



# Sudan: Counterrevolution strikes back, supported by the Egyptian Dictator and the Saudi Absolute Monarch

International Secretariat, League for the Fifth International Tue, 04/06/2019 - 17:28

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The bloodshed in Khartoum on Monday, June 3, proves beyond a shadow of doubt that elementary democratic rights are intolerable to the regimes in most Middle Eastern and North African states. The crackdown on the revolution that overthrew Omar al-Bashir on April 11, especially on the five months old sit-in outside the military HQ, has left 35 dead, including an 8-year old child, plus 116 injured, according to the Sudanese Doctors Association.

In the repression, live ammunition, stun grenades and gas were used and whips were wielded against young people, women and children. Attacks on protesters inside the Al Mualim and Royal Care hospitals are also reported. With many missing and reports of bodies dumped into the Nile, the numbers are likely to rise.

Heavily armed paramilitary units of the notorious Rapid Support Forces were deployed around the capital on Tuesday, guarding the bridges that cross the Nile to the twin city of Omdurman, and convoys of armoured vehicles moved menacingly around the city. These perpetrators of the genocidal wars in Darfur and South Sudan have every reason to crush a democratic revolution that could reveal their monstrous crimes there.

Sudan's new dictatorship is headed by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the Transitional Military Council, TMC, and his deputy Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo 'Hemeti'. He announced the TMC was "stopping negotiations with the Alliance for Freedom and Change", the only body with a shred of democratic legitimacy in Sudan. In fact, the crackdown was inevitable because the AFC would not agree to military oversight, that is control and participation, in what would be little more than a façade of civilian government and because the masses would not abandon their occupation of the square in front of the military HQ. Another factor was the two-day general strike on 28-29 May, which may have frightened the generals but did not break them, showing that, in a revolutionary situation, general strikes that are just protests are quite insufficient.

Al-Burhan now claims elections will be held within nine months and talks of these being held under "regional and international supervision". He doubtless has in mind his paymasters in Riyadh and the military intelligence of Egypt and thinks that repression will be sufficient to break the back of the movement. Obviously, unless the Sudanese generals are stopped by sustained mass action during the next months, we will see a wave of arrests, the torture of activists and restoration of the power of the regime-loyal islamist parties and militias. Then, and only then, will it be possible to hold a mockery of free and fair elections, rather as Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has done in Egypt.

The masses in Khartoum and Omdurman responded to the crackdown by throwing up barricades of burning vehicles. Everything now depends on whether the Sudanese trade unions can launch and sustain an all-out, indefinite general strike, with mass militias to guard it, and whether the courageous youth and women can get through to ordinary soldiers on the streets and in the barracks and win them to mutiny against their officers and commanders.

The Sudanese Professional Association has issued a call for a 'political general strike and civil disobedience as of today, June 3, 2019, until the overthrow of the regime'. They also call on 'the armed forces of the people and the police to do the duty of protecting the Sudanese people from the TMC's militias, shadow brigades and Janjaweed and to side with the will of the people in overthrowing the regime and establishing a fully civilian transitional regime.' (the Janjaweed were the militias responsible for the worst Dafur atrocities).

It is now clear that only a full-blown social revolution, a revolution that smashes the military high command and releases the soldiers from the discipline that forces them to gun down unarmed civilians, can lead to the most elementary freedoms enjoyed in the imperialist heartlands of North America and Western Europe. Yet it is precisely those imperialist states that are the main backers of the Saudi absolute monarchy and the Egyptian dictatorship.

### Regional Counterrevolution

The regimes across North Africa and the Middle East, that thought they had crushed the Arab Spring and could return to the business of robbing their people, were horrified by the revival of mass protests in Morocco, Algeria and finally by revolution in Sudan.

Saudi Arabia and Egypt are the regional bastions of counterrevolution and back the bloodthirsty Sudanese military, not least because they have hired Sudanese troops for the genocidal war they are waging in Yemen. Moreover, these states are particularly trusted allies of the USA, which has just sent £3bn to "stabilise" Sudan, its Nato allies, and Israel's right wing prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. However much May, Macron, Merkel, or even Trump, might publicly deplore the violations of human rights and urge an end to violence, this is just for home consumption. They will not stop the lucrative arms supplies to any of the regional butchers. As a Roosevelt once said about a Latin American military dictator "he may be a son of a bitch, but he is OUR son of a bitch!?"

The imperialist powers, now including China, which has herded hundreds of thousands of its Uighur population into concentration camps and supports the Myanmar generals' genocide against the Rohingya, and Russia, currently backing the brutal repression of Idlib in Syria, certainly have their own disputes and rivalries, but they are united in supporting the crushing of young people, women and workers fighting for freedom and independence.

The Sudanese people deserve and need the support of socialists, trade unionists, women's and youth organisations in Europe and North America as well as in Africa and Asia. We need to fight to block all aid to the Sudanese regime and its regional allies, the Saudis. In May, Italian dockers in Genoa refused to load a ship with arms for the Saudis, bound for the war in Yemen, as have French dockers in Le Havre and Marseilles.

Socialist and Labour parties and trade union federations should copy these magnificent examples and do everything in their power to force their governments to stop aid and arms sales to the Saudis, not only because of the horrific war in Yemen but as an act of solidarity with our Sudanese brothers and sisters. In universities and schools, demonstrations of solidarity should be organised.

The tasks posed by revolutions, which continue to break out spontaneously across the world, as well as the need for solidarity with them, show the need for revolutionary parties and a revolutionary International. Democracy, revolution, women's rights, workers' rights leading to workers' power, these are inseparable goals for victory in countries like Sudan as, too, is its spread across the entire region and the continents beyond.

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