Halt the Coup in Sudan

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On the morning of October 25, a coup was launched in Khartoum. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Chairman of the military-civilian power sharing Sovereign Council, announced the arrest of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and his cabinet. Hamdok, an economist and former senior U.N. official who was appointed as a technocratic prime minister in 2019, is currently in an unknown location, after refusing to support the coup attempt.

Thousands of protesters immediately took to the streets, as in the 2019 Revolution. They marched to besiege the military's headquarters in the capital only to be met by gunfire from soldiers. Among the spearhead of the counterrevolution are the troops of the Rapid Support Forces, a unit grown out of the militias that carried out murderous crimes during the war in Darfur, and later during the 2019 revolution.

Meanwhile, the Sudanese Professionals Association, SPA, a principal organiser of the 2019 Revolution issued a call to resist:

"We urge the masses to go out onto the streets and occupy them, close all roads with barricades, stage a general labour strike, and not to cooperate with the putschists and use civil disobedience to confront them."

Likewise, the Sudanese Communist Party called on workers to go on strike and for mass civil disobedience against the coup. The CP had been warning about the imminent danger since a failed coup on September 21 when it stated: "We need more serious measures to dismantle the pillars of the former regime, especially in the armed forces, security service, and police forces."

On this occasion, Hemeti and Abdelfattah El Burhan rushed to the barracks concerned to suppress the putsch; and the latter reassured the soldiers; "The armed forces are leading the change and take it wherever they want". We now see exactly where that was.

The military takeover comes after an attempted coup in September and a blockade of the country's Red Sea ports, fomented by forces loyal to the former Omar al-Bashir dictatorship.

Furthermore, in recent weeks there had been mobilisations by stick wielding gangs of supporters of the former regime, as well as a sit in by loyalists, protected by the military, which openly called for a coup. Those were answered by tens of thousands of demonstrators defending the supremacy of civilian rule, who were met by violent responses by the police.

It is likely that those ominous events of past weeks were a preparation by generals and counterrevolutionary rebel forces for a coup. At the same time, the existing government came under increasing popular pressure to take steps towards greater civilian control, combined with frustrations over the economic and social performance of the regime.

Food shortages were growing in the cities, added to by the Hamdok government's agreement to raise prices of fuel and other essentials, conditions required by the IMF for debt relief for Sudan, which led to rampant inflation. Fearing a progressive resolution of the current crisis on a wave of social mobilisations, it seems that the military decided to act decisively.

Meanwhile, the EU and the USA have condemned the coup and spoken out for democracy. But it was institutions under...
their control that contributed to this situation, whether through the financing of the Rapid Support Forces under the EU's Khartoum Process, aimed at stopping refugees, or through the IMF's economic policies.

This shows the danger of the imperialist powers as allies in the quest for democracy. Their democracy always comes at a heavy price for the workers and poor. One third of the population is already suffering from serious food shortages. Because the government was doing their bidding, the USA and the EU have, on this occasion, strongly condemned the coup. Indeed, a US envoy had just visited Hamdok.

The future of the limited democracy won in 2019 now depends on the power of the working class and the youth to bring the country to a standstill, to win over rank and file soldiers and carry through the revolution which was halted by the agreement with the military for a joint regime until elections in 2023. The Resistance Committees formed in 2019 still exist and will need to be strengthened into councils representing all the workers, women, students and soldiers. The coup proves that power-sharing with the generals of the old regime was a dangerous delusion, confirming the French revolutionary Jacobin Saint-Just's dictum, "whoever makes a revolution only halfway digs their own grave".

We have always argued that every standing army - so long as it is under the command of the generals and the officer corps - is a deadly weapon against the people. An essential early task of any genuine people's revolution is to break their command of the apparatus of repression, to liberate the rank and file soldiers and win them over to the side of the masses, especially the workers, and to form a revolutionary defence force under the democratic control of workers' and popular councils.

Crucially, everything depends on the effectiveness of a general strike and mass resistance on the streets in appealing to the ordinary soldiers and junior officers and NCOs to come over to the people. The current resistance movement must particularly build on the strength of revolutionary women and youth who played a leading role in the revolution in 2019. And if this happens, this time the revolution must not stop halfway. Nor must it rest content with a government of civilian technocrats, working hand in glove with the IMF, the US, the EU and the other imperialist powers.

What can resolve the current crisis in a social, democratic and sustainable way is a government fully committed to the revolution, a government based on workers' and popular councils, able to take socialist measures to meet the urgent needs of the rural and urban population.

In other countries, socialists and trade unionists need to join hands with Sudanese exiles to demonstrate against the coup and demand food and medical aid to combat COVID, and the economic crisis, as well as an end to the dictates of the IMF.

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