



[The Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt declared a narrow victory in the first round of a hotly contested constitutional referendum, even as activists' reports of fraud and calls for a rerun renewed the nation's political impasse. The Brotherhood's political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party, said Sunday its own unofficial exit polls showed 56.5% of voters cast ballots in favor of the draft constitution on Saturday. The National Salvation Front, the main opposition group, demanded the electoral authorities consider calls for a rerun. But the group didn't contest the result and called for a "no" vote in the next and final round on Saturday instead of boycotting it.]

BURUNDI :

RWANDA :

Rwanda Diaspora Petition Obama Over DRC

By Edwin Musoni/The New Times/15 December 2012

Rwandans living in the US have petitioned President Barack Obama over the Eastern DRC crisis.

The petition asks the US President to 'thoroughly evaluate the current conflict in the DRC, within the context of its roots in ethno-nationalist conflict, including the divisive governance of DRC which for the last several decades has provided safe haven to genocidaires and their sympathisers.'

In a letter dated December 11, 2012, they explain to Obama the origin of the Congo crisis and accuse the international community, including the United Nations, of orchestrating a propaganda campaign against Rwanda.

The war-torn eastern DRC early this year again plunged in another crisis following the creation of a new mutinous rebel group, the M23, that accuses the Kinshasa leadership of violating a March 23,

2009 peace agreement.

The letter, signed by Yvette Nyombayire Rugasaguhunga on behalf of the Rwandan Community in North America, also called urged Washington DC to work with involved parties to implement the Kampala communiqué, an initiative led by leaders of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).

The group also asked President Obama to hold the concerned parties accountable for breaking the March 23, 2009 peace deal, setting a solid foundation to implement the outcome of the ongoing talks between the government of DRC and M23.

In June, Rwanda was accused of supporting M23, a group of mutineers that has been at war with the Congolese army (FARDC) in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

In response, Rwanda submitted a comprehensive rebuttal to the allegations by a UN Group of Experts.

"The deeply rooted, and well-orchestrated propaganda campaign against Rwanda obliges us, as concerned citizens of Rwanda and legal residents of the United States of America and Canada, to faithfully defend our country by adding our voice to many others that strive to bring the truth out in a quest to restore the image of Rwanda and to pursue justice, peace and security in DRC and the Great Lakes region...So far the international community has shown no interest in investigating further to fully understand the ongoing crisis in DRC. Instead, Rwanda was rendered guilty without trial," reads part of the petition.

In the letter, the members expressed dismay over a decision by some donor countries to withhold the disbursement of budget support to Rwanda, based on the dubious allegations.

"We would like to remind you that Rwanda has been consistently praised for its proficient utilisation of foreign aid as well as its overall efficient fiscal management, which have resulted in successful reconstructive efforts in the last 18 years," the group said.

Over the last five years, Rwanda has lifted over one million people out of poverty.

"Cutting or freezing aid at this moment will not resolve the crisis in the DRC," they said.

They also explained that the roots of the cycle of violence in the DRC lay in the original ethno-nationalist conflict that has plagued the entire region since colonial days.

It said it is a continuation of the anti-Tutsi propaganda campaign that led to the Genocide against Tutsi in 1994 that claimed the lives of more than one million people in the most inhuman ways while the International community stood by.

The letter, which is also copied to the Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, adds that learning from the country's history, the group advises the involved parties to help Congolese create an environment where all its citizens will be guaranteed equal rights.

"We thus remain committed to work with any party vested to restore peace and security and welcome you to join Rwanda in this effort by restoring human rights and international law for all by addressing this crisis from the root causes of the conflict," reads the petition.

Rwanda: Global Energy Giant Eyes Rwanda

By Frank Kanyesigye/The New Times/17 December 2012

General Electric (GE), an American manufacturing firm, has expressed interest to invest in Rwanda's infrastructure, power generation, healthcare and aviation industry.

