

NAIROBI, Kenya, September 28 (Infosplusgabon) - Kenya's ruling Jubilee Alliance Party (JAP) introduced a new bill in Parliament on Thursday watering down the powers of the Supreme Court to nullify elections and weakening the powers of election officials, in a move which caused talks on the upcoming presidential re-run to flop.

Commissioners of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) and representatives of President Uhuru Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga, who met for the second day to hammer out a solution to the deadlock over the 26 Oct. election, failed to progress after the bill amending the election laws was made public on Thursday.

"It looks like this is an exercise in futility," said Senator James Orengo, representing Odinga and the National Super Alliance (NASA) at the talks at the Bomas of Kenya in Nairobi, after seeing the details of the proposed law to radically amend the election laws.

The opposition leaders walked out of the talks to firm up sticking issues before the holding of the election and IEBC Chairman Wafula Chebukati said a new election law was one of the least requirements and a prerequisite to the holding of the forthcoming vote.

"We do not need any laws but if they come into place, we hope they should not change the election framework," Chebukati told reporters after the two-party talks flopped.

The opposition demanded withdrawal of the proposed laws as a precondition for the continuation of talks.

However, Kithure Kindiki, leading the Jubilee party at the talks with the IEBC, said the opposition leaders had used threats and intimidation to pass the election laws in place.

“In their imagination, they have always used intimidation and violence to get what they always want,” Kindiki claimed.

The law whittles down the powers of the IEBC chairman and removes a requirement that the top election official must be an advocate of the High Court or a lawyer with 15 years experience.

Observers said the move appears meant to make it easier to replace Chebukati, who is the only lawyer in the commission, with any of its officials. It also removes the requirement that only the Chief Justice can swear in the President and replaces it with any Judge.

“You cannot change the rules of the game midway through the game,” said NASA Chief Executive Norman Magaya.

The new proposals were presented before Parliament, which is now dominated by the Jubilee Alliance, amid opposition from the NASA, which insists that it would not participate in the 26 Oct. poll.

The law also proposes that, if any party declines to participate in the repeat President Election, the sole participant would be declared the winner.

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