

NAI NEWSLETTER

9 March 2007

ELECTIONS IN AFRICA: NIGERIA AND MAURETANIA

CRUCIAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA: April 2007

Nigeria is about to hold the most crucial elections since the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970. The outcome of the April elections will prove if democracy in Nigeria will be consolidated or subverted.

On April 14 Nigeria – Africa's most populous country and leading oil exporter – will hold elections to the 36 state houses of assembly and gubernatorial positions, to be followed on April 21, by elections to the National Assembly and the Presidency. The elections mark the first time in Nigeria's rather tumultuous political history where one incumbent elected president will hand over power to another. Apart from this, it will also be the first time that three elections will be held consecutively within a democratic dispensation since independence in 1960. It is undoubtedly the most crucial elections since the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970, as it would finally prove if the return to democracy in 1999 be consolidated or subverted.

Nigeria has a history of hotly contested elections: 1959, 1964/65, 1979, 1983, 1993 (annulled at the Presidential stage), 1999 and 2003. Three issues stand out in all the elections: 1. the high stakes and zero-sum contest for power involving the use of force and electoral malpractices; 2. elections as processes of political transition (military to civilian rule); and 3. as a non-violent broadly representative modality of addressing the critical challenges in Nigeria's federalism and democracy. The 2007 elections would prove to be the ultimate test of Nigeria's democratic structures and processes and perhaps, the country's nationhood. Also, as West Africa's pivotal state and leading oil exporter, the outcome of the April elections would be critical to regional peace and global energy security.

In the run up to the elections the political tensions are fundamentally linked to the issue of whether the coming elections would be free and fair, reflecting the choice of Nigerian citizens in ways that will bring forth a truly representative and accountable government, which can effectively address the

interests and welfare needs of the people. There is some concern about the attempt by the incumbent President to influence the choice of an elected successor, the impartiality of the electoral body: Independent Nigerian Electoral Commission (INEC), and the willingness of the political class to play by the “rules of the game.” These concerns have been exacerbated by the open disagreement between the President and the Vice President, inflammatory statements by some politicians on the April elections, pre-election violence in some parts of the country, the escalation of the crisis in the oil-rich, but impoverished Niger Delta and the reported attempts of the federal anti-corruption agency to exclude opposition candidates in the coming elections.

In spite of the high stakes involved, the coming elections have demonstrated the capacity of Nigerians to struggle for democracy. Out of a crowd of about 50 political parties, the front-runners in the present race to the Presidential villa remain the candidate of the incumbent ruling party, People’s Democratic Party (PDP), and two opposition parties: the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) and the Action Congress (AC). In the event of an unlikely sudden change in the present permutations, a dark horse may emerge, but in the final conclusion, the chances are that democracy will have its way.

FURTHER READING:

Ibrahim, J. “Prospects for Credible Elections in Nigeria”, *News from the Nordic Africa Institute*; No. 1, 2007.

<http://www.nai.uu.se/publications/news/ibrahim/>

Ibrahim, J. “Nigeria’s 2007 Elections: The Fitful Path to Democratic Citizenship”, *Special Report 182*, January 2007, United States Institute for Peace (USIP), <http://www.usip.org> or the report directly

<http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr182.html>

Independent National Electoral Commission, <http://www.inecnigeria.org/>

Lubeck, P; M. Watts and R. Lipschutz, *Convergent Interests: US Energy Security and the “Securing” of Nigerian Democracy*”, *International Policy Report*, February 2007, <http://www.ciponline.org/>

Obi, C, *Nigeria: Democracy on Trial*, Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, 2005.

Occasional Electronic Paper,

<http://www.nai.uu.se/publications/books/book.xml?id=25114>

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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AllAfrica.Com

<http://allafrica.com>

HOUR OF TRUTH FOR MAURITANIAN TRANSITION: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS March 2007

How the military junta in Mauritania handles the upcoming elections will be the ultimate test for the democratic transition in Mauritania.