Speaking to The New Times in an exclusive interview, recently, President and CEO of General Electric (GE) Africa, Jay W. Ireland said that Rwanda has a big potential for investment.

"We are interested in investing in this beautiful country that is growing so fast on the Africa continent when it comes to economic development strategies," he said.

Ireland stated that, his company is still in negotiations with the government of Rwanda to start its work but the negotiations were still internal.

GE is involved in healthcare, transportation, oil and gas exploration, power generation and aviation in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Angola, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Mozambique among others.

Recently the US based company signed an agreement with the Kenyan government to modernise Kenya's transport, health and aviation industries.

GE has also invested US\$300m to US\$400m in renewable energy through the Kipeto wind generation plant in Kajiado in Kenya.

The project will produce 100MW of power in its first phase with 250MW projected for subsequent phases.

RDC CONGO :

UGANDA :

Uganda will not tolerate promotion of homosexuality

Dec 17, 2012/BY Pascal Kwesiga and Mary Karugaba /newvision.co.ug

President Yoweri Museveni has said that Uganda will not tolerate the promotion of homosexuality and warned pro-gay activists against such activities.

"I have been telling these people (pro gay activists) that nobody will kill or prosecute them for being homosexual, but there should be no promotion of homosexuality," Museveni said Sunday at the installation of new Archbishop of Church of Uganda, Most. Rev. Stanley Ntagali, at the St. Paul's Cathedral, Namirembe in capital Kampala.

Museveni said he recently met with the US ambassador to Uganda and told him that the country would not allow pro-homosexuality activists to continue with their promotional campaign of homosexuality.

"I told him I have never held rallies to even promote heterosexual issues. The problem is promoting, you hear people holding conferences to promote homosexuality as if it's a good thing," the President added as the Christians inside and outside the church chanted 'Amen'.

Museveni said he had explained to the American ambassador of the existing cultural clash between the people from the Western countries and Africa where sex is an issue that is not discussed in public.

"I told him that I have been married to my wife for 39 years, but I have never kissed her in public and in my house before the children. If I did it I would lose elections and you know I am not about to accept that idea of losing elections," the President added.

Museveni caused laughter when he said that he hoped that European clergy in attendance were in support of the stance of the Anglican Church in Uganda against homosexuality.

"I hope these (white bishops) are your partners in the struggle against homosexuality and I commend the church for the fight against this practice. There are some people who have been wasting our time," he said.

The President said before the whites came into contact with Africans, there were two prominent kings and a chief who practiced homosexuality and no one was bothered about their sexuality because they didn't promote or encourage others to follow suit.

"I knew of two kings and one chief who practiced homosexuality. They were not persecuted, discriminated or killed. The chief actually did very good work but homosexuality was not promoted. People would whisper and ignore, the issue now is promotion as if it's good, that we can't accept," Museveni said.

He said he was worried about the current HIV/AIDS prevalence rate that has increased tremendously in Uganda that was a model country in the world when the prevalence rate went down considerably in the 1990's.

Museveni observed that the drop in the HIV prevalence due to government's vigorous campaign promoting abstinence, faithfulness and condom use.

Museveni noted that conflicting messages such as circumcision are to blame for the rising HIV prevalence.

He urged the church leaders to embark on a campaign to guide the young people on how to avoid contracting the disease.

The President donated a V-X land cruiser to Ntagali.

Uganda: Civil Society Coalition On Oil Hits Back At Museveni Jibes

By Ronald Musoke/The Independent (Kampala)/15 December 2012

The Civil Society Coalition on Oil (CSCO), a group of Ugandan NGOs following the oil and gas sector have labeled President Museveni's accusations that the NGOs and some MPs were representing 'foreign interests' during the just concluded debate on the Petroleum (Exploration, Development and Production) Bill, 2012 as diversionary politics.

President Museveni addressed Parliament on Dec.13 in a special session and criticized some MPs

and civil society groups for opposing some clauses (especially Clause 9) in the Upstream Bill and accused them of undermining Uganda's benefit on behalf of some anonymous foreign interests.

