



Community Empowerment for Progress Organization

Elections Domestic Observation

**Principle Findings
for
Pre-Elections Domestic
Observation in South Sudan**

[Handwritten signature]
2024



March, 2026

Executive Summary

South Sudan has multiple times disregarded holding national general elections due to limited political commitment to elections. The leadership invested funds for aiding military wars but not for holding elections as scheduled for December 2026. Evidences are growing for the potential postponement of the scheduled elections for December 2026, and this will be the fifth postponement of national elections.

The factors that contributed to those multiple postponements of the country's elections since 2021 have to do with “less interest in elections” among some of the influential leaders close to the president. They strategically invested on facilitation of military confrontation between SSPDF and SPLA-IO on one hand and dragging adequate and timely release of funding to the national Elections Commission and other institutions with mandates associated with, likely the National Constitutional Review Commission (NCRC).

Until today, the leadership of the National Elections Commission has confirmed only received of 4%¹ of the elections' overall budget. It is clear that, without adequate and timely funding for the National Elections Commission by the end of April 2026, the likelihood of the country holding elections by December 2026 is slim. 22nd June, 2026, as a key deadline in the electoral schedule is approaching too fast, the leadership of the country, if they really want elections to be conducted in December 2026, then funding should be released to the National Election Commission urgently within March or April, 2026

Therefore, the time for preparation of the South Sudan elections scheduled for December 2026 is getting closer without any concrete steps for creating a good environment for the holding of the elections in a peaceful, credible, and fair manner. There is a high possibility of postponement of the elections rather than the genuine conduct of the elections as per the date of this pre-election's domestic observation brief report.

Inclusion, the leadership of the country has to be honest with the citizens on their political pronouncement for the country's readiness for holding elections as scheduled for December 2026. The failure of the country not to hold elections primarily will be directed to the Ministry of Finance, which failed to respond to the multiple directives² of the President on remittances of funds to the National Election Commission, and some influential leaders around the president who are fans of misdirecting funds, especially for financing war more than election

¹ https://www.eyeradio.org/elections-commission-says-only-4-of-funds-released-for-december-elections/#google_vignette

² <https://www.facebook.com/eyeradioss/posts/president-salva-kiir-has-directed-the-ministry-of-finance-to-release-funds-to-su/1359568969512311/>



priority. This recent promise from the Minister of Finance on the release of funds³ for elections, if it passes by April 2026 than chances of the country holding elections in December 2026 are limited

1. Brief Background

This report reflects CEPO's pre-election domestic observations on the country's preparation for the elections scheduled for December 2026, in accordance with the provisions of the 2018 peace agreement (R-ARCSS). The proposed elections were delayed multiple times due to inadequate funding and political commitment to elections since 2021. The rescheduled elections for December 2026 are likely to be delayed too due to the same reasons as in the past, which are centered on the delay of the release of funds from the government to the national elections commission.

Some of the influential leaders who were close to the president, who just used the call for elections in December 2026 as a strategy of managing public pressure for demanding elections, are still not ready for the country to hold elections as scheduled for December 2026. They are very interested in winning another extension of the transitional period. Their tactics currently are waging military confrontations and, from time to time, championing the establishment of different committees on the same subject matter of the country, holding inclusive political dialogue.

Any mismanagement of the scheduled December 2026 elections will be a big grave mistake that will sustain the culture of military approaches for resolving political misunderstandings across the country. The level of political grievances and dissatisfaction among the political elites across political establishments in the country is deeper and more bitter. This requires really genuine, credible, fair, and peaceful holding of elections as the only option of a non-violent way for the transfer of power in an honorable and peaceful manner from one group to another.

2. Methodology and the aim of the Report

The report content was generated through desk review and a few selective key informants' interviews from the public and public institutions. The desk review involved media articles and interviews published online and in print media outlets. Other documents that were used during the desk review were reports of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC). This period report aims to bring to the attention of the leaders critical limited issues

³ <https://www.eyeradio.org/finance-minister-pledges-support-for-elections-commission-preparations/>



that are associated with the delay for the country to hold elections scheduled for December 2026, and who is primarily to be blamed for the delays?

3. Key Finding Principles

This period of Jan-March, 2026, pre-elections domestic observation key finding principles are centered on the following matters:

- a) *The time for the possible holding of South Sudan's December 2026 elections is running out or getting closer daily without genuine evidence for success*
- b) *The electoral deadline of the 22nd June, 2026, is posing a potential constitutional and government legitimacy crisis*
- c) *Tactics for winning further extension of the current transitional period in the face of the decision or promises for "No more extension of the transitional period and postponement of December 2026 elections" is working*

These three key findings clearly demonstrate that the country will not hold elections in December 2026 if the leadership of the country fails to invest funds for the elections and immediately stops the tactics of waging expensive military confrontation and the act of fostering political splits among the party's signatories to the 2018 peace agreement.

