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POLICY BRIEF

ONE PERSON, ONE VOTE: ADVANCING ELECTORAL EQUALITY IN SOMALI

18th December, 2019

Executive Statement

Somalia has clocked 50 years since it last conducted a one person, one vote election. With the support of the African Union, the electoral commission is hoping for polls in 2020.

The need for competitive elections stems from the fact that it promotes democratic legitimization of the exercise of authority. As a result of the democratic mandate to exercise power, the elected have sufficient legitimacy to make decisions and the same decisions carry the same value of legitimacy. The voluntary will of transferring the decision-making level from

all eligible to those who were elected is due to: Increased efficiency of decision making, presumption that those elected have higher competencies than the average and this will positively affect the accuracy of their decisions.

Now that Somalia has peacefully completed its 2016–17 political transition through a one-time, semi-democratic process, attention has turned to the next election cycle, anticipated to happen in 2020–21. The federal government has announced that it intends these to be one-person, one-vote elections. The federal government was not able to hold one-person, one-vote elections

in 2016 as it had pledged to do three years earlier.

Introduction

After the collapse of the former Democratic Republic of Somalia in 1991, there has been no administrative authority responsible for the entire governance of Somalia.

The country faces a range of challenges in implementing free and fair elections a situation that has had implications on other stakeholders such as political leaderships across the federal states, communities, civil societies and international community.

Adoption of One-person, one-vote and the lifting of 4.5 clan power-sharing formula faces immense challenges. The latter formula has since its introduction in 2000, brought greater stability to Somali politics, but at the cost of full democratic accountability and legitimacy. The research carried out concluded the need to balance local versus national state building with democratisation and stability, examining whether elections can serve as a conduit for peacebuilding. The country has aspired to democratise its political system, with a view to establishing stable and competent governance institutions that can effectively serve the population.

Methodology

A cross-sectional research design was used in this study as it involved a one-time interaction with a key informants and secondary sources.

Interviews and questionnaires were the main data collection tools. Consent was obtained from the key informants to allow the researchers to record the interview by use of an audio recorder. The researchers also took notes to maximize on data capturing.

Informed consent was obtained from the key informant by guide. explaining in detail the purpose of the research, the expected outcomes, benefits, expected time required for participation, and assurance of confidentiality.

The research was restricted to Puntland, Somalia, because of relevant stability with residents hailing from Garowe, Bossaso, Sanaag region, Katanye, Borama, Qardho, Nugaal, Mudug, Bortinle with two respondents not indicating their residence. Out of the 181 respondents, 162 (89.50%) hailed from Garowe, the capital of Puntland region.

Results and Conclusions

17.1% acknowledged to have participated in the last elections while 82.3% didn't. Those who didn't participate in elections cited not

participating because the election was not one person one vote and only clan representatives voted.

62.4% acknowledged last elections being free and fair while 33.7% were of a contrary answer while 0.04% refrained from answering. Those who agreed cited it not having any form of corruption and no conflict was there while those who differed cited corruption and lack of petition

92.3% preferred voting through one person one vote 4.97% preferred clannism while (2.7%) did not respond. Majority of the population felt left out in the process thus felt clannism did not produce anything for the average person.

58% of the respondents acknowledge having heard of International observers, 39.2% declined while 2.8% did not respond. The respondents cited the role of election observers as: observing the elections; they gave financial support, ensured there was transparency in the elections, promoted accountability, checked on fairness, reported final results, controlled people's movement ,controlled the process, reported to the international community on how elections were conducted, overlooked the process, ensured the elections went on smoothly, observed if the elections were free and fair,

controlled the election's budget, monitored campaigns and helped in vote counting.

87.3% respondents overwhelmingly want to participate in the coming general elections, 11% didn't while 1.7% didn't respond to the question. Unfortunately, the questionnaire didn't ask for reasons for the above question but the study concluded that indeed most of the people in Somali are enthusiastic about the coming elections as majority want to participate in it

Recommendations

- i. Significant funding will be necessary to help the country prepare for the Universal election in 2021. As the cost of post-conflict elections is very high as they require extensive resources in terms of materials, money and manpower.
- ii. Insecurity is likely to make elections not to be conducted in some areas in Somalia. Security forces should receive training on human rights and the provision of security to civilians in the context of elections.
- iii. There should be clear delimitation of constituencies and their boundaries.
- iv. We call upon The President, Prime Minister, The State and Members of Parliament should listen to the voice of

the Somali people by implementing one person one vote in the coming elections for legitimacy purposes.

- v. We call upon the international community to fund Somali's National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC), Puntland Electoral Commission (PEC) and civil societies to facilitate adequate preparations in the coming elections.

Further reading:

Walls M (2014), 'Meeting summary: Towards Somali federalism? Insights from Puntland's presidential elections' Chatham House,
<https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Meetings/Meeting%20Transcripts/120214Somali.pdf>

Morland A (2014), 'The state of state-building in Somalia', Irin News, available at www.irinnews.org/report/100745/analysis/the-state-of-state-building-in-somalia 52

Balthasar D (2014), 'Thinking beyond roadmaps in Somalia: Expanding policy options for state building', Center for Strategic and International Studies, available at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/thinking-beyond-roadmaps-somalia>