Museveni told Parliament that, particularly, the Advocates Coalition on Development and Environment (ACODE), a Kampala-based policy think tank and member of the CSCO spent up to Shs 1.5 billion on one of many workshops, where according to Museveni, some of the 'leaders in the politics of Uganda' were paid Shs one million each and facilitators Shs. 5 million. He wondered where all that money came from and in whose interests it served.

But ACODE's Godber Tumushabe responded during a media briefing on Dec. 14, saying they do not consider such facilitation paid to MPs or other ordinary Ugandans who participate in such events as a bribe as Museveni tried to insinuate.

"In any case, the Government agencies pay similar facilitation for participants who attend workshops and other events," he said.

He added that although it is common knowledge that Ugandan civil society organizations get funding from development partners which include bilateral donors and foundations in both Europe and USA, the same donors have supported government in many different ways including support to the recovery and development process in northern Uganda, and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

However, Tumushabe noted, whereas the civil society organizations use the funds from donors as judiciously as possible to ensure that the voices of Ugandan men, women, the youth and children are heard in policy making circles, in the legislature and other civic platforms, the same funds (received by the government from donors) have been grossly mismanaged by government officials as is the case with the OPM scandals and Global fund for HIV/AIDS.

In a statement read by Irene Sekyaana, the chairperson of CSCO said it is misleading for anybody to suggest that Ugandan civil society is peddling foreign interests, adding that if that were the case, the same would be said of the Government since it receives funding from the same foreign donors.

The CSCO which is a group of over 20 NGOs went on the record saying the civil society in Uganda have vested interests in the oil sector, noting that, that interest is to ensure that the governance of oil resources is based on transparency and has inbuilt checks and balances to ensure Uganda avoids the oil curse.

Uganda: Umeme Now Ready to List in Kenya

15 December 2012/The Independent (Kampala)

Umeme Limited, Uganda's sole power distributor, has won regulatory approval to list its shares on the Kenyan stock exchange in a bid to improve trading in its stock.

The cross-listing of all 1.62 million Umeme shares on the Nairobi Securities Exchange will contribute to the goal of the five-nation East African Community (EAC) common market to integrate their financial markets.

The EAC comprises Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

The Nairobi Securities Exchange is the largest and most liquid stock market in the EAC, providing better trading opportunities for Umeme's shareholders, 46 percent of which are foreigners.

Several Kenyan firms like Kenya Commercial Bank, East African Breweries and Kenya Airways have cross-listed their shares on the Tanzanian and Ugandan markets.

Umeme, which completed its initial public offering last month, will be the first EAC firm to cross-list in Nairobi, after winning approval from the Kenyan market regulator on Dec. 13.

Officials said the Umeme Initial Public Offering which closed on Nov. 7 in Uganda was oversubscribed by over 36% by all categories of investors. They [officials] from Stanbic bank Uganda-the transaction advisor, African Alliance Uganda-the lead sponsoring broker said more than the 622, 378, 000 shares on offer were applied for by investors in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, and internationally.

They said there were over 4, 300 retail applications in total, which was a good indicator that the IPO was well received by the general public in the three-week period. They said the Ugandan retail segment applied for shares worth about Shs35billion and the East African investors applied for shares worth over Shs100billion.

SOUTH AFRICA :

S. Africa Says Won't Be Reckless on Mine Taxes

December 17, 2012/Dow Jones Newswires/foxbusiness.com

BLOEMFONTEIN, South Africa--The South African government won't be "reckless" if the ruling party makes a policy decision during a leadership conference this week to raise mine taxes, the deputy minister in the Finance Ministry said Monday.

The African National Congress kicked off a major leadership conference Sunday to elect new leaders and set party policy, which will form the basis of government policy given the ANC's majority in parliament.

