

The Confederation of Sudanese Civil Society Organisations (CSCSO)
Statement on the Sudanese elections scheduled for April 2015

5th March 2015, Khartoum

The Sudanese government has announced that it is intent on holding legislative and presidential elections in April 2015. This, despite repeated calls for their postponement by opposition political forces and independent civil society until such time when peace is secured and the national dialogue, which the government itself had announced and that potentially could lead to national consensus around the Constitution and how the country should be governed, might take place. Moreover, the National Elections Commission (NEC) announced it had completed preparations for the elections and set the schedule for all stages. It also announced that several regional and international actors have expressed an interest in monitoring the elections.

This against a context rife with insecurity and a political/economic crisis, unprecedented attacks and restrictions on freedom of assembly and freedom of expression; continued closures of independent civil society organizations; and arrests of political and civil society leaders. Moreover, with the opposition parties declaring their boycott of the elections, any chance of free and fair competition is ruled out. The ruling party has also already begun promising parliamentary seats to its allies and threatening to withhold parliamentary or executive positions from those who decide not to participate in the electoral process, thereby making the outcome of these elections already known.

Preparations for the elections have been seriously flawed and amendments made to the electoral law in 2014 have failed to address concerns raised by electoral system specialists and observers during the previous elections of 2010. Most notably, the possibility for statutory forces (police, army, etc.) to collectively register (in mass) and vote; and the acceptance of a residence certificate for voting which limits the ability to monitor voting, restricts the voters freedom of choice and opens the chances of repeated voting as well as circumventing the articles related to age and place of residency. The NEC also failed to subject these amendments to proper discussion and did not publish them after they were passed – something which would have showed transparency of the process.

Furthermore, regardless of the lack of transparency in updating the electoral registry and the fact that the citizens did not turn up to register, the registry is based on the results of the 2008 census. These numbers are questionable as evidenced by the re-count of the population of South Kordofan state in 2011 which revealed an error margin of over 70%. This brings into question the accuracy of the electoral numbers and subsequently the division of the constituencies.

Lastly within the current state of affairs, at least one third of the Sudanese population lives in insecurity as a result of ongoing conflict and fear created by the security forces through their attacks on civil society organisations, political parties and individuals. Within this context, citizens' freedoms and ability to express their opinions freely are limited including the freedom to call for a boycott of the elections.

Based on the above, the Confederation of Sudanese Civil Society Organisations views the upcoming elections in April as falling short of basic international standards which would afford it with the ability to be recognised for its credibility in the expression of the will of the voters. The elections also present an added threat to national unity, specifically in light of political partisanship based on ethnic and tribal grounds (this was also been admitted by the

authorities and used to justify some of the Constitutional amendments). Holding these elections will weaken the prospects of a national consensus between the different political forces which will increase conflicts and lead to further fragmentation among the country's population. The lack of international funding for the elections presents an additional burden on the already weak national economy and thus will further harm the Sudanese citizen.

The Confederation of Sudanese Civil Society Organizations call on the government to retract from its decision to hold the elections in April, and to exert efforts and make necessary concessions to end the conflict, to lead a productive dialogue leading to peace and to reinforce national unity. This will pave the way for free, transparent and fair elections.

The Confederation of Sudanese Civil Society Organizations also call on all national forces, specialised institutions and the international community to support efforts toward trying to achieve peace, stability and to support a national dialogue. A dialogue that should be based on equal rights of the stakeholders involved as they work towards ending the conflicts and addressing the injustices of those who have been unjustly treated. Only then, can there be a conducive environment for holding free and fair elections that reflect the will of the citizens and meet their aspirations to live in peace, freedom and dignity.

The Confederation of Sudanese Civil Society Organizations is a coalition of independent civil society organizations working to safeguard its members and strengthen their capacities in realizing a democratic community with good governance in Sudan through innovative approaches to capacity building, advocacy, networking and building knowledge.

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