

# Sudan's Rigged Elections

**Nairobi/Brussels, 30 March 2010:** The Khartoum government is rigging the 11-13 April elections in Darfur to return an indicted president and his party to power with catastrophic consequences for Sudan.

Even as opposition parties threaten a last-minute boycott, [\*Elections in Darfur and the Consequences of a Probable NCP Victory in Sudan\*](#),\* the latest policy briefing from the International Crisis Group, examines how the National Congress Party (NCP) has manipulated the 2008 census, drafted the election laws in its favour, gerrymandered electoral districts, co-opted traditional leaders and bought tribal loyalties. It has done this everywhere in Sudan, but most dramatically in Darfur, where it has greater freedom and means to carry out its strategy because of the ongoing conflict. Winning big in Darfur is central to the NCP's plan to capture enough votes in the North to ensure its continued national dominance.

“The legal environment for free and fair elections does not exist”, says Fouad Hikmat, Crisis Group's Sudan Special Adviser. “The international community should acknowledge that whoever wins will lack legitimacy”.

The flawed results of the 2008 census were used to draw electoral districts, apportion legislative seats and organise the voter registration in ways that favour the NCP. Census takers worked hard to count the party's supporters in Darfur. Newcomers from Chad and Niger were reportedly issued identity papers so they can vote as Sudanese citizens. Most of the estimated 2.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in camps, as well as individuals from groups hostile to the NCP living in “insecure” neighbourhoods of cities and the population of rebel-controlled areas, were not counted.

Observation missions from the European Union, the African Union and the Carter Center may help prevent the most flagrant electoral fraud and ballot stuffing, but much of the rigging has already occurred. Furthermore, observers will only assess the quality of the elections. They cannot be expected to make broader recommendations. President Omar al-Bashir, who is under indictment by the International Criminal Court for multiple atrocity crimes in the Darfur conflict, and the NCP will almost certainly win the presidential and legislative polls, but it will be up to governments and intergovernmental organisations to act to limit the damage.

In addition to making it clear that the victors lack a genuinely democratic mandate, they must push for the Darfur peace talks to resume immediately after the elections and insist that any Darfur peace deal provide for a new census, voter registration and national voting. The AU, UN, regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and other key international supporters of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the generation-long North-South civil war in 2005 should press the Khartoum government

and the Government of Southern Sudan to agree on the critical steps needed to assure a peaceful self-determination referendum in the South in January 2011 and to provide for stability in both North and South in the aftermath of that referendum.

“Since the April vote will impose illegitimate officials through rigged polls, Darfuris will be left with little or no hope of a peaceful change in the status quo”, warns EJ Hogendoorn, Crisis Group’s Horn of Africa Project Director. “Instead many will look to rebel groups to fight and win back their lost rights and lands”.