At the top of the conference agenda is how government can benefit more from its mineral resources. South Africa is the world's largest platinum producer and a major gold and coal miner. The ANC wants to use the mining sector to help reduce the big gap between the country's rich and poor.

Members of the ANC policy committee said mine nationalization won't happen but additional taxes and partial nationalization for minerals deemed vital to economic development could occur.

"We've never taken a tax policy on the hoof," deputy minister Nhlanhla Nene told a business breakfast on the sidelines of the conference.

"If anything comes out of the ANC conference...we will go through consultation. I assure you we won't be reckless," Mr. Nene said.

Government assurances have so far done little to assure mining companies as many have been cutting back on spending, with some selling assets.

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South Africa Since Mandela

By BILL KELLER/nytimes.com/December 16, 2012

IN 1994, shortly after Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the first president of all South Africans, one of the local newspapers ran an interview with him under a huge, boldface headline: “MANDELA: I’M NOT ‘MESSIAH.’ ” That this would be considered banner news testified to the degree of myth and the unreality of expectations that attended the man.

Mandela is now 94 and hospitalized, recovering from gallstone surgery and a lung infection, the latest echo of the tuberculosis he suffered during his years in the dusty contagion of prison on Robben Island. He may linger in the hospital, or he may be discharged to continue his largely oblivious old age at the retirement house he built in his native Transkei. Either way, this is an apt time to think a few thoughts about what Mandela bequeathed his people, for better and for worse.

Mandela’s most valuable gift to South Africa was a culture of patient compromise. He did not triumph over apartheid by spending 27 years in prison and then cashing in his moral superiority. He triumphed by spending 27 years in prison and then doing an elaborate deal with the men who put him there — a deal that temporarily protected the jobs, the lands and the industrial wealth of the white minority, a deal that made the disenfranchised majority wait patiently for their reparations, a deal that minimized the flight of white capital and expertise and averted a prolonged blood bath. He was, in short, a politician, of a sort that was rare in the African National Congress then and is in woefully short supply today, here and in Washington: a politician with high purpose, a clear eye on the future, an immense generosity of spirit and deep reserves of discipline and resourcefulness.

Returning to South Africa, I was not much surprised to find that this blessed and abused country has fallen short of the promise of Mandela’s days. That is not Mandela’s fault, but it is part of his legacy. For what he left in his wake was not really a government yet, or even a genuine political party, but a liberation movement, with the mentality, customs and culture of constant struggle.

History tells us that such liberation movements do not so easily make the transition to stable democracies. Think of the shabby heritage of the Castros, the tyranny of Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe, the long nightmare of the Bolsheviks or Kwame Nkrumah’s descent into authoritarian rule in Ghana. Examples abound. Even our own revolution required a civil war to settle things. Liberation movements are held together and defined by what they are against. The African National Congress, which is marking its centenary year, was from its early days a conglomeration of interests and ideologies, from rainbow-coalition idealists to black nationalists who chanted for the blood of white farmers, from Communists to Westernizers, from guilt-ridden white liberals to power-hungry opportunists. It had exile factions and in-country factions, prison factions and underground factions. It was inevitable that, once the shared enemy of white oppression was conquered, they would fall to quarreling over the direction and the spoils.

Liberation movements — operating surreptitiously and conspiratorially — thrive on discipline and suspicion, and punish deviation or dissent. The A.N.C. in its exile ran some camps that make the torture scenes in “Zero Dark Thirty” seem benign. Mandela, to be sure, sometimes strayed from the collective will to show unusual initiative. Most important, while still in prison he sensed the vulnerability of the white rulers and opened preliminary discussions without consulting his A.N.C. comrades; he was sure they would disapprove. But he remained a party man at heart — to such an extent that he let the party elders choose as his first deputy president and successor a man, Thabo Mbeki, whom Mandela did not much like or trust. (A friend who would know tells me that after retiring, Mandela took sensitive conversations outdoors because he believed Mbeki had bugged his home.)

