

as well as 125 members to the National Assembly, from within its ranks. The National Congress, of over 4,000 members, is made up of representatives of all walks of life in Sudan, who are elected at a local, regional, state, and, finally, national, level. The remaining 275 members of the National Assembly, are to be elected directly through popular vote.

President Al-Bashir's decree laid out the modalities for the elections. Most striking are the qualifications for candidacy. One can run for the National Assembly, if one "a) is Sudanese; b) has attained twenty-one years of age; c) is of a sound mind; d) reads and writes well (is literate); e) has not been convicted within the last seven years of a crime involving dignity and honesty." As for the Presidency, one may qualify as a candidate who "i) is a Sudanese; ii) has attained forty years of age; iii) is sane; iv) has never been convicted of a crime involving honesty, moral turpitude."

What this boils down to, is an open challenge to the opposition, whether in Sudan or abroad. Former President Gafaar Mohamed Nimeiri, now speaking for the opposition in Cairo, could return and run for office. So could rebel military leader John Garang. So, too, could Sadiq al Mahdi, whose government was removed from power by General Al-Bashir in 1989. Al Mahdi, who lives in Khartoum, is said to be considering whether to run or not. Unlike Garang and Nimeiri, Al Mahdi does have a political base of support. According to one political analyst in Khartoum, "Al Mahdi certainly has his people locally, who can feel the pulse of the population." His estimation was, that even though Al Mahdi enjoyed certain support, he could not be sure of victory. If he were to run for office and lose, that would signal the end of his career. If, however, he were not to seize the opportunity presented by elections, that would raise doubts regarding his seriousness.

More than one political figure close to the government, has expressed the view that the government, too, is accepting a challenge by going for elections which will be "real." The elections which took place at the beginning of January, within the National Congress, were hotly contested. Now, parliamentary and Presidential elections could be just as close.

As the *Economist* and *Financial Times* articles indicate, the London-based financial oligarchy has no intention of allowing such real elections to take place, or, if they do, of letting them be recognized as such. Both articles are sending out the message, that such elections are a farce. The Sudanese have issued invitations to all those international bodies which are routinely called upon, to monitor elections, from the Carter Center in Atlanta, to the European Parliament, the International Parliamentary Union, the Arab League, and the United Nations. Thus far, the Arab League is the only association to have responded; it will send one delegate, a far cry from what is required. The European Parliament, which sent 314 observers to the elections in Algeria in December, which were notoriously rigged, has not responded. Whether former President Jimmy Carter will lead a delegation there or not, as he did in the case of the Palestinian elections, is an open question.

Interview: A. Moneim Z. Nahas

Sudan prepares first elections since 1955

Mr. A. Moneim Z. Nahas is a retired deputy chief justice, who now heads the General Elections Authority (GEA) in Sudan. He gave the following interview to Muriel Mirak Weissbach on Jan. 23, 1996.

EIR: Can you tell us about the upcoming elections?

Nahas: This is the first time there will be general elections in Sudan, since 1955. Members to the National Assembly and the President will be elected directly by popular vote; 275 National Assembly members will be elected directly through their election districts. The remaining 125 have been elected indirectly, through the National Congress. The National Congress members, who met in the first days of January, are elected by the state congresses, which are elected by the local congresses, so this represented grass-roots assemblies. There is a legislative body in each state, similar to the American system. In Sudan, we have 26 states, in each of which is a state government, and a legislative body. This decentralization is one solution for the south, where there are now 10 states. Last year, the state assemblies were elected indirectly, i.e., through the state congress, and also directly. Now we are in the process of completing the election process, by voting for members of the National Assembly and President.

EIR: What is the institution which you lead?

Nahas: The GEA is made up of permanent members, appointed by the President. These are people with experience; for example, I was deputy chief justice for five years, another was a member of the judiciary for 35 years. There is a former interior minister, a former general of the Armed Forces, a career politician who was governor of Equatoria for many years, a woman who was assistant minister of education, ministers of local governments, and senior administration officers. The GEA has its own authority, its own budget.

