

Briefing: For peace, freedom, social justice, civilian government and democracy in Sudan



Background

- In December 2018, on the back of major public protests in the city Ad-Damazin over the sudden hiking of the cost of bread, a popular uprising began against the near 30-year-old Islamist-Military dictatorship headed by Omar al-Bashir. The growing street protest movement of Sudan's poor and disenfranchised was supported by the country's civic society organisations, notably including the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA); trade unions; and progressive political parties.
- The al-Bashir regime initially responded with its default brutality, attempting to rally its dwindling support base, and utilising its various organs and apparatuses to target the main currents of the protests - including the Resistance (or Neighbourhood) Committees, informal grassroots networks set up to organise civil disobedience to the regime, which had proliferated throughout Sudan.
- In April 2019, al-Bashir's military high command lost their nerve and removed him from office, placing him under 'house arrest' and promising the Sudanese people that their demands had been heeded and that reform would follow. However, it soon became clear that this was a ruse whereby the hated figurehead would be sacrificed in order to save the regime and that the military were not about to willingly loosen their grip on power.
- Despite the steadfast opposition of the civil society groups, trade unions, and the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) and the bravery of protesters in the streets, who refused to disband their vigils and return to their homes - even in the face of horrific acts of violence against them by the military - certain political currents agreed to enter into a joint military-civilian government, the Transitional Sovereignty Council, supposedly set up to oversee the country's orderly transition back to civilian rule. A framework and set time table for this political transition was agreed upon and publicly backed by several foreign powers, including the US and Britain.
- However, it is apparent that this exercise was designed to counter and exclude the influence of those opposition elements pushing for more radical and far-reaching change in Sudan and who had been the main forces in the movement for the overthrow of the al-Bashir dictatorship.
- Following months of intransigence and deadlock on the part of the military officials in the government, the military staged a coup on 25 October 2021 and suspended the transitional process. Civilian Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok was removed and General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the Commander-in-Chief of the Sudanese armed forces, became de facto ruler of the country. As his deputy, al-Burhan appointed General Mohammad Hamdan Dagalo (also known as Hemedti), the head of the notorious Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia, which was responsible for crimes against humanity committed in Darfur two decades ago as well as elsewhere.
- With the emergence of two rival spheres of influence between the Sudanese military and the RSF, each with their own international backers, an ensuing power struggle escalated into open and full-scale fighting between the two camps on 15 April 2023. Despite various ceasefires, significant fighting has continued, and Sudan now stands dangerously close to the precipice of all-out civil war.
- According to the May 15th update from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), more than 15,550

deaths have been recorded and 8.8 million people have fled their homes since mid-April 2023. Approximately 17.7 million civilians face growing food insecurity, with 4.9 million in a state of acute emergency.

- The UN's Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict reported in April that the war has disproportionately impacted women and girls, with increasing allegations of rape, forced marriages, sexual slavery, and trafficking, particularly in Khartoum, Darfur, and Kordofan.

International Response

- A number of ceasefires have been negotiated but these have proved to be short-term lulls, allowing brief windows for the removal of the dead and evacuation of those civilians with the resources and connections to leave, and have quickly collapsed only to be followed by the resumption of heavy fighting.
- Countries around the world have focussed on evacuating their own citizens from Sudan, but comparatively little parallel pressure has been brought to bear on the warring parties to end the fighting and come to the negotiating table - or to honour commitments made regarding the transition to civilian rule in the country, and the democratic rights of the Sudanese people.
- On 11 May 2023, Saudi Arabia and the US

brought key representatives of the army and the RSF together in Jeddah and a new ceasefire was negotiated to take effect from 22 May 2023. However, this agreement is for another short-term ceasefire to facilitate humanitarian assistance and the restoration of essential services, and nothing more.

Priority Demands

- An immediate end to the fighting and the flagrant human rights violations being committed in Sudan.
- Establish safe corridors to ensure the safe and timely delivery of humanitarian assistance.
- An end to the targeting of hospitals and humanitarian facilities, and ensuring the protection and safety of civilians - including all those attempting to flee the conflict.
- Safe corridors to ensure the safe and timely delivery of humanitarian assistance.
- Bring to justice all those responsible for this bloodshed and the perpetrators of crimes against the people.
- An end to all foreign interference in Sudan fuelling the current conflict with the aim of controlling and plundering the country's resources and natural wealth.
- Support for the legitimate aspirations of the Sudanese people for freedom, social justice, civilian government, and democracy..

About Liberation:

Liberation opposes new forms of imperialism, or “neocolonialism” that intervenes and lays waste to the global south, perpetuating economic exploitation, inequality and racism. We work to address the legacies of colonialism. Democracy, human rights, peace and social justice are central to our goals. We reject foreign interventionism and militarism. We support popular sovereignty. We believe international solidarity and co-operation are the means to make a better world. Our main focus is Britain’s former colonies and the Anglo-American sphere of influence. Liberation organises public meetings to raise awareness of current events and stimulate action. We run seminars, webinars and other educational activities. We work with UK parliamentarians to influence UK foreign policy and engage at an international level through the UN Human Rights Council. We publish a quarterly journal, and comment and analysis on relevant matters on our website, giving voice to progressive popular organisations in the Global South.

