



A Sudanese citizen casts his vote for President and for Parliament, in a polling booth in Khartoum.

organization, after it tried to present rebel leader Garang as its spokesman at a session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.)

Rice did the exact same thing as Cox had done for years, though without buying any slaves. She visited the SPLA-held areas, denounced the Bashir government for “slavery,” charged that government forces were bombing civilians, and so forth. Rice was reportedly accompanied by Harry Johnston, the U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan, who also travelled without a permit.

As *EIR* has shown, the charges of slavery are unfounded. See, for example, “Fact vs. Fiction about Slavery in Sudan,” *EIR*, May 3, 1996.

The Sudanese government had already warned, that the planned visit would be considered a hostile act. In a harshly worded statement, Foreign Minister Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail said that the visit was a “violation of international laws and norms.” On Nov. 21, the Sudanese government cancelled multiple entry visits for U.S. Chargé d’Affaires Raymond Brown, to protest Rice’s visit. Brown is one of the rotating personnel who travel to Khartoum from Nairobi, to keep a minimum of activity in the U.S. Embassy, whose full staff was withdrawn in 1996, in protest over alleged Sudanese support for terrorism.

On Dec. 7, just days before the elections were to begin, another U.S. diplomat broke the law, by collaborating secretly with the NDA forces. Glenn Warren, a political officer at the embassy, took part in a meeting of opposition figures from the NDA, who were plotting subversion. In announcing Warren’s

expulsion, the Foreign Minister said, “The American diplomat was caught in a meeting with leaders of non-registered political organizations and was discussing with them issues related to Sudanese security and stability.” Seven Sudanese involved were arrested and held in custody. Furthermore, he said, “The security authorities seized documents with the persons arrested, and they go in line with the current American policies that target the Sudanese government and seek to undermine it.” The meeting attended by the American diplomat, was found to have been involved in a sabotage scheme. According to the Foreign Minister, the seven people, members of the NDA, with whom Warren met, were plotting a “popular uprising backed by a military action and passing information over to the rebel movement to help it occupy cities and destroy installations with assistance by the United States.”

Thus, while Sudan was preparing to go to the polls to elect its political leadership, members of the U.S. government were engaging in subversive activities, aimed at overthrowing the government, not by elections, but by other means. And, at the same time, militias of the NDA were attacking eastern Sudanese sites, from their bases in Eritrea.

Interview: Abdul-Monueim al-Zein al-Nahas

We Gave All Candidates Equal Treatment

The following interview with Dr. al-Nahas, Chairman of the General Elections Commission, was conducted in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, on Dec. 13, 2000, by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach and Uwe Friesecke.

EIR: Who are the candidates in the Presidential elections?

Al-Nahas: There are five: Leading them is President [Omar Hassan al-] Bashir, the incumbent; [Ga’afar Mohamed] Numeiri, a former President of the Republic. Then there are three of the new generation; two of them, Dr. Al-Samual Osman and Dr. Malik Hussain, are economists, and the third is Mahmoud Ahmed Jaha. The three are all businessmen, with private companies. The last was a member of the former Parliament, and Dr. Hussain was a prominent figure at the time of Numeiri. All of them are in their fifties.

Bashir and Numeiri have similarities: both are career military officers who graduated from the military academy, and both had training abroad—Bashir in the U.S. and Egypt, Numeiri in Russia. Bashir is young, of course; in fact, he was a bodyguard of Numeiri when Numeiri was President, so he’s younger than Numeiri. He’s in his early fifties, Numeiri is in his late sixties.

EIR: What are the main issues, the main differences in their platforms?

Al-Nahas: I think there is no world of difference between Numeiri and Bashir. I think the philosophy of the Numeiri regime is to a far extent dominating now the present regime, except for this: what they call the centralization scheme. But these three young chaps, they have a different outlook.

For the first time, in this election campaign, we managed to put our hands on the national mass media, and to make it available to all of them, including Bashir, equally; we gave them equal time on television, in the last ten days. That is the duration of the election campaign, and we put it in the timetable of the elections. The campaign ended yesterday [Dec. 12]. For those ten days, we put the national mass media at the disposal of the Presidential candidates, and in the states, we put it at the disposal of the candidates in their geographical constituencies. This was observed by everyone, and it gave the candidates a fair chance. That's why they are praising the efforts of the Elections Commission. And we even asked the President himself, to show a low profile, even for his official functions, for this period of time, to give equal access to all candidates. We managed to organize debates for some of them, either the candidates personally, or their representatives, on television. Yesterday, there was a sort of chat between Numeiri and the other three, and a representative of Bashir.

As you can see in the public gatherings, they arranged their own activities, here and in the other cities. And everyone had a chance to go wherever he wanted, to speak freely, to have access to the public, to have publications, put up posters, place ads in newspapers—we allowed all this.

Of course, it is very expensive. But one of the authorities of the Elections Commission, according to the Constitution, is to introduce the candidates to the public, to enable them to campaign, and to utilize all the official mass media that are available, whether for the Presidential or the parliamentary elections.

EIR: The parliamentary elections take place at the same time. How many members of Parliament will be elected?