We have just been in a meeting with the representatives of the state government here, who will be supervising elections at the state level. Together with their subcommittees, and administrative officers, they will be arranging the polls and supervising, then counting the votes, and announcing the results. The ballots will carry not only names of candidates, but also symbols, to overcome the problems posed by illiteracy.

In our meeting, we have been setting the timetable for the

vote. At the beginning of February, we will be publishing the lists of registered voters; there will be time allotted for persons to appeal, if they find their names are missing. Then we will publish the list of candidates, again leaving time for appeals. Then, the final candidates' list will appear, and the campaign will officially open. This will all be financed through the government. We want to guarantee equal access to all candidates, to make sure that the population knows the candidates. The campaign will be short, about 10-12 days. Six weeks after the voters' lists have been published, the elections will begin, about mid-March.

EIR: How many candidates will there be?

Nahas: As many as wish to run. The requirements for candidacy are very simple. One must be a Sudanese citizen, 21 (for the National Assembly) or 40 years of age (for the Presidency), of sound mind and body, and without any criminal record. All candidates will have equal access to radio, television, and press, they will all be able to hold rallies. In the past, candidates depended on personal financial resources and on party backing. There were limits posed on campaign expenditures, and each candidate was required to present an audited budget of his expenses, but this was not adhered to.

EIR: Given the continuing war in the south, what are the perspectives for elections being carried out in an orderly fashion there?

Nahas: In the western Gazhal, in the Upper Nile and Juba, there are problems, but when we introduced the permanent group to them, they participated. Seven (of the ten) states have already sent in their lists. It is very important for them to be able to vote. . . .

EIR: Will there be observers at the polling places?

Nahas: By law, there must be observers in the so-called domestic committees. These are made up of members of the Supreme Court, and former senior civil service officials. They must make sure every citizen has a right to vote, and must secure the ballot boxes. The domestic observers will stay until the results are announced. The government wants international observers as well, and has sent out invitations to all relevant regional and international bodies. For example, the OAU [Organization of African Unity], the Arab League, the U.N. electoral unit, the EU [European Union], etc.

EIR: How are members of the opposition responding to the elections?

Nahas: The opposition is mostly outside the country, and is split. Had they so desired, they could have taken part in the state elections, and could have taken over control of the central councils, but they did not. They seem to be aware of their standing among the population. If any opposition leader wants to run for office, his candidacy will certainly be accepted. The government is confident. . . .

Jordan

Cabinet reshuffle portends confrontation

by Our Special Correspondent

Anyone who was caught unawares by the Jordanian government reshuffle announced on Feb. 5, has only himself to blame. If there had been no other hints of such a major political shift, there was the Shubeilat affair, to send a loud and clear signal, that something big was afoot.

The Shubeilat affair concerns a former independent Islamist member of parliament, currently on trial in Amman, for *lèse-majesté*, and shaking public confidence in the economy and currency of the kingdom. Laith Shubeilat's crime, was to criticize the manner in which King Hussein has been pushing through the "normalization" process with Israel, and the economic liberalization policy which the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank have attached to that process. Although Shubeilat's rejection of the peace agreement with Israel on ideological grounds, may not be shared universally, there is certainly a majority of the Jordanian population which has serious misgivings about aspects of the new arrangements in the region.

The main bones of contention are three: economic policy, relations with Israel (and the United States), and posture toward Iraq. Contrary to promises made at the time of the 1994 treaty with Israel, the "peace dividend" has not been forthcoming, in terms of improved living standards for the population. Instead of vast infrastructure projects, the country has embarked on a series of tourism-oriented projects. To attract foreign investment, Jordan has obeyed the recommendations of the IMF and World Bank, lifting subsidies, protective tariffs, and controls on foreign ownership of land. The rush into privatization, has led to increases in the price of basic goods, creating hardship for the working man and woman.

What has irked even loyalists, supportive of peace with Israel, is the pace and manner in which the "normalization" has been driven forward. Jordanians complain that they feel their country has become a "protectorate" of Israel, and of the United States. Recent military agreements announced on the occasion of U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry's visit to the region, for the delivery of F-16s and for training of Jordanian forces, have raised suspicions that the kingdom is being groomed to take over security responsibilities for large parts of the region.