

# Sudan's opposition leaders capitulate to the military junta

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The Alliance for Freedom and Change (AFC) called off its protest campaign and general strike earlier this week in exchange for some vague promises of “concessions” from Sudan’s junta.

The AFC has handed the initiative to the Transitional Military Council (TMC), which ousted long-term dictator President Omar al-Bashir in April in order to prevent the overthrow of the entire regime.

The nationwide general strike had brought cities across the country to a virtual standstill for three days after the weekend, just days after the TMC ordered a bloodbath to disperse the months-long mass sit-in outside the defense ministry headquarters in Khartoum on June 3.

The sit-in gave expression to workers’ and professionals’ determined opposition to the junta despite its threats and intimidation. It prompted warnings of an imminent civil war.

Since then, the military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), an offshoot of the notorious Janjaweed that ruthlessly suppressed the rebellion in Darfur, have killed at least 120 protesters, including 40 whose bodies were dumped in the Nile River and 19 children, injured nearly 1,000 and arrested hundreds.

Among the opposition leaders arrested was Yassir Arman, who had returned to Sudan in May to take part in the talks with the junta despite facing a death sentence. He had been detained after the military broke up the sit-in and deported by helicopter—against his will—to South Sudan, along with two other oppositionists. The TMC had earlier announced that the three had been released.

There were reports of many rapes. Khartoum has been in lockdown, the University of Khartoum ransacked, and electricity and the internet switched off.

The TMC’s deputy leader and RSF chief, Lieutenant General Hamdan Dagalo (known by his nickname “Hemeti”), who has ambitions of stepping into al-Bashir’s shoes, had justified the brutal crackdown by

blaming the protesters for “causing chaos.”

The Alliance for Freedom and Change consists of 22 opposition organisations, including the Sudan Professionals Association, coalitions of political parties, Girifna (“We have had enough,” a movement of young people), the Forum of Sudanese Tweeters and the families of the Ramadan martyrs (28 of the Ba’athist officers who, following a failed attempt to overthrow Bashir during Ramadan, were summarily executed by the Islamist security services in 1990).

It has called for the withdrawal of the militias from Khartoum and other towns, an international investigation into the bloodbath, the lifting of an internet blockade and the establishment of a civilian transitional government.

The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois layers represented by the AFC, regardless of their differences with the TMC, offer no way forward for the workers and poor in Sudan. A civilian-led transitional government in alliance with the military, while giving them a greater share in Sudan’s national cake, would continue to represent the interests of the country’s capitalist elite and its enforcers in the military.

This venal clique presides over a country where at least 80 percent of the 40 million population lives on less than US\$1 per day, with some 5.5 million in need of humanitarian assistance in 2018, an increase of 700,000 compared to 2017, and around 2.47 million children suffer from acute malnutrition.

The TMC is riven with dissent, having admitted there have been at least two coup attempts since al-Bashir’s ouster, with “two groups of officers,” apparently supporters of al-Bashir, taken into custody. However, Saudi Arabia’s state broadcaster al-Arabiya denied this, claiming that most of them had refused orders to disperse the mass sit-in, while al-Hurra, a US-based Arabic channel, said that the officers had been arrested for holding opposing views to the TMC.

Following the military's crackdown in the capital, there have been reports of clashes in other parts of the country, particularly the already-fragile and troubled regions of eastern Sudan and Darfur, where Janjaweed militia shot and killed nine people in the village of al-Dalij Monday.

In Eastern Sudan, there have been escalating tribal clashes and looting by criminal gangs in Port Sudan that have spread to the cities of Khashm el-Girba and Kassala and resulted in the deaths of more than 30 people. According to the *Middle East Eye*, it is widely believed that the TMC, RSF and agents of the "deep state" allied with it, are responsible for the tribal clashes and that the authorities released criminal gangs from prisons and allowed them to run riot.

The TMC's offer of concessions comes in the wake of several international developments: the African Union's suspension of Sudan, the UN Security Council's condemnation of the TMC's crackdown on peaceful protesters and mediation efforts by Ethiopia. According to Mahmoud Dirir, Ethiopia's special envoy to Sudan, the TMC and AFC had "agreed to resume talks soon."

Both the AFC and General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the TMC chief, met separately with Washington's newly appointed special envoy to Sudan, Donald Booth, and the assistant secretary of state for Africa, Tibor Nagy, dispatched to Sudan to help craft a "peaceful solution" to the crisis. Booth served as the US Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan from 2013 to 2017.

The US is determined to pressure the TMC for concessions to its own imperialist interests. Washington's primary concern is to ensure that the uprising does not spread to its regional allies: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt. These dictatorial and venal regimes, fearing their own working class and poor peasants, backed the junta and ordered the bloodbath.

The last thing the US—and Europe—want is instability in Sudan, strategically located in the Horn of Africa, alongside the Red Sea and the entrance to the Suez Canal through which much of the region's oil passes, and a new wave of refugees heading for Europe.

In a sop to the protesters, Sudan's state prosecutors have charged former dictator al-Bashir with corruption and misuse of emergency orders and announced investigations into the financial dealings of "leading officials of the former regime." The TMC has also "retired" 98 officers from the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) accused of cracking down on protesters while al-Bashir was in power.

The junta has also admitted that its security forces

committed abuses when they attacked the mass sit-in in Khartoum, with its spokesman announcing an investigation into the violence and the arrest of several military officers for the "violations."

These concessions urged upon the TMC by international "mediators" can and will be revoked at the drop of a hat. They are a trap for the Sudanese working class. Complicit in this treachery are Britain's fake lefts—the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party and their international affiliates—who have called for Sudan's revolutionaries to negotiate and ally with sections of the officer corps.

They likewise supported the Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists, which backed the Egyptian military's ouster of elected President Mohamed Mursi, paving the way for General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's bloodbath and repression more ferocious than that of his predecessor, Hosni Mubarak.

Sudan's struggle takes place amid a growing wave of working-class militancy throughout the Middle East and North Africa, exemplified by the strikes and demonstrations in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.

The only way to establish a democratic regime in Sudan is through a struggle led by the working class, independently of and in opposition to the liberal and pseudo-left forces in the middle class, to take power, expropriating the regime's ill-gotten wealth in the context of a broad international struggle of the working class against capitalism and for the building of socialism. This requires the building of a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the World Party of Socialist Revolution, in Sudan.



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