Al-Nahas: There will be 360—270 in direct elections, and the remaining 90 seats by special, or indirect, elections. There are about 35 seats allotted to women, 26 to scientific and intellectual cadres, and the remaining to trade unions, farmers, herdsmen, and businessmen.

So, we have direct elections in the constituencies [i.e., election districts], and indirect elections for the categories of professionals. These are elected through the general assemblies of the categories. So, the general assembly of the trade unions is about 350, and they come together to elect 11; the general assembly of the farmers, about 550, come and elect 10; the same for the herdsmen, about 150, who elect 5 of their number; and the businessmen elect 3 from a college of 25, representing all the trades of the businessmen's federation.



Muriel Mirak-Weissbach interviews Dr. Abdul-Monueim al-Zein al-Nahas, chairman of the General Elections Commission, in his office in Khartoum.

We finished with the indirect elections in the colleges last week. Now we are holding the direct elections, so in each polling center we are going to put different boxes: one, green, for the President; one for the direct constituency, which is white.

EIR: How will the new government be formed, and in what timeframe?

Al-Nahas: After the completion of the election, the new National Assembly [parliament] should be convened immediately. You know, the membership of the Sudan in the Inter-Parliamentary Union had been suspended, due to the absence of the previous National Assembly, and so we invited them to come. They said that they do not observe elections, but they are very keen to know the results, and they will come after the announcement of the results, because at that time, they are going to consider lifting the [suspension of Sudan's membership].

EIR: Will there be a new government by January?

Al-Nahas: By the end of this month [December], we are going to have a new government. After the completion of the elections, the new National Assembly should appoint a new Speaker, and elect heads of the specialized committees. After that, they will sit, for the newly elected President to come and take his oath. The new President has the authority to present the new government, and the Parliament should confirm his proposal.

So, first, the National Assembly should be there, so that the new President may be sworn in, in front of them. And, you know, we were supposed to arrange a referendum, for constitutional amendments, and we started preparations for

it, but at the last moment, they reconsidered the whole matter, and decided to adjourn it, until after the formation of the National Assembly. This referendum would deal with amendments concerning the appointment and removal of governors, for instance, which was the main point which had led to the quarrel between the former Speaker [Dr. Hassan al-Turabi] and the President. Up to now, they haven't reached a clear-cut opinion on the whole thing, so I think they want to leave it to the National Assembly.

EIR: What are the major issues?

Al-Nahas: Of course, now the environment is different from the past. We have supervised over five elections in the last ten years, all of them under one political system. Now, the environment is different: There is a multi-party system, although some of the parties are refraining from taking part in these elections, and some are running as independents, because they do not want to state their party affiliation.

EIR: From the Umma Party, for example?

Al-Nahas: Yes, and for Sharif [al-Hindi]. We expected it for the local council elections, which took place over the last few weeks, before we started these elections. A lot of political elements of opposition parties took part in the local council elections, as independents.

But the other parties, which refrained from taking part in

the elections, did participate in the nomination of the President. Such as the Umma Party, of Sadiq al-Mahdi; and the Islamic Umma Party, set up by the cousin of Sadiq al-Mahdi, which is in a coalition with another party, made up of the grandchildren of the Khalifa, called the Ansar: They are supporting this regime, and that is why they support the nomination of the President.

EIR: How does the nomination of the President work?

Al-Nahas: Whether for the candidacy for the Presidency or for candidacy to the parliament, you do not introduce yourself, you are nominated. For parliament, 20 people must come together, fill out a form, pay a nominal fee, and then the nominee has to say, "I agree to the nomination, I abide by the Constitution, my political color is independent—or Umma, or whatever."

A Presidential candidate has to be nominated by 1,300 people, from all over the Sudan, by registered voters from at least half the states of the Sudan. It should not be from one state. So, in the nomination of Bashir, 1,300 registered voters took part, they came here and confirmed their nomination. The two opposition parties I mentioned—the Islamic Umma Party and the Alliance Party, founded by the grandson of the Khalifa—which were originally part of the Umma Party of Sadiq al-Mahdi, split away; they are cooperating with the present regime, and may in the future take part in government.

EIR: Sadiq al-Mahdi, himself, who has returned from self-imposed exile, has, however, decided not to be a candidate for these elections, is that true?

Al-Nahas: Yes, he decided not to run. But he is in a dialogue with the current regime; he is not attacking the government. He appears not to be confident of the support he has in the population, because ten years is quite a long time [since he was replaced by the Bashir government]. A lot of water has gone under the bridge, so you can't tell. So, I think he didn't want to risk it. He waited to see. But at the same time, he is conducting a serious dialogue with the government, he's waiting for the new President. Of course, he prefers Bashir. He hates Numeiri, and Numeiri hates him. That's why Numeiri stated that if he were to win, the first thing he would do, is exclude Sadiq al-Mahdi from political life completely. Sadiq al-Mahdi is sympathetic to this regime and supports Bashir, though he does not want to declare it at this point. He will wait and see.

EIR: Are there also candidates from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)?

Al-Nahas: [Osman al-] Mirghani's party, the DUP, also split into three factions. The leading faction is the one of Sharif Hussein al-Hindi, and he is going along with the Umma Party split-offs, and is actively supporting the government. And they also participated in the nomination of Bashir. Of course, in any future government, they are going to take part.

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