

***Nairobi, Kenya, October 10 (Infosplusgabon) - Kenya's electoral body summoned its commissioners and lawyers to an emergency meeting Tuesday after the opposition leader, Raila Odinga, withdrew his candidacy ahead of the 26 October presidential re-run.***

Odinga, candidate of National Super Alliance (NASA), announced his withdrawal from the repeat presidential election, which should trigger fresh nomination process and an election in 90 days.

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) said it was holding consultations with its commissioners and would make a decision on the way forward.

Odinga said a fresh nomination before the election should be triggered by the formal withdrawal of a presidential candidate nominated after the annulment of a presidential election.

On 8 Aug. Kenyans voted in the 6th election since the return to multiparty politics in 1992.

“ As is customary voting went smoothly. But when it came to tallying and transmission of results, everything that could go wrong did go wrong. It became the first presidential election in Africa to be annulled by the Court, and only the fourth in the world,” Odinga said. He withdrew as Parliament reconvened to discuss a new set of election laws.

President Uhuru Kenyatta and his Deputy William Ruto said the election scheduled for 26 October should go ahead.

After Odinga's withdrawal, Kenyatta said: “If it were my choice, I would have asked to be sworn in. We decided the election should be the way to go.”

Odinga, who was accompanied by his running mate Kalonzo Musyoka, said in the aftermath, the annulment has plunged the country into uncharted waters.

“That was to be expected. What we would not have expected is that the country’s leadership would be divided by a fundamental tenet of democracy, namely free and fair elections,” Odinga told a news conference at his party’s Okoa Kenya headquarters in Nairobi.

Opposition leaders have been insisting on minimum reforms before the election scheduled for 26 October.

“We at NASA have insisted that the fresh election ordered be held to the standard ordered by the Supreme Court, that is, in strict conformity with the Constitution and written law. We have provided a checklist of what we deem to be the 'irreducible minimum' changes required to ensure compliance,” Odinga said.

The IEBC was preparing to order the printing of the presidential ballot papers before the announcement of the opposition withdrawal.

Odinga said the validity of the checklist of the requirements for free and fair elections proposed by NASA has not been disputed by anyone, not by the IEBC, not by Jubilee or other actors and observers.

He said the EU Observer Mission recommendations are in conformity with his party's 'irreducible minimum.'

In a constitutional democracy, Odinga said there should be no debate about a free and fair election, or compliance with court orders, or accountability for breach of public trust.

“We should have been working together to ensure that we uphold these values as they are not only our national values but are also the foundations of a credible electoral system,” Odinga said.

He said he withdrew from the race because the IEBC has stonewalled meaningful deliberations on the necessary reforms to ensure that the election of 26 October is free and fair.

“It has wasted valuable time engaging in public relations exercise intended to create the illusion of motion without any movement,” Odinga charged in a televised statement.

He said his party came to the conclusion that there was no intention on the part of the IEBC to undertake any changes to its operations and personnel to ensure that the “illegalities and irregularities” that led to the invalidation of the 8 August 2008 do not happen again.

“All indications are that the election scheduled for 26 October will be worse than the previous one,” Odinga reiterated.

Should the IEBC agree with the opposition leader that a new electoral process be opened, a new presidential election should be held within 90 days.

However, supporters of President Kenyatta said the time for the withdrawal should be within three days of nomination and not any time within the electoral process.

The Opposition said the Jubilee administration’s proposed amendment to the election law demonstrates that it has no intention of competition on a level playing field.

“The only election Jubilee administration is interested in is one that it must win, even unlawfully,” Odinga said.

But in response, President Kenyatta said his party won 802 seats in the 47 counties to control a majority of the County Assembly Members (MCA) and 170 seats in the national parliament against 120 for the opposition.

At least 70 seats in the parliament are the subject of court petition as a result of the past election where 339 cases are being heard.

Odinga said both Kenyatta and Ruto have gloated that they have the numbers in parliament to amend even the Constitution.

“The Jubilee vice chairman is on record stating that Kenya requires a benevolent dictator and proceeded to exhort Uhuru Kenyatta to exercise dictatorial powers. These utterances provide the motive for the blatant across the board rigging of the August 8 elections— it was to secure the majorities that Jubilee needs to overrun our Constitution,” Odinga said.

The opposition claimed Kenyatta and Ruto are beneficiaries, believers and defenders of the old order.

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