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AFRICA/SUDAN - Polls close today; insecure climate following kidnapping of 4 Blue Helmets in Darfur and death of 9 members of Southern government party

Khartoum (Agenzia Fides) – The voting process continues in Sudan, where the presidential election and local policies have been prolonged for two extra days (the polls should close tonight, April 15).
However, there have been at least two episodes of violence that disrupted the relatively peaceful climate in which elections were held. The abduction of 4 "Blue Helmets" was confirmed by the joint UN-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), which had reported them lost on Sunday, April 11 (see Fides 14/4/2010). The 4 "Blue Helmets", two men and two women,were of South African nationality. The attack took place near Nyala, the largest town in the Sudanese region and responsibility has been claimed by the Movement for the Struggle of Darfur People (MSDP), a group previously unknown. In Darfur, there have been other cases of kidnapping foreign workers for ransom.
The leader in Southern Sudan of the party in power in Khartoum, the National Congress Party, complained that three days ago, a group of South Sudanese military had killed the President of NCP in Raja and another 8 people. The Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), former guerrilla movement, which after the agreement in Nairobi in 2005 chaired the autonomous administration of Southern Sudan, has denied that its soldiers have committed the crime, saying that it must have been motivated by private intentions.
The National Congress Party, the party of President Bashir and whose electoral base is largely in the north, said that if they are victorious they will invite the other parties, even those who boycotted the elections, to participate in the future government. This decision is motivated by the fact that you need the greatest possible consensus in order to govern the country at a crucial moment in its history. In January 2011, there will be a referendum held on the independence of Southern Sudan, fulfilling the requirements of the Nairobi Accords. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 15/4/2010)

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