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Organizers call for a national general strike in Sudan

The Sudanese Professionals Association has called for preparation for a nationwide strike after months of sit-ins and vigils across Sudan. The SPA is demanding that talks resume to hasten a transition to a new national governing body with civilian leadership.

However, other forces within the main umbrella of protest groups, notably the Alliance for Freedom and Change, have refused to back the strike call. External capitalist forces are also attempting to influence the outcome of this mass people's struggle in Sudan.

Sudan's former president, Omar Al Bashir, was arrested April 11, as were several other officials associated with his government. Mohammed Hamdan, known as "Hemeti," presently leads Sudan as Deputy Chairman of Sudan's Transitional Military Council and Commander of the Rapid Support Forces.

Hemeti had previously met with leaders of the protest movement and had reached an initial agreement that would include both militia members and civilians in a 300-member body. The SPA has also been negotiating for its composition to be inclusive of different genders, youth and nationalities within Sudan.

Soon after the announcement of the agreement on May 14, shots were fired on unarmed protesters gathered at a sit-in in Khartoum. The most recent reports by Sudanese doctors state that four have died and more are injured.

More strikes and vigils took place in response to the shooting. Hemeti denied issuing a command to act against protesters, condemned the shootings and publicly gave an order to the RSF to "stop using violence against revolutionaries." On May 20, Hemeti announced that several RSF soldiers had been arrested in connection with the shooting.

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In addition to the mass sit-in in Khartoum, which has been ongoing since January, a number of collective actions have been taken. On May 23, in response to the call for a national general strike, Hemeti, in front of an assembly of RSF troops, said that engineers and other staff have been assigned to replace striking workers and that anyone who strikes should go home without returning.

Al Bashir's government had maintained popular subsidies for many years. This was despite the difficulties Sudan faced in developing resources, which would have entailed submitting to foreign investment in order to expand the oil infrastructure.

In 2011 South Sudan broke away, with the backing of the U.S. Three-fourths of Sudan's oil supply, and the means to repay loans based on projected funds from oil sales, went with South Sudan.

U.S. targeted Sudan, accused Bashir of genocide

The U.S. imposed diplomatic sanctions in 1996 and placed Sudan on its list of state sponsors of terrorism. The U.S. accused Bashir of genocide in the Darfur region in 2003, an accusation he denies. Militias with irregular ties to the state had made attacks against populations in the Darfur region, in areas where U.S.-backed South Sudan rebels had been mobilizing.

In October 2017, the U.S. lifted some of the sanctions, but refused to remove Sudan from the terrorism list. The lifting of sanctions permitted the government of Sudan to accept loans from the International Monetary Fund. Among other austerity measures, the IMF demanded that wheat subsidies be cut, leading to soaring bread prices and unrest.

Sudan's government spent further resources expanding its military to counter attacks from armed groups, including the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North. Removal of subsidies on staples such as bread catalyzed the sit-ins, according to the SPA.

Imperialists' role: How much involvement?

According to Radio Dabanga, a Sudan-based news organization (dabangasudan.org), U.S. legislators have sent a letter to the U.S. State Department proposing "a series of measures that should be taken to support the democratic transition in Sudan, including increasing the capacity building of civilian leadership and civil society and to provide the transitional civilian authorities with technical capacity-building assistance."

However, this does not make clear what type of capacity would be supported and to what extent it would serve the needs of the working class of Sudan.

The SPLM-N has agreed to a ceasefire with the government and tentatively supports the umbrella group Alliance for Freedom and Change. Its demands have tended to align with U.S. interests, and it will likely press for those in any negotiating process.

Britain and Norway have also come out in favor of the AFC's demands, stressing that their aid and investment decisions may hinge on whether the government is civilian-led. (Radio Dabanga)

Federica Mogherini, foreign policy chief of the European Union, declared, "A swift and orderly handover to a civilian transitional body with full decision-making authority is the only way to enable a peaceful, credible and inclusive political process that can meet the aspirations of Sudanese society and lead to much-needed political and economic reforms. The position taken by the African Union's Peace and Security Council is welcome and important in this context." (Africanews.com)

The EU has come under criticism among the Sudanese people for the possibility that EU allocations of funds, ostensibly for ameliorating the root causes of migration from Sudan, have been used to fund anti-migrant death squads along Sudanese border migrant routes to Europe. (tinyurl.com/y419mluu)

The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia have contributed \$3 billion to Sudan's central bank. Some have interpreted the aid as attempting to reinforce the Transitional Military Council's leverage against the opposition of the Alliance for Freedom and Change. Saudi Arabia has previously been accused of recruiting troops out of Sudan's RSF to fight in Yemen. Meanwhile, the U.S. and EU have pressed the U.N. to request Saudi Arabia not defend the TMC if it acts against the opposition.

Powerful global and regional capitalist forces are jockeying for position in relation to the people's uprising in Sudan. Media outlets representing the interests of international finance capital make this clear when they stress the opportunities in gold mines, rich agricultural land, water from the Blue Nile, Sudan's strategic location on the Red Sea, resort development potential along the shoreline, and potential tourist interest in well-preserved archaeological sites.

The natural features and resources of Sudan belong to the people of Sudan. It is for the people of Sudan to determine how their resources will be used, and it is their right to determine the outcome of the struggle for their lives and their future.

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