



SOMALILAND: ELECTION CAMPAIGNS CONCLUDED AHEAD OF 13 NOVEMBER VOTING

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The newsletter from the Election Monitoring Office provides brief description of the political events that occurred in Somaliland. CPA was established to help the countries of Horn of Africa region to build, peace, democracy, human rights and effective governance systems where all citizens are equal. CPA is based in Hargeisa, the Capital of Republic of Somaliland.

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On 13th November 2017, a presidential election will take place where over seven hundred registered citizens will vote for the man who will rule Somaliland the coming five years. Three presidential candidates representing three political parties are competing for the office of the presidency along with vice-presidential running mates. A twenty one days of campaign ended on 10 November. Each party held campaign rallies one day in all over the country. The country now enters 48 hours of calmness before the voters go to the polling stations to cast their votes.

On October 19 2017, the three candidates faced off the first presidential debate, similar debate was faced by the tree vice presidential candidates on October 20, 2017. The tree presidential candidates also met for the final and second debate on November 9, 2017. Those debates was the first ever held in Somaliland.

Generally the campaign was peaceful and there were no major incidents. Sixty international observers will be monitoring the election as well as more than six hundred domestic observers.

The involvement of clan leaders and clan politics in the campaign rallies have been more evident and publicly shown. Clan elders have been touring around the country to campaign for their respective candidates seeking clan alliances and votes based on clannism. The dominance of clan politics in the campaign diminished the role of issues that matter for the public and increased polarization and divisions.

The police stated that they arrested in Hargeisa three people who are accused of paying voter cards from the people. Buying cards have been a concern raised by people. In Sahil region, local government members held a press conference and showed above two hundred cards they collected from the voters and stated that they will use to vote for the ruling party, Kulmiye. The Election Commission has not said anything about this action which is clear violation of the law and could risk the process.

The campaign has been concluded peacefully and smoothly, despite occurrences of minor incidents including raids of offices of political parties by supporters.¹ The National Electoral Commission changed campaign rules after the public complained that nigh time outdoors

¹ <http://www.bbc.com/somali/41786871>

campaigning causes nuisance.² However, the Commission decision was largely ignored and parties continued their night time show off.

The civil society held two press conferences urging the parties to stop using inflammatory and divisive statements. These came after the presidential candidates of Waddani and Kulmiye exchanged heated remarks that were seen to create tension. Circulation fake news was also another major concern during the campaign period. A fake news emanating from social media sites were later cited by mainstream media contrary to the Media Code of Conduct.³ Nevertheless, the media including the state media were seen to respect the code of conduct.

Kalsan TV, a Somali speaking television based in London, was banned to operate in Somaliland after the Information Minister of Somaliland issued a decision revoking the operating license, accusing the television of being against the statehood of Somaliland and broadcasting false news. The decision of the Minister came after Kalsan aired a video clip showing people scuffling at a ruling party campaign rally in Las Anood, Sool region.⁴

On 10th November, the National Electoral Commission ordered the telecommunication companies to shut down social media from 13th November until election results are declared.⁵ The ban of social media causes outcry from international and local human rights organization who argued that the ban is contrary to the constitution and the international human rights laws. The Commission has not elaborated the grounds and legality of the blockage but stated that is done to avoid rumors and fake news.

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahiLATCSQjQ&feature=share>

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=Y6IPXB9RPL4&app=desktop>

⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_BZ9nfHP80&feature=share

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58k1vfuSvww>