

Begi Referendum (1995 G.C)

Article 2 of the 1991 Ethiopian Transitional charter, grants nations and nationalities of Ethiopia the right to self- determination. As stated under article 2 of the charter, every nation, nationalities and people of Ethiopia have the right to protect their own identity; develop and nurture their own history, culture and language.

It is to be recalled that following the territorial dispute between the Oromia and Benishangul Gumuz regional states over the Begi special zone, the Transitional government's Prime Minister Office passed a decision for the disputed special zone to be administered by an independent body until a referendum was conducted.

As a result, and following a request by the Prime Minister's office to conduct a referendum, the NEBE established a six-member committee with the task of researching the recruitment of election officials, establishment of polling stations, as well as procedure for voter's registration. Subsequently, a referendum was conducted on July 2, 1995.

Materials required for voter's registration and polling, such as electoral rolls and ballot papers were prepared and distributed by the Board to the polling stations according the election calendar. Decisions for complaints raised during voter registration period and polling day were provided after they were presented to the committee through Oromo People's Democratic Party (OPDO) and Mao People's Democratic Party (MPDO), that were operating in the woredas legally.

Overall, the Board confirmed that people residing in 88 kebeles participated in the referendum. Accordingly, the below election results were conveyed to the Prime Minister's office.

Type of Information	Number	Percentage
Number of Registered voters	56,586	90 %
Number of registered voters who cast their votes	45,965	81.23033 %
Number of registered voters who did not cast their votes	10,621	18.76966 %
Voter turnout from total number eligible voters		74 %