

# ELECTIONWATCH

## SUDAN



### Sudan Pre-Election Watch: April 2010 National Elections

Multi-party elections are scheduled to be held in Sudan April 11-13, 2010. In 2005, the President of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the leader of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, Dr. John Garang. The CPA ended Africa's longest-running civil war and established a power-sharing government between President Al-Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). Following the abrupt death of Dr. Garang, His Excellency Salva Kiir has held the title of First Vice President of Sudan and President of Southern Sudan. The CPA provided Southern Sudan with a semi-autonomous status and laid the foundation for national elections to take place within four years with a referendum on Southern independence to follow.

### Political Situation

In July 2008, the first steps in the implementation of elections were taken with the passing of the National Elections Act (NEA). The NEA defines the legal election procedures and established the National Election Commission (NEC). Per the NEA, presidential and legislative elections were to be held by July 2009, however, a number of steps required by the CPA were not met in the timeframe leading to Election Day. Specifically, the official release of the national census results was delayed until February 2009 causing a delay in the demarcation of constituencies. As a result, a series of postponements pushed elections to mid-April 2010.

Throughout the intense political environment and multiple delays in election dates, the NEC continued to release new timelines for election related events, such as voter registration, candidate nomination, campaign season and polling dates. Delays and a slow start, however, did not deter citizens from registering to vote. While voter registration did not take place without flaws, a reported 75.8 percent of eligible voters were registered to vote. There were cases of voter intimidation and fraud, but these were fewer than the cases reported of organized, informative and efficient centers carrying out their duties.

In the final days before the vote, events have occurred that might have a significant effect on the outcome of these elections. A coalition of 17 opposition parties has threatened to boycott the elections if they are not postponed to allow for higher levels of transparency and fairness of technical preparations. Several opposition parties have pulled their candidates for the presidency out of the race and the news on party boycotts changes daily. With little infrastructure to communicate these changes to rural populations, it is expected that many ballots will be cast for candidates and parties who are no longer, in fact participating. SPLM has stated that it will not boycott the entire elections; though the party's participation in the north continues to decline. SPLM will also not participate in elections in Darfur and, most

concerning, Yasir Arman, the SPLM's candidate running for the presidency has pulled out of the race. It is widely understood that the SPLM considers the elections a required step to arriving at the highly anticipated referendum on secession. Recent moves by the party make its position on southern independence clear.

## Challenges of the Elections

As these are the first multi-party elections being held in Sudan in 24 years, the potential for significant political change is low. It is expected that the parties in power (NCP and SPLM) will remain so after the elections. However, this has not deterred the excitement of citizens to cast their vote for the first time.

Poor infrastructure and high illiteracy rates will add to the logistical challenge of conducting an election. Roughly 70 percent of Sudan's population is under the age of 30 and has never seen an election take place. Moreover, the rate of illiteracy throughout the country is around 40 percent. According to the United Nations Population Fund, 76 percent of the population of South Sudan cannot read, which further complicates ballot comprehension on Election Day. Additionally, even though Sudan is the largest country in Africa, it is one of the least developed. Electricity is predominantly found only in major cities, cell phone service is unreliable, road transportation becomes impossible during bad weather and security crises are frequent.

In addition, these elections are complicated. Sudan's government, as defined in the CPA, will be elected by both direct vote and through proportional representation. The President of Sudan, President of South Sudan and State Governors will be directly elected by registered voters, as will 60 percent of the designated geographical constituency seats of the National Assembly (GoNU), the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA) and all 25 state assemblies. Additionally, 25 percent of the seats in the three assemblies will be decided by a women's list and 15 percent chosen from a party list. The breakdown of ballots is as follows:

### **North Sudan**

- President of Sudan
- State Governor
- GoNU Geographical Constituency
- GoNU Women's List
- GoNU Party List
- State Geographical Constituency
- State Women's List
- State Party List

### **South Sudan**

- President of Sudan
- President of South Sudan
- State Governor
- GoNU Geographical Constituency
- GoNU Women's List
- GoNU Party List
- SSLA Geographical Constituency
- SSLA Women's List

SSLA Party List  
State Geographical Constituency  
State Women's List  
State Party List

In total, voters in Northern Sudan will cast a total of eight ballots and in Southern Sudan, will cast 12.

## IRI in Sudan

The International Republican Institute (IRI) operates in Sudan through a grant from US Agency for International Development. Since its work began in Sudan in 2004, IRI's mission has been to: Improve the organizational development of political parties; improve the effectiveness of political parties' participation in governance; and increase political parties' level of preparation to participate in elections.

In preparation for the April 2010 elections, IRI has focused on educating political parties across the country on the electoral process. This has involved training party leaders on the 2007 National Electoral Act and their rights and responsibilities under Sudanese law. Instruction has also focused on procedures for party registration, monitoring voter registration, candidate selection and fielding poll agents to act as representatives of political parties in monitoring polling stations on Election Day.

IRI developed educational materials outlining all Election Day procedures, including a how to video on casting a ballot and transparent ballot box security procedures in order to fully inform party agents on what to look out for as they monitor polling stations. IRI has also trained potential candidates on skills for running effective campaigns including communications and public outreach. With offices in both Juba and Khartoum, IRI has been able to reach and provide information to many of the registered political parties in Sudan.



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