

Fourth Day of Voting is Accompanied by Violence, Intimidation, and Irregularities

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(15 April 2010) The fourth day of elections in Sudan showed a continuation of the same tactics employed systematically by the National Elections Commission (NEC), accompanied by a spike in violence. Though it cannot be verified due to lack of capacity for comprehensive analysis, observers have noted that voting has slowed across the country. NEC officials believe that the decreasing rate of voting is due to the extension of the voting period, implying that most people have already voted. However, observers have also noted that obstacles to voting, including the exclusion of registered voters from the voter rolls and the fact that some voting centres have run out of ballots, may have contributed.

In addition, observers have continued to note instances where the transfer of ballot boxes has not been secure, candidate's names have been dropped from the ballot or their symbols misrepresented. There is no evidence that the NEC has investigated any of these incidents. Below, some of the instances from 13 and 14 April:

Irregularities in voters' lists: On 14 April in Constituency 2 of Omdurman, it was noted that a portion of the voter rolls had been transferred from the Alemam Alboukharry voting centre to the School 17 Centre. In the Alemam Alboukharry centre a copy of the registration rolls replaced the original voter roll (on which the names of those who had been marked), suggesting that individuals could vote twice. A candidate of Constituency 3, Alsadig Ali Hassan, attempted to make a complaint on this matter, but was ignored under the pretext that election officials did not have the necessary form.

Inconsistent voting requirements: In Alosarah Centre Number 3 of Constituency Number 37, an elderly blind woman requested that the Director of the Centre cast her vote for the Democratic Unionist Party. Assistance in voting is allowed by NEC guidelines for the blind. However observers noted that he cast her vote for the National Congress Party (NCP). When the woman realised this, she struck the Director. The police intervened and beat her. The Centre was closed briefly and only reopened after the woman had been removed.

Irregularities in ballot papers: On 14 April, voting centre 23 at Ashari District School for Girls in Constituency 23 of Kosti City, 500 ballots were cancelled after the NEC discovered that the ballot cards used for the National Assembly repeated symbols of political parties. Voters were informed via microphone in the voting centre, and told to re-vote. In Aldabah Nahr Elniel State, Constituency 18, a NEC officer distributed ballots for the Legislative Council with portions missing. The ballots for Legislative Council are made up of three cards, consisting of candidates for the constituency, women, and political parties, respectively. The NEC officer only distributed three cards from the women's list, but did not inform the voters or NEC. At least 28 voters cast the wrong ballots. When a voter discovered that the wrong ballots had been used, a request to close the ballot box was made to the political parties representative, a member of the National Alliance. A NEC official was contacted and arrived accompanied by police and security services, which surrounded the Centre and engaged in skirmishes with voters. Voting continued without cancelling the initial misused ballots, though the incident was reported.

Irregularities in handling ballots: In Halfa in North State, Constituency 12, a book of 100 ballots and 10 empty ballot boxes was found at the home of a NEC officer. The ballots and boxes were removed, and the incident was reported to the local Police Department. In Aldain town, South Darfur, the election box was moved from the main room to another, where no political party observers were present. In Port Sudan, eastern Sudan, Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Mukhtar from Beja Congress reported to NEC damage to the polling box in Constituency 9, Centre 2.

Security harassment and arrest: On the 13 April in Alghaba, Constituency 14, North State, the police arrested six supporters of the independent candidate Abas Sultan Kejab, and filed a criminal case against them as a public nuisance. They were tried on the spot, and sentenced to 15 lashes per person. Two members of *Girifna* were arrested by NISS officers in Ombada, Khartoum. In South Darfur, the Centre of Khour Abashi, which was to serve 2,848 people, has not yet opened. A candidate of Constituency 17 complained to the NEC that access had been denied to these voters. In Abu Shouk IDP camp in North Darfur, members of the NCP threatened IDP women to vote for the NCP and Omar al Bashir for President in the voting centre. In Al Salaam IDP camp in North Darfur, border guards threatened the IDPs in close proximity to Centre 4 inside the camp.

Politically-motivated violence: On 13 April, a voter in Raja, Southern Sudan, stabbed a police officer. In a suburb of Raja, Altomsah, in Bahr el Ghazal, nine members of the NCP were murdered, including Hamadoun Jamaon, the locality's NCP chairman. On 14 April, Najlaa Sied Ahmed, a coordinator of elections observers and a well-known activist for the freedom of expression, was monitoring voting centres in Oumorman Oumbada area. She observed a fight wherein NCP members were threatening voters and people near the voting centre, and an order was given for the security forces to beat the voters. A National Security Officer holding an NCP card by the name of Najm Elein Khojali got into Ms. Ahmed's vehicle, and beat her and Bakri Alagami, who was accompanying her. He ordered Ms. Ahmed and Mr. Alagami to take him to Oumbada Alsabeel Alhara police station in Constituency 18, where he accused them of being journalists and kidnapping him. Lawyers from the African Centre are following the case closely. On 14 April at the Fodasy Voting Centre of Constituency 11 in Central West Wad Medani, Mohamed Alamei Hamdan, a representative of the Democratic Unionist Party, was assaulted and beaten by anonymous attackers. In Constituency 18 of Al Gezira state, Sheikh Abd El Baky School Centre, a member of the NCP was spotted entering the election room repeatedly during the first three days of voting, and was expelled by the head of the Centre. On the 4th day of voting, he came back to the Centre accompanied by six members of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS). Two members threatened the head of the voting centre at gunpoint to allow the NCP member access. The voting centre was closed for two hours. In southern Sudan, in Kaka City, three observers from the Sanad Charity were arrested. In eastern Sudan in Haya Constituency, the candidate of the Beja Congress complained that their supporters were receiving threats from NCP members. Three polling centres were attacked Wednesday morning in South Kordofan State and a group called the Sudan Liberation Army Front has claimed responsibility. In a press statement to *Radio Miraya*, the commander of the group, Abu Bakr Mohammed Kadu, said that the attacks targeted the areas of Danffara, Heigleig, and Al Demulowiya in Al Deab municipality.

Violations of freedom of information: The website Sudan Vote Monitor, an independent civil society monitoring initiative, was blocked in Sudan.

Entering the last day of voting, it is clear that the electoral process has been marred by procedural flaws and irregularities, corruption, violence, and severe restrictions on civil and political freedom.