



Somaliland Non State Actors Forum

Location: Jigga-yar, Badda As, Behind WHO Office

Tel: +252-(0)-63-570536, +252-(0)-63-4414335

Website: www.sonsaf.org

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Sool and Buuhoodle Voter Registration Preliminary Findings

Summary:

The voter registration of the upcoming March 2017 presidential and House of Representatives elections has peacefully started in Sool region and Buuhoodle district on 23rd August 2016. Voter registration has been successfully completed five regions of Togdheer, Awdal, Saaxil, Maroodi- Jeex and Sanaag and Sool region is going to be the last region that its people are registering in order to participate Presidential and House of Representatives elections in Somaliland.

A team from SONSAF in collaboration with Somaliland Civil Society Election Forum (SCISEF) has reached Sool region a week before the commencement of the voter registration and trained domestic observers for Sool region, which SONSAF deployed 75 out of 175 voter registration centers to attend and report how voter registration process is taking place in Sool region and Buuhoodle district.

While the first the phase of voter registration finalized on Wednesday 31st August 2016, the preliminary reports from domestic observers stated that; in general voter registration has ended peacefully in Sool region and Buuhoodle district, so far no security incident reported except one minor incident happened voter registration center under the Xudun district.

Domestic observers reported that the eligible voters of Sool region widely participated voter registration, while all planned voter registration centers in the region performed their work effectively. It is assumed that, the process is linked to the peace conferences between the communities in the area and the Somaliland Government, in particular, Awr boogays, Adhi cadeeye and also the appointment of the Minister of Interior Mr. Yaasiin Xaaji Maxamuud "Faratoon", took a great role that majority of the people

inhabitant in the region supported voter registration, assuming that the appointment of the Minister of Interior showed that the people in Sool region had their representation of the Government, and the Minister himself made campaign to convince the people to register. The Minister travelled too many locations of the region and as confirmed by domestic observers, this initiative influenced that a lot of people showed up for the registration.

In the meantime, the domestic observers reported that there were a lot of technical implications which many times constrained the process of the registration, on the other hand, as other regions experienced the voter education was not neither coherent nor substantial.

General Overview

The voter registration of the upcoming elections of Presidential and House of Representatives officially started in Sool region and Buuhoodle district, the last region that voter registration has to take place.

Highly organized ceremony participated by all Somaliland election stakeholders was held in Laascaanood, at Hamdi Hotel on 21st August 2016. All stakeholders attended in the ceremony have agreed that considerable support should be given on the voter education to the people inhabitants in Sool and Buuhoodle, so they can register to vote, and also special effort should be given security, as the main factor enabling voter registration to happen.

The President of the Republic of Somaliland visited in the region a week before voter registration, this visit was aiming to encourage voter registration in the region, the President requested the people in the region to register, the appointment of the Minister of Interior, Mr. Yaasiin Xaaji Maxamuud “Faratoon” and series conferences of Awrboogays, Adhi cadeeye and dialogue between the Government of Somaliland and Khaatumo, the visits of the leaders of national political parties in the region is also considered the elements influenced the way that the people in Sool and Buuhoodle participated voter registration exercise.

Domestic observers have reported that traditional leaders took a great role on the awareness of the voter education in Sool region, specially the awareness of voter registration of the people inhabitant in the rural areas.

Domestic observers also reported that registration was delayed many voter registration centers in the Sool region, because of disagreement between the transport company contracted by NEC and vehicle owners, the issue was resolved after tremendous efforts.

All voter registration centers in Sool region and Buuhoodle district were operating without internet network, “offline” which can result that person can register more than one time in different locations. The “offline” was for Sool and Buuhoodle only, while all other regions were operating online. SONSAF is recommending to NEC to give special consideration in Sool region and Buuhoodle district for the offline system so that voters will not lose their voting cards.

No incident was reported so far from the locations of the voter registration centers in all districts of the Sool region, except voter registration center No. 1124 of Xudun district, which a group of armed militia attacked in the night of 29th August 2016, the security forces of the center defended this attack from the center.

There was six registration centers in the north of Hargeisa, which was planned to start simultaneously with the Sool region, this was not happen, because of disagreement between the people inhabitant in the area divided into two groups one rejecting and other group supporting voter registration to take place in the area.

The Minister of Interior produced decree on August 28th, 2016 stating; that voter registration will take place the disputed area of the north of Hargeisa, thus, voters registered in the area can vote the upcoming presidential elections only.

This dispute and tensions of these six voter registration centers mounted high nowadays, the root of the argument is boundaries among regions of Awdal, Saahil and Maroodi-Jeex, the Ministry of Interior has not prepared Act regulating boundaries of districts and regions of Somaliland.

Eventually, Somaliland Non State Actors Forum (SONSAF) is encouraging to all concerned parties to resolve this disagreement which existed quite some time, through a responsible and peaceful manner, and asked concerned parties the matter should not be solved by use of force. Current signals in this area demonstrated deadlocks because varoius groups from Maroodi-jeex, Awdal, Salal and Saahil are highly contesting one another and speeches televised or exchanged through media were not helpful at all.

Conclusion

The first phase of voter registration in Sool region and Buuhoodle district was completed satisfactory, while voter registration in Sool region reached all locations planned to take voter registration across the region. Buuhoodle district so far there are three centers which the voter registrations did not happen including Buuhoodle town. It is expected that voter registration in Sool region and Buuhoodle district will officially come to an end on September 19th, 2016.