



**Somaliland Non State Actors Forum**

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## **Voter Registration Briefing Paper: 5**

### **Sanaag Voter Registration Preliminary Findings**

#### **Summary**

The voter registration process which is going on in the region of Sanaag started on July 16, 2016, and a total of 167 voter registration centers opened concurrently across the region but there was one incident that has occurred in the Booda-cade village under Dhahar district on 18 July 2016 where Somaliland security forces involved the voter registration process in this area confronted Puntland forces who apparently attacked in this area of the voter registration centers as domestic observers reported. Therefore, these clashes between Somaliland and Puntland forces halted the process of the voter registration centers in Dhahar area. The domestic observers reported that the confrontations between two sides caused both death and injuries. Domestic observers deployed across all districts of the region included Ceerigabo, Badhan, Dhahar, Ceel-afweyn and Gar'adag district; domestic observers indicated that this region needs a lot of concentrations due to geographical location which is the largest region in Somaliland.

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#### **General Overview**

On July 16, 2016, voter registration activities resumed in the Sanaag region, which is the fifth region of the voter registration activities in the country, the eligible voters in Sanaag region begin to go to the voter registration centers after the break of the fasting month of "Ramadan".

Launching ceremony of voter registration was held in Ceerigaabo on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2016 and attended by all election stakeholders, all stakeholders who participated the ceremony agreed to give special consideration in this region due to many circumstances in which the Sanag region is different from the previous regions conducted voter registration, in terms of geographical, poor infrastructure as roads and security.

Somaliland National Electoral Commission (NEC) told that a total of 206 voter registration centers planned in five electoral districts of Sanaag region.

On Saturday 16, July, 2016: The voter registration activities peacefully started in Sanaag region and according to the information obtained from NEC and domestic observers indicated that a total of 191 of the planned out of 206 voter registration centers were sent to registration kits and 167 become operational in the region.

NEC also told that voter registration activities were suspended in Lasqoray district because of security reasons not permitting voter registration activities to take place in the area. It is worth to mention that voter registration is taking place new places of Sanaag region, which was not part of the previous elections of the country, especially south of the Sanaag region, where neither voter registration nor elections happened before this time.

Domestic observers reported that no voter registration activities taken pace in Badhan and Dhahar districts, as the equipment of voter registration materials reached late time than as planned, the reason of such delays was reported “disagreements between transport owners and the designated NEC Staff and the distance of the area, which resulted that the voter registration activities delayed one day in these two districts and successfully started on Sunday, 17 July 2016.

In terms of situation of security, an armed clash was reported in between Somaliland military and militia forces loyal to Puntland, this confrontation happened at Booda-Cadde village which is 17kms west of Dhahar district. During the time of the clash SONSAF’s Domestic Observers were in Hiingalool 30km of west of Booda-cadde. On Monday 18, July 2016, a man armed with gun fired the voter registration number 970 in the south of Erigavo and damaged the engine, which resulted the closure of this voter registration center, however, the engine was replaced and the registration center restarted its operation next day.

With regards to technical problems, reports indicated that voter registration centers commenced its operations as planned except; “some minor technical problems, which frequently happened in many registration centers across the region, problems of electricity were also ranged from Erigavo voter registration centers, which disrupted registration process.”

According to preliminary reports from domestic observers pointed out that the necessary attention was not given in preventing underage registration as observed in a number of voter registration centers, one important factor is how the age of the young people can be identified during the registration process, in this regard, the domestic observers have also reported that NEC staff was very dedicated to ensure that the right age to be registered with their limited mechanisms to verify.

SONSAF was on the ground a week before the commencement of Sanaag’s voter registration activities, to train domestic observers in collaboration with Somaliland civil society election

monitoring forum (SCISEF). SONSAF trained domestic observers of 42 members who were sent to the districts of Sanaag region and equipped to report back frequently as neutral and objective information based on what they observed during the implementation of voter registration activities in the Sanaag region.

On the other hand, domestic observers highlighted that the majority of technical problems in the region were computers and engines, resulting the opening of the voter registration centers late time. Similarly, domestic observers reported that the people going to the voter registration centers inside Erigavo were low due to shortage of the voter education and people were transported to outside villages to register.

Moreover, the domestic observers confirmed that first seven days of the voter registration completed across the rural areas of the region and the residual period of the registration started on Jul 23 effectively in the district capitals of Gar'adag and Elafwayn, while inside Erigavo the first phase will be closed on July 29.

## **Conclusion**

Domestic observers commend to the local community of the Awr-Boogays district in the south of Sanaag region where traditional elders and the government of Somaliland held very comprehensive meeting that has contributed strengthening the security of these districts and enhanced the grass-roots mobilization and awareness raising on the voter registration process in these areas.

SONSAF also encourages Somaliland government to continue such initiative of the peaceful dialogue and grass-root engagement similar to Awr- Boogays district. SONSAF recommends NEC to conduct a comprehensive voter education and awareness raising campaigns in the Sool region prior to the registration process on Aug 2016 by engaging the traditional elders and other influential people in the region.

Finally, SONSAF believes the best way that conflicts and political tensions can be solved is through peaceful means and dialogue and this may encourage Somaliland government to promote such coordinated grass- roots initiative of the traditional and religious leaders in the regions vulnerable to the conflict.

**Somaliland Non- State- Actors Forum (SONSAF)**