

Alliance statement: Solidarity with the popular uprising in Sudan

Friday 11 January 2019, by [Alliance of Middle Eastern Socialists](#) (Date first published: 8 January 2019).

We the Alliance of Middle East Socialists support the ongoing uprising which erupted across Sudan starting December 19th, 2018. The protests were set off by the lifting of subsidies on bread, wheat, and electricity as well as spiking inflation. The United Nations Development Program has estimated that nearly half of the population, i.e. 20 million, live below the poverty line. However, their demands go much deeper and call for the downfall of the regime of Omar al-Bashir because of its decades of economic, political, and social repression. The dictator al-Bashir was also on the verge of obtaining constitutional amendments allowing him to run in the presidential election in 2020.

The most popular slogans of demonstrators in the cities are “freedom, peace and justice” and “the revolution is the choice of the people”, but also the famous “the people want the fall of the regime”. Many cities have seen the people brave the state of emergency and the curfew that has been established there. This situation demonstrates the depth of the crisis and rejection of Bashir’s regime.

The regime which has been in power since 1989 has practiced the most brutal violence against the current protesters, using snipers and thugs to kill at least 39 and arrest over 2000, including the leadership of feminist, labor, and leftist groups. Among those killed was twelve-year-old child Shawqi Ishaq, who has become an icon of the uprising.

The protests began in rural areas and in such cities as Atbara, where there is a strong tradition of independent trade unions, which Bashir has attempted to crush. These unions, especially the Sudan Professionals Association (SPA), have continued to be at the forefront, amplifying the voices in the street and serving as an organizational backbone for the movement. Their participation has led to mass arrests of labor cadres and leadership, including SPA secretariat member Dr. Mohamed Nagi al-Assam, Sudanese Teachers’ Committee member and SPA secretariat member Ahmed Rabie, Obstetrical & Gynaecological Society of the Sudan executive committee member Dr. Huweida Ahmed Muhammad al-Hasan, head of Sudan Doctors Union Dr. Ahmed al-Shaikh, deputy head of Sudan Doctors Union Dr. Najib Najmuddin, and Gezira State Teachers Committee head Abdullah al-Hassan.

With the spread of the protests and intensification of the regime crackdown, independent unions led by the Sudan Doctors Committee have put into effect a general strike. An independent union of journalists went on a three-day strike. The Sudanese Pharmacists Central Committee have announced a strike. Students and professors have taken part in strikes as well as protests. Up to twenty University of Khartoum professors were arrested. Some were subsequently released due to labor and university pressure. These include SPA secretariat member and economics professor Dr. Mohammad Youssef, sports science professor Dr. Mohammad Abdallah, literature professor Dr. Mamdouh Mohammad al-Hassan, endemic diseases professor Dr. Montasser al-Tayeb, engineering professor Dr. Ali Seory, and literature professor Dr. Mohammad Younes.

The Sudanese left has continued to fully support and participate in the uprising. It has rejected the “soft-landing” proposal of Islamist opposition and ruling party groups favored by the international community, in which Islamist opposition groups and factional leaders from within the ruling coalition could continue practicing failed security and economic practices in favor of the international community. The left’s support for the uprising has led to mass arrests and assaults on leftist cadres and leadership. These include Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) Political Bureau member Hanadi Fadl, SCP Central Committee member Kamal Jarrar, SCP Central Committee and Medical and Health Profession Trade Union – Sudan member Dr. Masoud Muhammad al-Hasan, Batoul Rifaai as ransom for her father SCP member Abdulfattah Rifaai, and the shooting of SCP member Yasser al-Sir Ali who is in critical condition.

The Sudanese Women’s Union (SWU) and other feminist groups have taken an active role in the leadership of the uprising, remaining at the forefront as they have in past protests against the misogynistic and discriminatory practices of the al-Bashir regime and its predecessors. As a result, the regime has imprisoned several of the most prominent leaders, including SWU leader Adilah Zi’baq, Sudan Democratic Women’s Union leader Munira Sayyid Ali, SWU, SCP, and Sudanese Solidarity Committee member Hanan Muhammad Nour, poet Sumayya Ishaq, lawyer and SWU member Hanan Hassan Algadi, and SWU and SCP member Amal Jabrallah.

The regime has practiced decades of political repression by playing off the racial and ethnic prejudices and political divisions within Sudanese society and within regime opponents. This has contributed to the breakup of the country and the creation of a political vacuum unfillable by the distrusted and illegitimate leading Islamist opposition’s National Umma Party (NUP). NUP, led by Sadiq al-Mahdi, has attempted to ride the protest into power. This has often allowed the regime the opportunity to deflect and undermine the radical demands of the street.

We stress that the military is an essential partner in the cronyist practices of the ruling regime and its essential arm in repression and political instability both within the country and in South Sudan and Yemen. Those who portray it as an independent institution that has the potential to stand with the people should heed the military’s counterrevolutionary role in Egypt and the Sudanese military’s own statements in support of the regime.

After proving a willing partner in the War on Terror and a reliable ally of empire in a region rejecting its tyrannical leaders, Bashir’s arrest warrant from International Criminal Court for his war crimes in Darfur has been diluted and undermined as he restores relations with imperialist powers and gains the support of fellow war criminal and US-installed South Sudan president Salva Kiir in the face of the Sudan uprising.

The Bashir regime extended and escalated civil war, weaponizing religious and racist incitement in its genocide against South Sudan and Darfur, with casualties estimated to have surpassed the one million mark in total. The Bashir regime has weaponized the experience it gained in killing its own people by sending battle-hardened tribal leaders accused of rape and killings to Yemen as mercenaries. This reminds us that the repression of the Bashir regime, as any other, is regional and cuts across borders.

Additionally, the Bashir regime has successfully played other regional and imperialist powers as well to remain in power. With the launch of the current uprising, Bashir visited Bashar al-Assad in Damascus, announcing his support and purportedly acting as a proxy likely of Saudi Arabia. While maintaining the longer-term alliance with Qatar, he has solidified his relation with Saudi Arabia and partnered in its crimes in order to stabilize his rule. This has led to shows of support from the criminal regimes of both sides, including Qatar’s emir Tamim al-Thani, ruling Turkish AKP, and Egypt’s foreign minister and intelligence chief. Additionally, he has joined other regimes in taking

steps towards public normalization with Israel, with Netanyahu pronouncing the ability of Israeli state airline El Al's ability to conduct flights in Sudanese airspace.

Today, Sudanese protesters have rejected the Bashir regime's sectarian policy and its solidarity with all regional alliances of tyranny, as well as the International Monetary Fund's disproven policies of impoverishment. They have announced a general strike by a civil society and labor movement which has survived the brunt of the escalating wave of neoliberalization and repression.

Considering the Sudan protesters' brave actions in confronting the ruthless regime forces, and considering as well as the regional and international consensus which has kept Bashir in power for decades, it is imperative upon us to step up and offer support and solidarity to the people's rebellion and their struggle for social justice, under the popular banner "freedom, peace, justice, and revolution are the people's choice."

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