen ballot boxes recovered in east Bentiu

Local authorities in Unity state have succeeded in recovering five ballot boxes reportedly taken away during the night by SPLM elements from "Quar" area in east Bentiu, **Al-Wifaq** reports. The paper also reports that the Commissioner of Renk has directed the SPLA to transport the boxes which were filled with ballots from the polling stations to the army garrison. The Commissioner also reportedly ordered the closure of Kosti-Renk road.

NEC intervenes to resolve clash between NCP, PCP candidates

Al-Watan reports that NEC officials rushed to constituency (18) to resolve a direct confrontation between NCP candidate Ibrahim Ghandour and PCP candidate Ibrahim Abdul Hafiz. Reportedly, the two candidates clashed and exchanged harsh words when three ballot boxes were reported broken. DUP candidate at the constituency has confirmed the incident.

Head of committee found inside store of ballot boxes late in the night

PCP candidate for constituency 8 in Omdurman Al-Amin Mahmoud said a serious polling irregularity occurred yesterday, **Rai Al-Shaab** reports. Mahmoud told a press conference yesterday in Khartoum that they received information stating that a man was seen inside a store for ballot boxes of polling centre (7) in Omdumran. He said when they rushed to the scene they discovered that the man was Mr. Yasin Mohamed Ahmed head of the committee in the polling station. He said Ahmed did not hand over the keys of the store to the police adding that when the incident was reported to the police station near the centre they said their job was only to monitor and not to interfere with ballot boxes.

According to the newspaper, a man was also found inside store of ballot boxes in constituency (7) in Khartoum. When interrogated by the observers, the man said he entered the store to change his clothes.

Policeman Killed at Northern Bahr El Ghazal Polling Centre

Gurtong 14/4/10 - A police officer was killed yesterday during the ongoing elections at

Majakbaai polling centre in Majakbaai Constituency of Aweil North County, Northern Bahr El Ghazal State.

The officer, identified as Major Makuei Ariech, was reportedly stabbed to death in a retaliatory attack by a man he had stopped from causing chaos at the polling station the previous day.

<http://www.gurtong.net/ECM/Editorial/tabid/124/ID/3435/Default.aspx>

SPLA impartial in polls - spokesman

Gurtong 14/4/10 - The Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) has refuted reports that its soldiers were harassing certain candidates in the ongoing elections.

SPLA spokesman Major General Kuol Diem Kuol strongly condemned a report published by a Sudanese media house on Monday that a candidate in Warrap State withdrew from the polls following harassment by SPLA soldiers.

<http://www.gurtong.net/ECM/Editorial/tabid/124/ID/3437/Default.aspx>

Sudan church leader says elections too flawed to be free and fair

Ecumenical News International 15/4/10 - The General Secretary of the Sudan Council of Churches - an Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic grouping - has said that current national elections in Africa's biggest country do not qualify as free and fair - writes Fredrick Nzwili.

The Rev Ramadan Chan Liol, said, however, that the elections should continue since they are a key step in the implementation of the country's Comprehensive Peace Agreement. "The view of the Church is that the whole exercise is one that cannot be described as free and fair," Chan, a Baptist, told Ecumenical News International in a telephone interview from Khartoum on 14 April. "There are too many challenges. Peoples' names are missing from the registers. They are scattered in different rolls in different towns."

He spoke as the elections entered their fourth day.

Churches had mobilised people to vote in the presidential, legislative and local elections, according to Chan, but some voters said they were frustrated by boycotts and withdrawals.

The SPLM withdrew its presidential candidate Yasir Arman from the poll, while the Umma Party and Popular Congress Party from the north also said they are boycotting the election.

"The boycott has brought down the morale among the people. They are no longer excited about the elections," said Chan.

Chan was asked if the situation may be repeated in a scheduled 2011 referendum to determine whether the south will remain united with the rest of the country or it will become independent. He said, "That will be a different scenario from the elections where people will chose yes or no." As he cast his vote on 12 April, Catholic Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro of Juba told journalists, "This preparation for the people of southern Sudan for the referendum next year." BBC television later quoted as the archbishop as saying in Juba. "If the people chose to secede... they must go."

