



# BULLETIN

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## COMMENTARY

Editors: Jacek Foks (Editor-in-Chief), Łukasz Adamski, Mateusz Gniazdowski, Beata Górka-Winter,  
Leszek Jesień, Agnieszka Kondek (Executive Editor), Łukasz Kulesa, Marek Madej, Ernest Wyciskiewicz

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### Sudanese General Election

by Patrycja Sasnal

*The winner of April's elections in Sudan is incumbent president Omar al-Bashir. This gives his effectively dictatorship government greater legitimacy, but at the same time postpones the danger of civil war breaking out again between the northern and southern parts of the country until the referendum on division of the country is held in 2011.*

Between 11 and 15 April this year democratic elections were held in Sudan for the first time in 24 years. They were a requirement under the peace agreement of 2005, which ended the civil war that started in 1983 between the northern and southern parts of the country. In the complicated election process the Sudanese elected a president, members of the national and state assemblies, governors and other local representatives. The opposition and foreign and local observers reported a high number of irregularities in the voting, but both in Sudan and in the international arena the results will probably be acknowledged as valid.

On 26 April the National Elections Commission announced present President Omar al-Bashir the victor in the presidential elections. He won 68% of the vote, and 21% of votes were cast in favor of his main opponent, Yasir Arman, who personally boycotted the elections, like the other most prominent candidates. The head of the autonomous Southern Sudan will remain incumbent president Salva Kiir—leader of the movement in favor of the southern part of the country breaking away, and who at the same time will take up office as the country's Vice President.

President Al-Bashir—the military dictator since the coup in 1989 and for whom the International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for war crimes in Darfur—gained greater government legitimacy thanks to voters. This will strengthen his position in the country and the region, which might lead to efforts on his part to reduce the international pressure for him to face trial before the ICC. The League of Arab States and the African Union were pleased with the results because they mean that sudden changes in Sudan that might trigger another civil war will not take place in the near future.

The results of the parliamentary elections reflect the balance of power that was defined by the presidential elections. Al-Bashir's party (the National Congress) will once again create a government with Kiir's party (Sudan People's Liberation Movement), with which it differs on the issue of the status of Darfur and oil fields. Meanwhile one of the main challenges facing the new government will be to stabilize the situation in Dafur. It is doubtful however whether President Al-Bashir will aim to achieve that goal by peaceful means.

The elections have major implications for the results of the referendum planned for January 2011 on the independence of the Christian and animist south from the Muslim north and creation of a new country in Africa. Break away supporter Salva Kiir gained 93% of votes in that part of the country, which means that in 2011 Sudan most probably will break up. The referendum will be a serious test of stability in the country and skills in resolving key issues, i.e. demarcation of a new border and distribution of profit from oil fields.

The disproportion in the distribution of profits from the oil fields located on the border between the north and the south of Sudan has already been one of the causes of civil war—the north of the country, which controls export of crude oil, derived the south, where most of Sudan's deposits (approximately 70%) are, of the financial benefits. Under a peace agreement of 2005, each of the parts of the country receives half of the profits from their exploitation. In the event the country splits in two the demarcation line could be a cause of another conflict, because as a result the north would lose a substantial portion of its oil fields. Another unknown is the future form of Salva Kiir's government. It has been alleged that he used intimidation tactics on the population during the April elections. It is unlikely that South Sudan will have the infrastructure and be politically prepared for sovereignty.