Mbeki was not as awful a president as the retouched history of his time suggests. He expanded a safety net to a lot of desperate people, and contributed to a first-world business climate that made outside investors feel welcome. But ultimately he fell into a kind of paranoid isolation — the most horrifying symptom being his insistence that the rampaging South African AIDS crisis was a white-invented myth. The party stripped him of his office in a grotesque ritual humiliation — the kind of knives-out display that is customary for liberation parties feeling their power. It is still not uncommon to hear “the opposition” demonized as if they wanted a return to the cruelty of apartheid.

Liberation movements — prizing ends over means — are not always particular about their friends or scrupulous about their transactions. President Mandela left no record of being on the take, but he was always accessible to the businessmen who tithed to the A.N.C. Under the flag of human rights, his government sold arms to such exemplars of human rights as Rwanda, Indonesia, Algeria and the Republic of Congo — in some cases simply rewarding regimes that had backed the A.N.C. in exile.

“Conflict of interest” is often treated as a luxury of the elitist press, and it is natural that some of those who paid dues in the struggle feel a bottomless sense of entitlement. The newspaper headlines here daily scream of scandal, beginning at the very top with President Jacob Zuma, whose singular accomplishment has been to make Mbeki look like a paragon of virtue. Zuma has diverted many millions of dollars of state money and special-interest largess to enlarging a lavish homestead in a region, Nkandla, ravaged by poverty and AIDS.

One crude measure of South Africa’s moral decline is to compare Zuma’s fortress — helicopter pad, tennis courts and soccer field, planned underground bunkers — with the retirement refuge Mandela built, its blueprint copied from the warden’s cottage at his last prison for the very Mandela-esque reason that the floor plan was familiar.

On Sunday the A.N.C. opened its five-day electoral conference to renew the leadership ranks of the A.N.C., which then becomes the party’s election list in 2014. The predictions are that Zuma will remain at the top of the party and the country until 2019. The main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance, is gaining adherents but is reckoned to be many years away from being much more than a nuisance at the national level.

In the 18 years since coming to power the A.N.C. government has created a substantial black middle class (more in the public sector than the private) and a smaller, conspicuous cadre of black privilege. But it has not — perhaps could not have — significantly narrowed the gulf between the shack-dwelling underclass and everyone else. Inequality breeds serious resentment, violent protests over undelivered services, strikes, fatalism. The way old Soviet-era Russians sometimes tell you things were better under Brezhnev, you can even find blacks who speak of apartheid times with nostalgia.

The urgent question now is whether the movement that is Mandela’s bequest to his country can mature into a more credible government before the public runs out of its famous patience and starts looking for a new messiah.

Mandela Honored by South Africa's Governing Party

By By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press/ December 16, 2012

JOHANNESBURG

Nelson Mandela's political party sang praises for the anti-apartheid icon Sunday, as the 94-year-old leader remained under doctors' care in the longest hospitalization he's faced since leaving prison

decades ago.

President Jacob Zuma led delegates of the African National Congress in song as they opened their Mangaung convention, being held in the city also known as Bloemfontein. The song, in Zulu, calls out: "The journey is long, ... Mandela told his followers that we'll meet on freedom day."

In his address, Zuma also touched on Mandela, who has been hospitalized since Dec. 8 for tests while receiving treatment for a lung infection. He also underwent a successful gallstone surgery Saturday.

"He is receiving good care from a competent and caring medical team," Zuma said. "We wish him and the family all the best during this time."

South Africa Mandela.JPG

Mandela, South Africa's first democratically elected president, was admitted to a hospital in South Africa's capital, Pretoria, the government has said. At first, officials said Mandela was undergoing tests and later they acknowledged he had been diagnosed with a lung infection.

The Nobel laureate has a history of lung problems, after falling ill with tuberculosis in 1988 toward the tail-end of his 27 years in prison before his release and subsequent presidency. While doctors said at the time the disease caused no permanent damage to his lungs, medical experts say tuberculosis can cause problems years later for those infected.

