



Somaliland Non State Actors Forum

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Hargeisa and Salaxley Voter Registration Preliminary Findings

Summary

On 30 April, 2016 voter registration process has resumed in Maroodijeex region after one month break due to the droughts that the country has encountered. The president of the Republic of Somaliland H.E President Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud (Silanyo) has officially launched the start of the registration process in the remaining parts of the most populated region of the country (Maroodi Jeex).

From the period of April 30 to May 6, 2016: SONSAF with the support of Somaliland Civil Society Election Forum (SCISEF) has dispatched 67 local observers and reached 145 registration centers out of 183 registration centers across the region which constitutes 79.2%.

Domestic Observers have reported that a huge improvement has been made in overcoming the technical problems that was happening in all the previous regions. This has been due to the re-employment of experienced operators who have previously worked in the districts of Baligubadle and Gabiley, as well as the increase of the number of the troubleshooting team number, which helped in tackling any kind of technical problems at a short period of time. In addition to that, many technical problems that have happened before have been mitigated by the National Electoral Commission(NEC) before the start of the registration. Optimistically This is a very positive sign in which SONSAF would like to congratulate NEC for their effort.

Domestic Observers have also reported that the turnout in many registration centers, especially inside Hargeisa were below the expectations. The low turnout, especially from youth has forced the Minister of Education to instruct school principles not to permit exams to the students who don't have voter cards. SONSAF understands that voting is a voluntary act and does not support any kind of pressure inserted on citizens to register themselves for voting, but it encourages all

the eligible citizens to register themselves and exercise their voting rights. This approach will help citizens determine or shape their future, it is also the best way to make politicians accountable to them.

On another account SONSAF applauds the House of Representatives for the approval of the amendments that have been made on the voter registration law that was requested from them by President Ahmed Silanyo. This was perceived as a commitment from all the stakeholders in holding the combined Presidential and Parliamentary elections on time. On the other hand, SONSAF encourages NEC to announce a time-line for all the activities that must be done before the Election Day. SONSAF also persuades the leaders of the Justice and Welfare Party (UCID) to settle their differences through their bylaws and the national laws.

General Overview

Voter registration process has re-started in Hargeisa and Salaxley on 30th of April after one month break due to the severe drought that the country had experienced. Even though majority of the country had received substantial rain, but there are also many parts of the country that are still suffering from droughts.

The voter registration process in Hargeisa and Salaxley have been peaceful and no major incidents have been reported by the domestic observers, and all the 145 registration centers reached by Domestic Observers have been fully functional. The current voter registration process in Hargeisa and Salaxley have been very successful in mitigating and minimizing the impacts of the technical problems which have been very common in the previous regions. This is a huge improvement, a one which NEC deserves congratulations for.

Domestic Observers have reported that this improvement in mitigating technical problems have been as a result of re-employment of experienced operators who have worked in the previous districts of Baligubadle and Gabiley. There was at least one operator who has experience from Gabiley or Baligubadle in all the registration centers in Hargeisa and Salaxley. The National Electoral Commission has also increased the number of the troubleshooting teams. In Hargeisa one trouble shooting team were allocated to 5-7 registration centers, a ratio which is better than the previous regions. The troubleshooting teams from NEC have also succeeded to mitigate many concurrent technical problems in advance. However, the improvement in the technical problems was not matched by a large turnout, according to the domestic observers, who have reported that in many registration centers, especially inside Hargeisa, the turnout was low.

Domestic Observers have observed that in many registration centers, papers are collected from registrants by some individuals. Although it is not yet known the exact reason behind this act, domestic observers reported that this is mainly done by potential candidates for the House of Representatives who have the motive of ensuring that they will receive the votes of the registrants whom their papers are collected. SONSAF believes this is against the freedom of voting and suggests government to eliminate such acts.

Local observers have also pinpointed several incidents involving government and police officials forcing their way in the registration centers without the consent of the center chairperson. On Saturday morning, 30th of April, voter registration number 355, several local councilors, including the mayor have physically abused the chairperson of the center after he requested them to identify themselves before they enter the registration center, and it was reported that one councilor who was accompanying the mayor has slapped the center chairman for not recognizing the mayor. And on Sunday morning 1st of May, in the voter registration number 327 a police captain has also slapped and insulted the center chairperson after he was requested to join the registration queue, rather than trying to pass the queue that came before him. SONSAF strongly urge officials from any institution to respect the law and they must not perceive themselves as superiors than the rest.

Last but the not the least, domestic observers are congratulating political parties for observing the voter registration code of conduct by eliminating campaigns , but still encourage to them not to carry any party symbols while visiting registration centers.

Finally Domestic Observers praise NEC for listening the grievances of the people by increasing the registration centers inside Hargeisa, even though this was beyond their initial plan.

Conclusion

The first phase of the voter registration was concluded in both Salaxley and Hargeisa in a peaceful manner, and has witnessed considerable improvements about the technical problems that were frequent in the previous regions in which the voter registration have been conducted.

To this end, Somaliland Non- State Actors Forum (SONSAF) is congratulating to the National Electoral Commission (NEC), for their continuing success in holding free and transparent voter registration in the fourth and the most populated region of the country. SONSAF believes a successful voter registration will pave the way for free and fair elections.