

Sudan Interim Regime Says It Has Thwarted a Military Coup

Sovereign Council has faced increasing unrest in the East while a legislative component of governance remains delayed.

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*People in the Republic of Sudan and across the world awoke on September 21 to an announcement by **Interim Prime Minister Abdulla Hamdok** that the security forces had prevented a coup by elements within and outside the military.*

Hamdok claims that those involved in the purported putsch were loyalists of the former **President Omar Hassan al-Bashir** who was ousted in a military seizure of power in April of 2019.

Further details on the incident allege that the center of the attempted coup was in the twin city of the capital of Khartoum, which is Omdurman, located in the area where the Blue and White Nile Rivers converge. The interim administration says that 21 people have been arrested in connection with the conspiracy to overthrow the government.

Although Hamdok proclaimed that the oil-rich African state would move forward and not backwards in regard to the policies of the ousted al-Bashir administration, there is much discontent within the country as the overall social conditions have not improved since the Transitional Military Council (TMC) took power two-and-a-half years ago. The Transitional Sovereign Council (TSC) represents a coalition governance structure encompassing military officers, political parties, professional groupings, civil society organizations and technocrats, such as Hamdok, an economist with close ties to international finance capital.

The statement by the Sovereign Council administration also cited the recent unrest in the Eastern Sudan region where demonstrations had occurred for several days in September demanding reforms. Opposition groups say they want a future government which is inclusive and committed to transforming the unequal development impacting the people of the provincial states in the East.

Port Sudan located in the eastern region on the Red Sea is an important asset for the country in regard to international trade. Sudan since the partition of the country in 2011,

has been weakened by the advent of the breakaway Republic of South Sudan where oil resources formerly controlled by Khartoum are now under the authority of the government in Juba.

Image on the right: Sudan woman demonstrator protests against lack of democracy (Source: Abayomi Azikiwe)



Protesters in Eastern Sudan blocked highways, streets and the port preventing normal activities in several major cities. The Hamdok interim administration under the chairmanship of **General Abdel-Fattah al-Burhan** had traveled to the region during 2020 to sign an agreement with opposition groups aimed at settling long standing political and economic grievances. Nonetheless, some opposition political leaders say that the agreements have not been implemented by the TSC.

Soon after the reports that the military coup had been subverted, Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Hamza Baloul, said on Sudan Television that:

“Today, Tuesday, September 21, 2021, a failed coup attempt was brought under control by a group of armed forces officers from the remnants of the former regime. We assure the Sudanese people that the situation is under complete control as the leaders of the military and civilian coup attempt were arrested and are being investigated now, after the last pockets of the coup were liquidated in the Shagara camp, and as the competent authorities continue to pursue the remnants of the defunct regime involved in the failed attempt. We call on all the forces of the revolution, including resistance committees, political and civil forces, peace parties, professional and trade union bodies, and all sectors of the Sudanese people to be vigilant and pay attention to the repeated attempts that seek to abort the glorious December revolution.” See [this](#).

Nonetheless, the “Glorious December Revolution” referred to by Minister Baloul has been undermined by the dominance of the military and technocrats within the TSC. A popular uprising which began in December of 2018 in Sudan sprang up from the deteriorating economic conditions impacting the working people, farmers and youth.

Transformation Process Stalled by the TSC

The takeover by the military in Sudan was prompted by the mass demonstrations which grew during the period between December 2018 and April 2019. Thousands of people representing various opposition groupings staged a sit-in outside the defense ministry in Khartoum demanding the resignation of al-Bashir and the installation of a new civilian government.

In order to avert a popular movement from taking power in April 2019, several high-ranking military officers took control of the state claiming they were in support of the people. However, the mass demonstrations did not subside with the occupation of the capital continuing until the first week of June.

On June 3, 2019, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), opened fire on thousands of demonstrators in Khartoum. The massacre of civilians resulted in the 128 officially reported deaths with many more seriously injured. Consequently, the country was facing a profound crisis which threatened all sectors of the society.

With the intervention of the African Union (AU) and other regional structures, a negotiated settlement mandated the formation of the TSC. Although it may have appeared to be an advancement and even a breakthrough politically, in actuality the transitional council was established as an interim structure dominated by the military leadership.

The chair and vice chair of the TSC are **Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan** and **General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemetti)** respectively. These military officials were slated to remain in their positions for 21 months, which has already passed since August 2019. The tenure of the TSC is 39 months which will expire at the end of 2022. Members of the TSC, both civilian and military, are ostensibly forbidden from running for political office after the expiration of the interim administration.

Yet one of the main concerns of the political forces in Sudan is the absence of any legislative authority within the TSC. The failure to ensure multi-party elections and the establishment of a civilian government has caused divisions within the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), the coalition which brought together the various professional associations, trade unions, opposition political parties and civil society organizations during the mass demonstrations of 2019. Some FFC members are condemning other elements for their close cooperation with the military.

The TSC has undertaken negotiations with the armed opposition groups with mixed results. The Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), which includes various political and armed organizations from the restive Darfur region along with the border areas with the Republic of South Sudan, has largely adopted in principle the need to enter the proposed political process.

A Juba Peace Agreement was signed in January with the SRF and many of its affiliates. There are plans to integrate the 12,000 rebel troops with the SAF in order to fill the security vacuum left by the departure of the AU and United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Darfur region of the country in December 2020. **Minni Minawi**, the leader of the breakaway Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM-MM), emphasized his desire to place the rebels on an equal level with the conventional military forces. (See [this](#))

Democratic Transition and Sudanese Foreign Policy

Sudan had been the largest geographic nation-state on the African continent prior to the partition of 2011 and the independence of the Republic of South Sudan. The vast petroleum resources and other natural resources were propelling rapid economic growth since the early 2000s.

With the division of the country into two separate states, many issues related to the drilling

and transport of oil became a major impediment to the development of both Khartoum and Juba. Border disputes in the Kordofan regions and the Blue Nile between the Republic of Sudan and South Sudan still remain unresolved. Therefore, considering the border issues and internal problems within Sudan and South Sudan, neither government has benefited from the partition.

The U.S. and the State of Israel were main proponents for the division of the Republic of Sudan during the period of the armed conflict between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and the SAF. Political and economic pressures from Washington during the administration of former President Donald Trump resulted in a commitment by the Interim Prime Minister Hamdok to "normalize" relations with Israel. The unilateral declaration of "normalization" represented a violation of the Israel Boycott Act of 1958 passed into law by the then parliament of the Republic of Sudan.

This shift in foreign policy has drawn opposition inside the country. Many organizations have objected to the maneuvers including the Sudanese Communist Party, National Umma Party, Sudanese Baath Party, the Popular Congress Party, among others. (See [this](#))

After the decision to establish relations with Israel, other measures were required by Washington to have Sudan delisted as a "state sponsor of terrorism." The interim government was forced to pay restitution to U.S. citizens killed in various attacks attributed to groups such as al-Qaeda. With the interim regime's acquiescence to Washington and Tel Aviv, Sudan would then be eligible for loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and other western based financial institutions. These loans, which have been given to many African states since the 1960s, have done more to maintain the economic and consequent political dependency of the continent on the imperialist center of power.

A movement for a complete revolutionary transformation of the Republic of Sudan will have to be based upon the political and organizational capacity of the majority of people within the society. Genuine independence and national development cannot be directed from the western states, it must emerge from the efforts of the people in alliance with anti-imperialist forces on an international scale.

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Featured image: Sudan General Abdel-Fattah al-Burhan is chair of the Transitional Sovereign Council (Source: Abayomi Azikiwe)

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