

Teim



## TEIM Election Watch Analysis

**OCCASIONAL ANALYSIS:**

**SUDAN /The secession referendum – ready for judgment**

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On January 14 2011, after one week of voting in Southern Sudan, the secession referendum was over. The participation rate surpassed 80 percent (84%, according to preliminary data from the Commission for the Referendum in South Sudan / SSRC) of the 3.9 million voters who had registered to vote. In the words of SSRC Chairman Mohamed Ibrahim Khalil, 3.1 million voters cast their votes in the southern regions (out of a total of 3.7 million people enrolled to vote), to which must be added the 62,000 voters (out of a total of 116,000) that did so in polling stations set up for southerners resident in the north. As for Southern Sudanese voting abroad, the turnout was even higher: 91% (55,000 out of a total of 60,000). This figure by far exceeds the established legal minimum turnout of sixty percent required for a recount. The same rules set a threshold of 50%+1, necessary to declare either of the two options - "segregation" or "unity" – winner.

All forecasts indicate that the "yes" vote will have received overwhelming backing, especially among residents in the southern regions and among the diaspora. The president of the Republic of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, acknowledged in a public speech on January 25 that the final result would be around 99% in favour of a secession, which he and his National Congress Party (NCP) had opposed. The final results will not be communicated by the SSRC until 09February, or at the latest, on 14 March. International observers from the European Union and the Carter Foundation have confirmed the fairness of the process, although in a reduced number of polling stations it has been discovered that the number of votes exceeds that of enrolled voters. It is important to highlight the regional and international impact of this referendum, as well as U.S. diplomacy involvement in it - with its overt support for the secessionist option.

Amidst an atmosphere of euphoria, the leaders of the still autonomous region are preparing for the creation of the new republic. The president, Salva Kir Mayardet, from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), has announced his intention to run for head of the state-in-the-making, while negotiators from both sides are trying to resolve the major disputes that exist between Khartoum and Juba, the southern capital, to ensure a cordial relationship between the Republic of Sudan and what, sources in the SPLM indicate, will be called the Republic of South Sudan.

However, the vote was not free of violent clashes in various locations in the south and especially in the disputed enclave of Abyei. The militias of General George Ator, a SPLM dissident, have maintained skirmishes with the forces of the latter. In Abyei, fighting between SPLM militia in support of the Ngok Dinka tribe, and armed groups from the Arab Messiria tribe, allied with Khartoum, have been recurrent over recent weeks. In this enclave, located in the (northern) region of Kurdufan, on the border with the south, a referendum should also have taken place to determine if its people wanted to join the south or the north. But the controversy between the NCP and the SPLM on whether the Messiria nomads were entitled to vote or not, forced it to be postponed. Abyei is very important because it harbours a significant proportion of the country's oil wealth. At least two thirds of the total crude deposits are in the south, which, however, lacks the infrastructure necessary to refine and market it. The partition would leave the north without the bulk of energy resources, pending what happens in Abyei, but still with the entire processing industry. It is envisaged that multinationals and western governments will assist the new state in developing its oil sector. Several options are being considered: one, to transport the crude to the Indian Ocean via Kenya to avoid the current pipeline which reaches the Red Sea via Port

Sudan. The second, less likely option, is to take the crude west, across the African continent to Senegal.

The future of Abyei will be a source of constant tension between the SPLM and the Khartoum government, even if the special committee formed to settle the issue reaches a final decision on its geographic boundaries and electoral roll. In general, the delineation of the border continues to arouse heated debates, and there is still no consensus on the final position of the more than 2000 kilometre border that will definitively separate the two states after secession. Added to this, is the stumbling block of Sudan's foreign debt: the central government is demanding that the new state assume a share of the total (around forty billion dollars). The SPLM leaders have flatly rejected such a possibility, arguing that the origin of the debt is Khartoum having squandered it on its military campaigns against the south - intermittent since 1956 - and on agricultural and industrial projects in the north. The Southern Sudanese have, in any case, conditioned any agreement on this issue to a commitment from Khartoum to also share its assets with the new state. Another issue is control of the Nile River: following the latest accords signed by the riparian states, led principally by Ethiopia - the principal regional supporter (along with Kenya) of the secessionist project - the traditional quotas of water allocated for Sudan and Egypt have been affected. The latter two states now fear that the creation of a new state, will further impair their access to a water supply that is fundamental for their livelihoods. In the case of Sudan, the loss of natural resources and the fertile southern areas, coupled with a reduction in quotas for the Nile, could aggravate its economic crisis.

In addition, the delicate internal situation on both sides must be taken into account. In the north, the opposition accuses al-Bashir of having yielded to the south in exchange for maintaining the hegemony of his party, and in order to free himself from the arrest warrant issued against him by the International Criminal Court, for crimes against humanity in Darfur. The opposition is also demanding the dissolution of the government and parliament, the formation of a transitional government, and free and transparent elections along with a comprehensive peace agreement in Darfur. In Darfur, the armed rebel movement continues threatening to force a new territorial breakup process. For now, Khartoum is only agreeing to incorporate a few prominent members of the opposition into the NCP-led government, while refusing to release one of al-Bashir's opponents, Hassan al-Turabi, arrested mid-January for alleged collusion with the Justice and Equality Movement, the main armed group in Darfur. As for the south, its major challenges are the fight against extreme poverty suffered by much of the population, and overcoming ethnic and tribal differences, particularly the distribution of power among the Dinka (the majority in the SPLM's power structure), the Nuer, the Shilluk and other minority groups, and the assimilation of the Muslim community. This depends largely on the SPLM's ability to attract major figures from the opposition into the future unity government, especially Lam Akol, SalvaKir's rival in the presidential elections in the autonomous region in 2010.