The first round in the Mauritanian presidential elections will take place on March 11 and the second round on March 27, in case none of the candidates wins an absolute majority. The presidential elections in Mauritania are the final stage in a 19 month democratisation process, proclaimed by Mauritania's ruling 'Conseil Militaire pour la Justice et la Démocratie' (CMJD) (The Military Council for Justice and Democracy), led by the military head of state, Col. Ely Ould Mohamed Vall who toppled the former president Maaouya Ould Taya in a coup d'état on August 3, 2005.

The democratic transition process started with a referendum on the constitution in June 2006. The municipal and parliamentary elections were held on November 19 and December 3, 2006 respectively and senate elections on January 21, 2007. The military junta has barred its own members to candidate in order to guarantee transparency. For the first time in Mauritania's election history UN is providing technical assistance and so far there have been few complaints. Immediately after the coup CMJD was strongly condemned by the international community, but then to a large extent accepted because of organizing elections and granting general amnesty to political prisoners.

The military junta is however accused of supporting one of the independent presidential candidates, Ould Cheikh Abdellahi. As the country has a long history of coups these accusations therefore indicate a dangerous trend in the hitherto promising transition process and could jeopardize the future of the democratisation process.

The election campaign has been on-going from 23 February through 9 March. 19 candidates have registered to run for president. Some of the candidates represent political parties and others are independent candidates. Among the candidates is Ahmed Ould Daddah, representing a party within the Coalition of Forces for Democratic Change (CFDC), which took a large portion of seats in the parliamentary elections in November/December 2006. Ould Daddah has promised a number of improvements as to the infrastructure. Other candidates are e.g. the former military ruler Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla, who came second, behind Taya, in the 2003 presidential elections and Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi who is running as an independent candidate and viewed by CFDC and other political parties and civil society organisations as 'the junta's candidate'. Abdellahi was sacked during the Ould Taya regime and accused of corruption linked to the fisheries industry which he then headed. Abdellahi is alleged to be very tolerant to the wishes of the army.

The country is ethnically divided into black Africans, white Moors and black Moors (former slaves of the white Moors). Approximately one third of the population are white Moors but form the main part of the political and economic elite. The list of presidential candidates is skewed in favour of light skin Moors. Messaoud Ould Boulkheir, leader of the 'Alliance Populaire Progressiste' (APP), is one of three candidates who are not white Moors. Ould Boulkheir has in his election campaign strongly emphasized equality of all races.

The future of Mauretania's foreign relations are also debated as some of the candidates pledge to cut the country's relations with Israel. Internal tensions such as the sequels of slavery are also touched upon. The government's responsibility for expelling approximately 70,000 black African Mauritians in late 1980, more than 20,000 of them still living in Senegal, are difficult questions that need to be solved.

FURTHER READING:

Fair Elections Haunted By Racial Imbalance. UN Integrated Regional Information Networks. NEWS, March 5, 2007

<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200703060425.html>

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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USEFUL WEBSITES:

Agence de Presse Africaine (Elections and leadership)

http://www.apanews.net/elect_topic.php?id_mot=411

IRIN. humanitarian news and analysis

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

<http://www.irinnews.org/Africa-Country.aspx?Country=MR>

Agence Mauritanienne d'Information (AMI) - Mauritania

News from Mauritania. (*In Arabic/French*)

<http://www.ami.mr/fr/defaultfr.htm>

AllAfrica.com

<http://allafrica.com/>

ELECTIONS CALENDAR FOR AFRICA

March

Mauritania, 11/3 Presidential elections
Benin, 25/3 National Assembly elections

April

Nigeria, 21/4 Presidential and Parliamentary elections
Mali, 29/4 Presidential elections, first round
Chad National Assembly elections

May

Mali, 13/5 Presidential elections, second round
Algeria People's National Assembly elections
Burkina Faso National Assembly elections
Congo (Brazzaville), National Assembly elections