On Saturday, Mandela underwent endoscopic surgery to remove gallstones, a procedure in which a patient usually receives sedatives and an anesthetic to allow a surgeon to put an endoscope down their throat, authorities say. The surgeon then can remove the gallstones, which are small, crystal-like masses that can cause a person tremendous pain.

Mandela's nine-day hospital stay, his longest since leaving prison in February 1990, has sparked increasing concern about a man who represents the aspirations of a country still struggling with race and poverty. South Africa, a nation of 50 million people, reveres Mandela for his magnanimity and being able to bridge racial gaps after centuries of white racist rule.

South Africa's Zuma confident of victory at party conference

By Robyn Dixon/latimes.com/December 16, 2012

BLOEMFONTEIN, South Africa – Defending his government's record and calling for an end to corruption, South African President Jacob Zuma addressed the opening session of the ruling African National Congress' national conference, at which he expected to comfortably be returned to party leadership.

Zuma faces competition from Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe, for the leadership post, which essentially determines who will be the South African president after elections in 2014.

But he appeared confident of maintaining power Sunday, as the hall erupted with deafening cheers and battle songs during his appearance, at which he wore a leather jacket in the ANC colors of yellow, green and black. In addition to speaking, Zuma danced and sang about Nelson Mandela, the party's elder statesman, who is in the hospital recovering from a lung infection and surgery for gallstones.

South African media reported that the Zuma camp was furious that Motlanthe is contesting the

leadership spot. Zuma seized power from his predecessor, Thabo Mbeki, at a similar conference five years ago.

The ANC is so deeply divided that some party members in several provinces have taken party officials to court over allegations of manipulation of voting or other improprieties in recent elections.

Zuma himself once faced more than 700 corruption charges, which were dropped two weeks before the 2009 general election, opening the way for him to become president.

Zuma's ally, businessman Cyril Ramaphosa, running as deputy ANC president on Zuma's ticket, is also likely to win, which would automatically make him South African deputy president, putting him in position to succeed Zuma as national president in the 2019 elections.

After his rousing song, Zuma complained about "alien tendencies" in the party, accusing party members of vote-buying and vote fraud – the same accusations that his opponents in the party make of his supporters.

Zuma also conceded problems in education and called on teachers to arrive on time at schools, and dressed decently.

"Let me repeat the call to all our teachers, that they should be in school, in class, on time, teaching for seven hours every school day next year."

To cheers, he threatened surprise school inspections.

"I want [school] inspectors to come back," said Zuma, departing from his speech to deliver a proposal likely to be unpopular with teacher unions. "Comrades in education don't like it, but they must implement it."

TANZANIA :

KENYA :

Kenya: Prisoners Will Wait Little Longer to Vote - IEBC

By Olive Burrows/Capital FM (Nairobi)/15 December 2012

The chairman of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission Issack Hassan has expressed frustration at the pending litigation surrounding the voter registration exercise.

Civil society groups have threatened to go to court in a bid to have the electoral calendar amended, to allow the registration of prisoners and Kenyans outside East Africa.

These efforts, Hassan says, are ill-timed and the demands untenable given there are only three days to the end of the voter registration exercise.

"I'm aware Kituo cha Sheria has threatened to go to court. If you remember during the referendum, the constitutional court said prisoners can vote but those rights were only limited to the referendum."

The constitution, Hassan acknowledged, protects every Kenyans' fundamental right to vote but asked for empathy saying it was the first time the IEBC will be conducting elections under a new constitutional order.

"This is a first election since we had a new constitution. We are asking them to be patient and be patriotic and allow us to have the first elections. Thereafter we'll put in place mechanisms for the Diaspora to vote and for those in prison to vote."

Kituo Cha Sheria issued a statement on Thursday saying it would file a petition in the High Court to seek an extension of voter registration following what they termed as IEBC's refusal to engage them on the registration of prisoners.

Hassan was adamant his commission would not be cowed. "If we are served (with the court papers) we are going to defend ourselves."