Many church leaders in southern Sudan support the independence of the region saying it can help the mineral-rich region where Christianity and African traditional religions predominate.

NEC employee arrested for keeping ballot boxes in his house

Radio Miraya 15/4/10 - In new Halfa, the authorities in Naher Atbara locality have arrested an employee of the National Election Commission (NEC) for keeping in his house eight ballot boxes, seven of which were for the Presidency of the Republic.

The head of the Independent Candidates' Committee in the area, Numeri Ali Hussein, told Radio Miraya that the NEC said the employee was tasked with collecting the ballot boxes from villages in the area prior to sending them to the State High Elections Committee.

The UN provides logistical support for elections, security in Sudan

VOA 14/4/10 - A top official of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) says the world body is supporting the full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), an effort supported by the government in Khartoum and its former adversaries, the southern-based Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

"There has been a commitment by both parties to the implementation of the CPA and they have been [marking] the milestones for the implementation – one is the polls, and the UN Mission supports the Sudanese national elections commission with limited logistical support," said UNMIS spokesman Ashraf Eissa.

Part of the UN's mission is to provide security. UNMIS consists of over 17,000 military personnel and over 3,000 civilian police personnel.

"The UN police forces," said Eissa, "have been training the police authorities in north and south Sudan on election security, and securing election ballots and stations."

"We have had our civil access teams deployed to tense areas talking to tribal chiefs and resolving issue of contention in hot spots. And the UN has been arranging patrols in areas with tribal violence in southern Sudan.. They have been successful in diffusing tensions and stabilizing regions where tension is possible."

In 2006 the United Nations-Habitat, which works on human settlements, opened a new office in South Sudan's capital, Juba, to help resettle over two million internally displaced persons and refugees.

Other highlights

Mutiny on the river Nile as Africans push Egypt, Sudan into a corner on water sharing

Sudan Tribune website 15/4/10 - The Egyptian Government today warned that it is prepared to respond strongly to any initiative taken by Nile basin countries that would have an impact on its share of the Nile waters in accordance with the 1929 agreement.

The three days marathon meetings at the ministerial level in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm Al-Sheik failed to bridge differences between Egypt and Sudan on one side and other Nile basin states. The Nile basin nations have failed for years now to agree on the Nile River Cooperative Framework Agreement to administer the longest river in the world, which would reduce Egypt's share of the Nile water.

Egypt's state news agency (MENA) reported Tuesday that source nations {decided to sign}

because their rivers flow into and make up the Blue Nile and White Nile that come together in Sudan's capital Khartoum — would sign the agreement on May 14.

"The sources nations decided to go ahead with signing," the report said. "Egypt and Sudan decided to stay away."

Reda Bebres, a spokesman for Egypt's delegation, said the move to sign the deal was a "regrettable unilateral decision" by the other Nile basin nations.

Bebres also said that any accords signed should not affect Egypt's share because it is protected by international law threatening that his country would reconsider its funding to water projects in these nations. However, he stressed that Egypt will work with those countries to reach a compromise.

At the meetings, the Egyptian Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation Mohammed Nasr El-Deen Allam insisted that Egypt would maintain its share of 55.5 billion cubic meters of water from the river — more than half of the Nile's flow.

Egypt also wants veto power over any new irrigation projects undertaken by the other nine riparian states.

Egypt's claim to Nile water is based on a 1929 agreement between Egypt and Great Britain on behalf of Britain's colonies which gave Egypt the right to most of the more than 100 billion cubic meters of water that reaches the downstream countries annually.

The Sub-Saharan African states have rejected the clause and called for the signing of the agreement.

Egypt, a country of some 80 million people says if Egypt's annual share of Nile water remains at 55.5 billion cubic meters, per capita water availability will stand at around 630 cubic meters in 2025, compared with 1,213 in 1990.

Observers say that Sudan's stance which is supportive to Egypt is driven by political considerations rather than economic ones. They point out that Sudan itself will require more water than is available in the coming years for economic and agricultural expansion.