

27 March 2015
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

H.E. Chairperson Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, African Union Commission,

H.E. President Thabo Mbeki, Chair of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel,

Excellencies, Representatives of the AU Peace and Security member states,

Your Excellencies,

We, the undersigned Sudanese, African and Arab civil society organizations, wish to thank and commend the efforts of the African Union and its various organs under your leadership to bring about a lasting, comprehensive peace to Sudan. We reiterate our support for the proactive stance of the African Union in ensuring that the root causes of Sudan's crises are addressed.

Your Excellencies, in this regard, we write with reference to the upcoming April Sudanese general elections to urge the African Union Commission and all relevant AU organs, such as the Peace and Security Council and the High-Level Implementation Panel, to act in line with the objectives of the ***African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance***, which was ratified by the Government of Sudan in 2013, of "[p]romot[ing] adherence, by each State Party, to the universal values and principles of democracy and respect for human rights". We call upon Your Excellencies, to:

1. Ensure that the African Union *does not* send any mission to monitor the upcoming Sudanese general elections in April, in order to ensure that the African Union does not, unwillingly, endorse a process which is grossly inconsistent with the standards of the Charter, exacerbates the root causes of Sudan's problems and undermines all progress over the past year to bring about a negotiated settlement to the conflict;
2. Call on the Government of Sudan to postpone the April 2015 presidential and legislative elections until a comprehensive, inclusive and genuine process of national dialogue takes place and a conducive environment exists; and
3. Reiterate to the Government of Sudan and all stakeholders that any process of national dialogue cannot be preempted with an elections process which most major political parties and civil society reject as flawed procedurally and which may exacerbate the conflicts in Sudan.

The elections, if held on 13 April in Sudan, risk triggering violence and likely will be a driver of conflict, exacerbating the root causes that fuel the wars in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, and further complicate efforts to bring about a negotiated settlement to the Sudanese crisis. Despite efforts by the Government of Sudan to launch a national dialogue process, efforts by Your Excellencies and the African Union and its various organs, and efforts by Sudanese stakeholders to coalesce and agree on the principles of dialogue in order to bring peace to Sudan, the elections at this time will cause a major setback that could undo months and years' worth of progress. The Government of Sudan's attempts to carry out elections in the current environment will not only undo major efforts over the past years, but they will re-entrench all stakeholders and make it extremely difficult to bring about a lasting, comprehensive, just peace to Sudan.

The current ongoing and increasing restrictions on civil society groups, severe crackdown on the media and journalists, and ongoing arrests and detention of opposition, youth and civil society leaders, all contradict the African Union's own Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. Throughout the past year, several civil society organizations have been shut down without any due process. In February, 14 newspapers were confiscated by national intelligence organs in one day, and countless other papers are confiscated regularly and journalists are subjected to interrogation and detention.¹ The media is not allowed to cover many issues, such as corruption and the ongoing abuses by the government. The realities on the ground are a clear demonstration of a context and strategy that works against any possibility of genuine elections. In Darfur, the conflict there has displaced 430,000 in 2014 alone, "more than in any single year since the height of the conflict in 2004," according to the United Nations, while humanitarian emergencies continue throughout the country.² The recent document from the [Sudan Consortium](#) provides a consolidated brief of the humanitarian crises in Sudan.³ The Government of Sudan has abjectly failed to meet its obligations outlined in the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and it would be a major setback for the African Union to lend any political legitimacy to the flawed process by observing the elections.

Your Excellencies,

The African Union and all of its relevant bodies must set an important precedent by not sending elections monitors, call upon the Sudanese government to postpone national elections until a genuine and comprehensive national dialogue takes place and continue your steadfast efforts to bring about a lasting, just peace to Sudan through an inclusive process.

We urge Your Excellencies to seize this unprecedented opportunity of achieving sustainable peace in Sudan and send a clear message to all interested stakeholders.

The undersigned:

African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies - Uganda

Algeria League for Defence of Human Rights - Algeria

Al-Khatim Adlan Centre for Enlightenment - Sudan

Arab Coalition for Sudan

Arab Organisation for Human Rights – Libya

Arab Organisation for Human Rights – Mauritania

Arab Programme for Human Rights Activists - Egypt

Centre for Conflict Resolution - Uganda

Civil Society Initiative - Sudan

¹ African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies: <http://www.acjps.org/sharp-increase-in-media-restrictions-5-weeks-before-sudanese-general-elections/>

² UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: <http://www.unocha.org/sudan/about-ocha-sudan>

³ Sudan Consortium: http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur_consortium_actions/reports/2015/Sudan%20Humanitarian%20Briefing%20-%202013%20March%202015%20-%20FINAL.pdf

Confederation of Sudanese Civil Society Organizations - Sudan

Darfur Bar Association - Sudan

Governance Bureau - Sudan

Human Rights and Democracy Media Centre SHAMS - Palestine

Human Rights Development Organization - Sudan

International Centre for Policy and Conflict - Kenya

Journalists for Human Rights - Sudan

National Human Rights Monitors Organization - Sudan

Permanent Peace Movement - Lebanon

Regional Centre for the Development of Civil Society – Sudan

Sudan Democracy First Group - Sudan

Sudanese Initiative for Constitution Making - Sudan

World Peace and Reconciliation - Sudan

Zarga Organisation for Rural Development - Sudan