The Political Parties Forum, one of eight coalitions registered with the registrar of political parties and composed of eight political parties including Julia Ojiambo's Labour Party of Kenya, on Monday said they would go to court to have the elections postponed to December to allow for the registration of Kenyans in the Diaspora.

The parties say there are close to three million Kenyans in the Diaspora and that those in the East African region who should be allowed to participate in the electoral process.

The registration of Kenyan voters in Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, Hassan says, will commence immediately the Kenyan drive ends on Tuesday.

"We're going to have centres in Kampala, Bujumbura, Kigali, Arusha and Dar es Salaam. There will be three Biometric Voter Registration kits at each centre."

Blasts rock Nairobi neighbourhood

16 Dec 2012/Al Jazeera and agencies

Several injured in series of explosions in Somali Eastleigh suburb in Kenyan capital.

A series of blasts has shaken the predominantly Somali neighbourhood of Eastleigh in the Kenyan capital Nairobi injuring at least six people, police has said.

The Kenya Red Cross on Sunday said that there had been "at least three separate grenade attacks" and that the grenades had been thrown from a speeding vehicle.

The blasts follow a recent grenade attack outside a mosque that killed at least five people as well as wounding the local member of parliament.

A recent roadside bomb in Eastleigh district killed one person and wounded several others. And last month, a bomb on a bus killed nine people.

Kenya has suffered a string of attacks, often blamed on al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabab fighters, since it

invaded Somalia last year.

Kenyan troops, now integrated into an African Union force, seized the Shabab bastion of Kismayo in September, a key southern Somali port. That led to warnings of retaliation from both the insurgents and their Kenyan supporters.

But the Shabab have denied involvement in previous similar bombings.

Violence in Kenya - ranging from attacks blamed on Islamists, inter-communal clashes and a police crackdown on a coastal separatist movement - have raised concerns over security ahead of elections due in March 2013.

Last month, riots broke out in Eastleigh after the bombing of a bus, with running street battles between demonstrators and the police.

ANGOLA :

AU/AFRICA :

Egypt Islamists Expect Constitution Victory

By MATT BRADLEY/online.wsj.com/December 16, 2012

Brotherhood Says Majority Favored Proposal in a First-Round Vote, While Opposition Alleges Fraud and Calls for New Polls

CAIRO—The Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt declared a narrow victory in the first round of a hotly contested constitutional referendum, even as activists' reports of fraud and calls for a rerun renewed the nation's political impasse.

The Brotherhood's political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party, said Sunday its own unofficial exit polls showed 56.5% of voters cast ballots in favor of the draft constitution on Saturday.

The National Salvation Front, the main opposition group, demanded the electoral authorities consider calls for a rerun. But the group didn't contest the result and called for a "no" vote in the next and final round on Saturday instead of boycotting it.

A majority of urban voters in Cairo and Alexandria voted down the proposed constitution, state television reported in preliminary results. Most of the country's rural governorates, where Islamists tend to hold a strong majority, supported it.

The next voting round takes place in mostly rural Egypt, suggesting that the Islamist-tinged constitution is likely to pass.

But opposition activists said the closer-than-expected vote is likely to extend Egypt's political instability, pitting an Islamist political majority against a mainly secularist opposition.

"I don't think we have any winners here. Everybody loses with what's going on," said Ibrahim Al Hodaiby, a liberal activist who opposed the constitution. "We are approaching a difficult situation where the entire legitimacy of the constitutional system is in question."

The Freedom and Justice Party said the vote reflected Egyptians' "will for freedom of expression" and it "assures their desire to achieve political and constitutional stability."

During the past several weeks of deepening enmity and violent clashes between Islamists and secularists, Brotherhood leaders repeatedly brushed aside dissenting voices with the expectation that voters would vindicate President Mohammed Morsi, who supported the constitution.

