

South Sudan Official Warns People Not Ready For January Vote

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Photo: AFP

A Sudanese opposition supporter shouts slogans as protesters wave the flag of Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) during a demonstration against the government in Khartoum, 07 Dec 2009

The Chief Coordinator for the International Campaign Countdown to South Sudan's referendum has expressed concerns about what he described as the referendum commission's ill-preparedness to organize the scheduled 9th January vote.

Ambassador John Andruga Duku, south Sudan's former envoy, told VOA there are reasons to believe that Sudan's ruling National Congress Party (NCP) is undermining the referendum commission's effort to organize next year's referendum.

"We need a robust civic education to prepare the population to understand what they needed to do in this referendum. Because the referendum in south Sudan is a matter of life and death for the people of south Sudan, there is no second chance," he said.

Analysts say the referendum commission seems to be running out of time to carry out civic educational campaigns ahead of the referendum.

Officials of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) have accused the NCP of a calculated ploy to undermine the upcoming referendum - a charge the ruling party denies.



AFP

Salva Kiir (L) VP and President of South-Sudan in Nairobi (File)

An official of the referendum commission recently called for a possible postponement of the January vote saying there wasn't enough time to organize the referendum.

But, Ambassador Duku called on the international community to put more pressure on President Omar Hassan al-Bashir and his ruling NCP to guarantee the referendum is not derailed.

"We also appeal to the international community to release the necessary resources required. We are very grateful to the United States of America for pledging \$60 million for this process. But, this money remains just a figure. It is not filtering down to the people on the ground to do the actual work," Ambassador Duku said.

As part of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between President Bashir's government and the SPLM, the NCP will appoint the chairman of the referendum commission leaving the SPLM to appoint the general secretary.

But, Ambassador Duku said the NCP reneged on the agreement after appointing both the chairman, as well as the general secretary of the commission to the chagrin of the SPLM.

Senior officials of the NCP have insisted that the ruling party is committed to the full implementation of the rest of the provisions of the CPA