The leadership of the Ministry of Finance and some influential political leaders around the president are primarily to be blamed for any failure of the country in holding elections in December 2026. The multiple promises of the president to the public that elections will be held as scheduled for December 2026 are proof not real to the public by those leaders identified as the primary actors/leaders to be blamed for the country's failure to hold elections as the president promised the public

4. Details of the key finding principles

The three key findings are the current drivers of the process for preparing the country for holding any form of elections. *The BIG QUESTION (what type of elections in December 2026)* is yet to be answered by the national elections commission, which is inadequately funded by the government. It seems that a good number of leaders around the president are fans of the country holding elections, although they do make public statements that the country is going forward with the planning and preparation for holding elections in December 2026. This domestic pre-election observation report attempted to provide specific findings on key aspects of the country's preparation for the proposed elections in December 2026. The key finding principles are below;



- a) **The time for possible elections to be held in December 2026 is running out daily. This is due to;**
- i. The delay of funding for the National Elections Commission (NEC) activities.
 - ii. The continuous expensive military confrontations between SSPDF and SPLA-IO are absolutely undermining the pre-elections polling day preparations
 - iii. The strategy of fostering political split among the party's signatories to the 2018 peace agreement
- b) **The electoral deadline of the 22nd June, 2026, is posing a potential constitutional and government legitimacy crisis**
- i. The final voters' vetting registration list will not be ready for publication
 - ii. The political parties and independent candidates will be ready to launch their political campaigns
 - iii. This will be the first major violation of the electoral schedule task for December 2026
- c) **Tactic for further extension of the transitional period, besides the promises for no more extension of the transitional period and postponement of the December 2026 elections, is working**
- i. The actions of establishing more committees on the same subject matter of inclusive political parties among the signatories of the R-ARCSS are proof.

Evidences

- i. National Transitional Committee: In June 2025, South Sudan's President Salva Kiir reconstituted and expanded the high-level committee responsible for implementing the 2018 peace deal to 31 members⁴. The expansion has not delivered any concrete results
- ii. Formation of the Elections-related Dialogue committee: President Salva Kiir, on 30th Jan. 2026, formed a high-level committee⁵ to lead dialogue on the December 2026 elections, in a move aimed at building consensus among political stakeholders ahead of the anticipated polls.
- iii. Formation of Inter-party dialogue committee: March 7, 2026, President Inter-Party Dialogue Committee⁶ Launches Preparations for 2026 Elections. This

⁴ <https://www.eyeradio.org/kiir-reconstitutes-peace-committee-appoints-31-members/>

⁵ <https://www.sudanspost.com/kiir-forms-committee-to-lead-dialogue-on-elections/>

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/densonjuniors1407/posts/inter-party-dialogue-committee-launches-preparations-for-2026-electionsmarch-7-2/1003879721966425/>



committee held its first meeting with a focus on the work plan for the conduct of political parties' dialogue⁷ in March 2026.

5. General Remarks

These general remarks are to set reflections on the underlying factors that are likely to drag the process and preparation for the country holding elections in December 2026.

- a) The political commitment and will among some influential leaders close to the president in the government for the elections is very low or not available
- b) Funding war more than elections is a clear indicator that some leaders are planning for a transitional period, further extension
- c) Without finalizing voter registration and status of political parties between April-May, 2026, elections are likely to be delayed again
- d) The continuous government pronouncement for elections is not real, but it is a strategy for managing public, regional, and international actors' pressure
- e) The use of military confrontation between SSPDF and SPLA-IO, including the aiding of splits among the parties are tactic designed for generating reasons for further extension of the transitional period
- f) The recent move on the formation of a committee on inter-party dialogue is an aim to undermine the resolution number 6 of the AU C-5 plus summit⁸ declaration on the political transitional process in South Sudan.
- g) The financial status of the national Elections Commission is very weak and below expectations for performing activities at pre-elections polling stages, such as voter registration, among others
- h) Finally, South Sudan is likely to fail in holding the scheduled December 2026 elections due to a lack of political commitment, honesty, and seriousness

6. Conclusion

South Sudan elections still have choices for possible holding if the political leadership can demonstrate a serious commitment that will be described with adequate allocation of funding to the NEC and other election-related institutions. The speed at which the time is getting closer for the conduct of the December 2026 elections is disturbing and stressful for the national

⁷ https://www.eyeradio.org/committee-on-political-dialogue-discusses-work-plan-in-first-meeting/#google_vignette

⁸ <https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/declaration-of-the-african-union-high-level-ad-hoc-committee-for-south-sudan-c5-plus-summit-on-the-margins-of-39th-ordinary-session-of-the-assembly-of-african-union-heads-of-state-and-government-addis-abaaba-ethiopia-15-february-2026>



institutions that have a direct mandate on the conduct of the elections as scheduled. The actions of the leadership and allies of the top leadership of the country are demonstrating discouraging moves that seem not to be embracing successful planning for the conduct of the elections as scheduled for December 2026. The best option for the success of the scheduled elections in South Sudan is holding inclusive political dialogue among the rightful signatories to the R-ARCSS and agreeing on practical decisions for the creation of good enough or agreed-upon conditions for the elections. This inclusive political dialogue should embrace the role of the African Union in accordance with the resolution number six of the AU C-5 plus declarations.⁹ as quoted *“DIRECT the AU Commission to coordinate and collaborate with the relevant institutions of RTGoNU to develop a clear roadmap for elections and to provide technical and financial support to create a conducive environment for the organization of the free, credible, and inclusive elections in December 2026, inclusive of all citizens eligible to participate in the elections.”*

The growing fear for the AU C-5 plus among some of the influential leaders close to the president is likely to generate tactics that will undermine the government's attention on the potential assistance from the African Union

⁹ <https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/declaration-of-the-african-union-high-level-ad-hoc-committee-for-south-sudan-c5-plus-summit-on-the-margins-of-39th-ordinary-session-of-the-assembly-of-african-union-heads-of-state-and-government-addis-ababa-ethiopia-15-february-2026>