Mr. Morsi publicly projected 90% of voters would approve the draft. Early results fell far short of that. And a relatively low turnout rate of 32%, according to the Brotherhood, reflects frustration by the electorate with the process, some analysts say.

Still, the powerful Brotherhood showed no signs of yielding to opposition calls for a new vote, raising the question of whether Egypt's government can finally settle into a predictable electoral pattern.

A coalition of liberal-leaning monitoring groups said Sunday that rampant polling irregularities should render the first round invalid. They demanded that Egypt's High Elections Commission rerun the polls.

"The Egyptian people went to vote in long lines and with great intensity. But throughout the day, there were irregularities that should lead to the voiding of the results," said Bahey Al Din Hassan, director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies.

The group complained that Islamist groups carried out a campaign of intimidation and violence against "no" voters, with a few outbreaks of political violence Friday and Saturday.

Civil-society groups were forbidden from observing the vote, the groups said. Some polling stations closed early, while many voters reported a lack of official stamps meant to ensure ballot papers' authenticity. Imams, or religious leaders, violated the law by using Friday sermons to urge voters to approve the document, the groups said.

Negad Al Boraie, the head of the United Group, a legal rights advocacy organization in Cairo, accused the head of the body that drafted the constitution—Hossam al Gheriany—of illegally granting permits to tens of thousands of Freedom and Justice Party members to enter polling stations, where he said they campaigned for a "yes" vote. Mr. al Gheriany also leads the National Council for Human Rights, which helped monitor the vote.

In a few cases, poll workers blocked Christians from voting, the groups reported.

The Freedom and Justice Party on Sunday said the voting unfolded in an "atmosphere of integrity and transparency under full supervision of the judiciary, the local and international media and human-rights groups."

During past elections, the Brotherhood has used its massive ground-level campaign network to keep reliable exit polls and turnout data that closely reflect final, official results. Final official results are expected soon after Saturday's second round.

Some foreign electoral observers said they weren't given access to observe the vote. The Atlanta-

based Carter Center declined to monitor the polling, saying the vote was too rushed for it to arrange to observe it.

The first round of voting follows a bitter, three-week-long dispute between secular-leaning politicians and Mr. Morsi's Islamist supporters, which threatened to derail the referendum.

Voters cast ballots under a pall of uncertainty that followed the worst political crisis since President Hosni Mubarak was forced from power 22 months ago. Swaddled in jackets and scarves to keep out the cold, many voters said they were disappointed, as they weighed the merits of a document many admitted to knowing little about.

Saturday's referendum was the fourth time the Egyptian public has gone to the polls since the revolution early last year. The political forces that pushed out the aged autocrat have turned against each other, derailing hopes for a politically cohesive country.

"Compared to the last time I voted, this just doesn't feel like it's in safe hands," said Reham Mohammed, 23 years old, a law student who was standing in line to cast her "no" vote in the low-income Cairo neighborhood of Sayyida Zeinab. "It was very fast. We felt there was something wrong because of this short period. We didn't get a chance to fully understand this long constitution."

Egypt's Islamist-dominated constitutional drafting committee rushed to finish the 236-article document on Nov. 30 to avoid a confrontation with judges who had threatened to dissolve the committee. The following day, Mr. Morsi called for the national referendum on the document to begin Saturday as required by a constitutional declaration approved in an earlier referendum last March.

Arrangements for Saturday's vote were made at the last minute, without the blessing of thousands of judges who are traditionally charged with observing elections. As many of half of Egypt's judges declined to observe the vote after Mr. Morsi curbed their powers in an edict last month. Mr. Morsi later lifted most of the edict.

Many voters faulted a lack of observing judges, rushed planning and long lines that required many hours of waiting.

Still, Mohammed Goma'a, 52, said he was committed to participating in Egypt's nascent democratic process, despite its flaws. If democracy had caused problems for Egypt, he said, it was also the only solution. "We're convinced with voting," he said. "We're optimistic and we put our faith in God because the country is slipping backward."

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