



East Africa Civil Society Organisations' Forum

*Strengthening Civil Society in the
Integration Process*

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PRESS STATEMENT

A CALL TO PEACEFUL ELECTIONS IN KENYA & RWANDA

EACSOF (East African Civil Society Organizations' Forum) is the apex body for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) operating in the East African Community (EAC). It is recognized under the East African Community Consultative Dialogue Framework (CDF) adopted by the Council of Ministers during its 26th Meeting (EAC/CM26/DECISION 06). The Decision was made pursuant to Articles 127, 128 and 129 of the EAC Treaty under which Partner States agreed to create an enabling environment for Private Sector and Civil Society participation in the integration process.

EACSOF, through its deliberations and engagements, has prioritized peace and security as one of its core areas of intervention. EACSOF's mission in this area is to ensure that EAC Citizens and States are proactively engaged in seeking peace to secure social and economic progress while safeguarding the rights of all citizens. EACSOF has taken note of the upcoming General Elections in Kenya on the 8th August 2017 and the Presidential elections in Rwanda on 4th August 2017 and the environment thereof. It took note that general elections in our region have a direct relationship with the enjoyment of peace and security among citizens, a critical concern of the EAC (refer Article 121 of the Treaty and the EAC Protocol on Peace and Security).

Civil Societies Concerns over peace in Kenya in view of the coming General Elections:

Civil Societies have noted that, with exception in 2002, Kenyan elections have generally been plagued with problems impacting on their credibility, with the worse crisis occurring in 2007/2008. Although the results of the last elections held in 2013 were accepted after legal challenges, there was a general dissatisfaction with the outcome that continues to affect public confidence in the electoral process. There are a number concerns around this election including but not limited to the following;

First there are widespread fears that these elections will be accompanied by violence. Secondly, Kenyan society remains polarized attributed to the unresolved issues arising from the 2007 and 2013 elections. Third, the electoral management body, the independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), is inadequately prepared to conduct the election. Fourthly, there is declining public confidence in key institutions related to the electoral process namely the IEBC, the Judiciary and Security apparatus. Finally, there remain unfulfilled constitutional imperatives including gender equality and inclusivity, which are indicative of a lack of adherence to the rule of law.

In Rwanda, the concern of many citizens is that the current running president has been in power since 2000 and runs for another seven-year term, many Rwandans share their fear as they see a government that is crushing dissent ahead of the election. And they worry that their country is turning into a one-party state: Following a 2015 referendum to extend term limits, Kagame can now legally remain in power until 2034.

Our humble call to action:

EACSOFF calls upon Kenyans, Rwandans, regional and international actors on the critical role they should play in supporting Kenya and Rwanda to avert a possible crisis and call for peaceful elections. As Civil Society Representative in East African Community we urge the following recommendations:

- 1. The states to uphold the citizens fundamental rights and freedoms as enshrined in the constitution of Kenya and Rwanda and ensure sufficient security of every citizen especially during this time of elections;**
- 2. The IEBC and the Rwanda National Electoral Commission (NEC) should take immediate measures to build public confidence in its ability to administer a free, fair, credible and transparent election;**
- 3. Call upon the states and all political actors to ensure that the electoral processes are safe for women, persons with disability and other vulnerable groups;**
- 4. All political actors publicly denounce post electoral violence;**
- 5. Politicians from both sides of the parties divide to adhere to the Constitutions and the rule of law;**
- 6. All security agents to remain professional, neutral and non-partisan in securing the electoral processes;**
- 7. Call upon to the Kenyan and Rwandan Judiciary to adjudicate upon any electoral disputes in a manner that inspires public confidence in its independence and upholds the rule of law;**

- 8. Dispatch a mission to observe the elections and publish a detailed observation mission report of the pre-election, election and post election environment;**
- 9. Put in place a standby panel of Eminent African personalities to mediate between political actors in the event of a crisis emanating from the elections;**

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