

-- OPEN LETTER --

Subject: Civil Society dismay at decision to deploy observation monitors to Sudan elections

13 April 2015

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Excellencies, Representatives of the AU Peace and Security Council Member States,
H.E. Chairperson Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, African Union Commission,
H.E. President Thabo Mbeki, Chair of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel,

Your Excellencies,

We, the undersigned Sudanese and African civil society organizations, write with deep concern about the decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council to send an observation mission to monitor the 13 – 15 April 2015 Sudanese general elections, in direct contradiction to the recommendations of the African Union's own pre-elections assessment mission.

We call upon Your Excellencies, to:

1. Ensure that the African Union does not legitimize a process aimed at prolonging the Government of Sudan's continued political, human rights and humanitarian abuses and which is grossly inconsistent with the standards of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), and exacerbates the root causes of Sudan's problems and undermines all progress over the past year to bring about a comprehensive negotiated settlement to the country's multiple crises; While we do not endorse the decision to deploy the mission, it must report objectively and accurately on structural flaws in the election process.
2. Demand that the Government of Sudan participate in a genuine, transparent and inclusive national dialogue facilitated by independent and neutral moderators that leads to a transitional period ending in participatory elections;
3. Reiterate to the Government of Sudan and all stakeholders that a process must be inclusive and cannot exclusively happen inside Sudan, in order to allow for all interested stakeholders to participate.

Your Excellencies,

As concluded by the AU's pre-elections assessment mission report, "the necessary conditions and environment for the holding of transparent, competitive, free and fair elections as agreed in the AU principles governing democratic elections have not been satisfied." Moreover, the mission reported that "the prevailing situation in the country and negative impact the conduct of these elections would have on the national dialogue process, including the potential for increase in violence, it is the considered view of the assessment team that deploying an AUEOM (AU Elections Observation Mission) under this circumstance would not be viable and effective, and would not contribute to democracy building in Sudan as enshrined in the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) and the OAU Declaration on Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa."

The continued intransigence on the part of the Government of Sudan and its refusal to participate in a Pre-Dialogue Preparatory meeting convened by the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) in late-March, has resulted in the failure of its own ostensible desire to hold a national dialogue, is in direct contravention of the AUPSC's September 2014 Communique 456, which called for such a meeting, and is leading to a total collapse of the AU's efforts to facilitate and mediate for a negotiated settlement of Sudan's crises. We urge Your Excellencies to ensure that the African Union sets a positive precedent and does not further legitimize a flawed process.

The undersigned:

Africa Friends Association – Tunisia
African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies – Uganda
Al-Khatim Adlan Centre for Enlightenment - Sudan
Arab Programme for Human Rights Activists - Egypt
Arab Coalition for Sudan
Arab Network for Human Rights Information – Egypt
Arab Organisation for Human Rights – Libya
Arab Organisation for Human Rights – Mauritania
Arab Institute for Democracy - Tunisia
Algeria League for Defense of Human Rights - Algeria
Civil Society Initiative - Sudan
Conscience International - Sierra Leone
Darfur Bar Association – Sudan
Governance Bureau – Sudan
Human Rights Development Organisation – Sudan
International Refugee Rights Initiative – Uganda
Journalists for Human Rights – Sudan
Kamma Organisation for Development Initiatives - Sudan
Lawyers for Human Rights - South Africa
Nuba Relief Rehabilitation and Development Organisation – Sudan
Regional Centre for Development of Civil Society – Sudan
SOS Exclusion - Cote d'Ivoire
Sudan Consortium
Sudan Democracy First Group – Sudan
Zarga Organisation for Rural Development – Sudan

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