



Carter Center Finds Sudanese Referendum Peaceful and Credible

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The Carter Center observation mission congratulates the people of Sudan for the successful conduct of the historic referendum on self-determination, which was marked by an overwhelming turnout of enthusiastic voters during a peaceful and orderly seven-day voting period. The referendum process implements a major pillar of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), and represents the realization of the aspirations of the people of Southern Sudan to determine their political future.

While several critical stages of the process remain to be completed before final results will be announced, the Center finds that the referendum process to date is broadly consistent with international standards for democratic elections and represents the genuine expression of the will of the electorate.

According to the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) and to reports of observers and others, it appears that the 60 percent turnout threshold required for a valid vote was reached several days before the end of the polling period. In addition, based on early reports of vote counting results, it appears virtually certain that the results will be in favor of secession. The Carter Center welcomes statements by the Government of Sudan (GOS) that it will accept the results of the referendum, and anticipates that the international community will recognize the outcome as soon as the final results are announced. Although the population of Southern Sudan is understandably anxious to receive the results, The Carter Center urges all to remain calm as they wait for the final announcement due in early February.

The Carter Center commends the SSRC and the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRB) for their determination to implement a successful referendum despite very short timelines and logistical challenges. The Center also recognizes the critical roles played by the United Nations Integrated Referendum and Elections Division (UNIRED), the International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES), and other international partners to assist Sudanese referendum authorities. The Government of Sudan and the Government of Southern Sudan should also be recognized for taking steps to ensure that the process could be conducted successfully.

The Carter Center mission noted the following key findings during the referendum process:

- The voting period between Jan. 9-15 resulted in an overwhelming turnout of voters who cast their ballots in an atmosphere that mixed enthusiasm with solemn determination to participate in a historic referendum process. Although this enthusiasm led to long queues during the initial days of polling in Southern Sudan, voters displayed patience and commitment.

- With the exception of a few isolated incidents, polling was conducted in a peaceful and orderly environment. Polling materials were in place at most centers at the start of polling. Most officials carried out their duties properly and with confidence, working diligently often without full pay.
- While voter turnout in the South was overwhelming, nearing 100 percent in several locations, in the North, participation in registration and voter turnout was significantly lower. Long distances and a lack of transportation to the referendum sites may have contributed to this result; the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) also encouraged Southerners living in the North to come home to register and vote. The large numbers of Southerners who decided to repatriate after registration was also likely a factor in the lower turnout in the North.
- During the voter registration period in November and December, more than 3.9 million Southern Sudanese registered to vote, mostly in Southern Sudan but also in northern Sudan as well as eight out-of-country voting locations. Although the voter registration exercise faced some procedural, logistical, and security challenges, the Center's observers found that the registration process was generally credible and laid a strong foundation for an inclusive vote.

Overall, the referendum process to this point has been successful and broadly consistent with international standards. Nonetheless, Carter Center observers reported a number of problems, which while not undermining the overall credibility and legitimacy of the referendum process, deserve to be noted to ensure improvements in future electoral processes in Sudan:

- During both voter registration and polling, Carter Center observers reported that procedures intended to resolve complaints at referendum centers – especially the formation of Consideration Committees – were not adequately implemented, and failed to provide an effective remedy for complaints.
- Similarly during voter registration, the application of eligibility criteria was uneven, particularly in northern Sudan, where some potential registrants were turned away. Identifiers intended to verify applicants' eligibility were either not present or not recognized by registrants as credible community representatives.
- The absence of large-scale voter education and non-biased civic education contributed to the voters' limited understanding of the process and curtailed their ability to make informed decisions about the impact of unity versus secession.
- During the polling period, Carter Center observers reported widespread instances of assisted voting for illiterate and poorly educated voters in Southern Sudan, most often by referendum officials. Carter Center observers generally found that such actions appeared to have been well intentioned by officials and desired by the voters. Although this assistance could undermine the secrecy of the ballot, in most instances it did not appear to influence the will of the voters. The high-degree of illiteracy combined with the lack of voter education contributed to this phenomenon.
- In the South, Carter Center observers reported many instances of security officials inside referendum centers. Observers in the North reported an excessive security presence outside the referendum centers. While the presence of security officials may have been intended to maintain security and order, their presence may have had an intimidating effect on some voters.
- The Carter Center welcomes the initiative of the SSRC to announce and post aggregated results at each stage of the tabulation process to increase transparency of the aggregation of final results.

With the forthcoming conclusion of the referendum process, The Carter Center urges actors in both the North and Southern Sudan, especially the CPA partners, to take urgent action to address the following challenges:

- The National Congress Party (NCP) and the SPLM should engage immediately to resolve all outstanding post-referendum issues as quickly as possible – well ahead of the end of the CPA – particularly those related to Abyei and citizenship.
- Although citizenship issues regarding southern Sudanese in the North and Northerners in the South remain unresolved, it is critical that the security of all of Sudan's people be guaranteed. The Center calls on the CPA partners to ensure the protection of all Sudanese in the post-referendum period.

- The referendum period triggered a wave of repatriation of an estimated 180,000 Southerners who had been resident in the north. The GoSS was frequently ill-prepared to provide basic services for returnees. The Carter Center encourages the government to increase its assistance to repatriated Southerners who intend to return to their original communities.
- The Carter Center believes that it is essential for the North and Southern Sudan to implement the CPA's goal of democratic transformation in Sudan. The Center welcomes and encourages efforts to pursue a consensual constitutional process in the South to provide an inclusive foundation for a vibrant pluralistic political society. In the North, the Center encourages the ruling party to respond to calls for meaningful consultations with the opposition, and to support the Popular Consultation process in South Kordofan and Blue Nile.
- Finally, the Center urges all sides to work urgently to achieve a lasting peace in Darfur.

Background on the Carter Center's mission

In response to an invitation from the SSRC, The Carter Center initiated its referendum observation activities in Sudan in August 2010, subsequently deploying long-term observers in September. During the voter registration, the Center deployed 72 observers in Sudan and the eight OCV voting locations. For the polling period, more than 100 observers have been deployed to observe the polling and tabulation process in Sudan and the OCV locations.

The Center assesses the referendum processes in Sudan based on the CPA, Interim National Constitution, Southern Sudan Referendum Act, and Sudan's obligations for democratic elections contained in regional and international agreements.¹ In total, Carter Center leadership, core staff and observers form a diverse group from 34 countries.²

The objectives of the Carter Center's observation mission in Sudan are to provide an impartial assessment of the overall quality of the referendum process, promote an inclusive process for all Southern Sudanese, and demonstrate international interest in Sudan's referendum process. The Carter Center conducts observation activities in accordance with the Declaration of Principles of International Election Observation and Code of Conduct that was adopted at the United Nations in 2005 and endorsed by 35 election observation groups.³ The Center will release periodic public statements on referendum findings, available on its website: www.cartercenter.org.

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The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, in partnership with Emory University, to advance peace and health worldwide. A not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization, the Center has helped to improve life for people in more than 70 countries by resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity; preventing diseases; improving mental health care; and teaching farmers to increase crop production. The Carter Center began working in Sudan in 1986 and for more than 20 years the Center has focused on improving health and preventing and resolving conflicts in Sudan. Please visit www.cartercenter.org to learn more about The Carter Center.

¹ Sudan ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Feb. 18, 1986. The ACHPR came into force on Oct. 21, 1986. Sudan acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) on March 18, 1986. The ICCPR came into force on March 23, 1976.

² These countries include: Australia, Belgium, Benin, Cameroon, Canada, China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

³ The Declaration of Principles in Arabic and English can be read at http://cartercenter.org/peace/democracy/des_declaration.html