June

Senegal, 3/6 National Assembly elections
Togo, 24/6 National Assembly elections
Cameroon National Assembly elections

July

Mali, 1/7 National Assembly elections, first round
Sierra Leone, 28/7 Presidential and legislative elections
Mali, 29/7 National Assembly elections, second round

September

Morocco Parliamentary elections

October

Cote d'Ivoire Presidential and parliamentary elections

November

Seychelles National Assembly elections
Ethiopia Presidential elections

December

Kenya President and National Assembly elections

Unknown election dates 2007

Angola National Assembly elections
Cameroon National Assembly elections
Guinea National Assembly elections
Madagascar National Assembly and Senate elections

SOURCES:

The Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, <http://www.eisa.org.za>

African Elections Database, <http://africanelections.tripod.com/>

ElectionGuide, <http://www.electionguide.org>

African Political Resources: Listings of political sites sorted by country, with links to parties, organisations, governments, media and more.

<http://www.politicalresources.net/>

<http://www.politicalresources.net/africa.htm>

AFRICAN MEDIA DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

The African Media Development Initiative (AMDI) is the most extensive independent survey of the state of the media across 17 sub-Saharan African countries: Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The full reports are available electronically from the AMDI website:

<http://bbcworldservicetrust.org/amdi>

The studies aim to assess the key changes and developments in the media sector in Africa over the past five years; to show how training and capacity building activities have contributed to the development of the media; and to identify future actions with the greatest potential impact on the development of the media sector in Africa.

AMDI is an effort by the Ahmadu Bello University (Nigeria), BBC World Service Trust, Rhodes University (South Africa) and a network of researchers from 17 African countries to develop new strategies for increased media support into Africa. AMDI originates from the 2005 Commission on Africa Report "Our Common Future".

EVENTS AT THE NORDIC AFRICA INSTITUTE

Seminar and screening of the film Blood Diamond

Time: 16 March 2007 at 14–18 hrs.

Venue: Filmstaden, Västra Ågatan 16, Uppsala

Speakers: Mats Utas on diamonds and civil war in Sierra Leone; Heléne Averland on the Kimberley process; and Chris Coulter on diamond migration and young women in Sierra Leone.

Read more about the film at: <http://www.blooddiamond.se>

Information about the Kimberley process at: <http://www.regeringen.se>.

Books published by NAI touching upon the theme:

Amadu Sesay, 2007, Does One Size Fit All? Revisiting the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Discussion Paper 36. Uppsala: NAI.

<http://www.nai.uu.se/publications/books/book.xml?id=25227>

Campbell, Bonnie (Ed.), 2004, Regulating Mining in Africa. For whose benefit? Discussion Paper 26, Uppsala: NAI.

<http://www.nai.uu.se/publications/books/book.xml?id=25099>

Good, Kenneth, 2003, Bushmen and Diamonds. (Un) Civil Society in Botswana. Discussion Paper, Uppsala: NAI.

<http://www.nai.uu.se/publications/books/book.xml?id=25090>

Panelnsamtal: Darfur – Vad kan omvärlden göra?

Tid: 17 mars kl. 13.00–14.30

Plats: ABF-huset, Sveavägen 41, Stockholm

Penldeltagare:

Jan Eliasson, FN:s särskilda representant för Sudan.

Ove Bring, Adj professor i folkrätt, professor i internationell rätt vid Stockholms universitet.

Björg Mide, avdelningschef för Östafrika, Syd- och Syd-Östasien vid Norska Kyrkans Nödhjälps internationella avdelning.

Moderator:

Carin Norberg, direktör, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet

NEW BOOKS FROM THE NORDIC AFRICA INSTITUTE

Basedau, Matthias, Gero Erdmann & Andreas Mehler, 2007,
Votes, Money and Violence. Political Parties and Elections in Sub-Saharan Africa.

<http://www.nai.uu.se/publications/books/book.xml?id=25132>

COMMENTS ON THE NEWSLETTER ARE WELCOME

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