

Sudanese Transitional Government Faces Profound Challenges

Administration holds discussions seeking to resolve conflict and normalize relations with the West

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***Interim Prime Abdallah Hamdok** of the Republic of Sudan visited the United States during early December seeking to have sanctions lifted against his newly-created administration.*

In meetings with members of Congress and the **National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien**, who was appointed by **President Donald Trump**, Hamdok requested the removal of Sudan from the list crafted by Washington of those states ostensibly involved in supporting “terrorism.”

These events come in the aftermath of a series of negotiations with internal opposition groups inside Sudan. Some of these grouping are armed and have been engaged in military operations against the former administration of the ousted **President Omer Hassan al-Bashir**.

Al-Bashir was overthrown in a military coup on April 11 amid ongoing mass demonstrations and rebellions which had spread throughout the oil-rich nation. The protests began during December 2018 over the rise in food prices and soon escalated into demands calling for the removal of the National Congress Party (NCP) government.

With the removal of al-Bashir, a new Transitional Military Council (TMC) was established in an effort to end the unrest. After the continuing post-coup demonstrations and a massacre of civilian protesters in June outside the defense ministry headquarters where a sit-in was being held, the TMC agreed to the creation of an interim coalition administration composed of the FFC and the military junta.



Sudan demonstrations during 2019

The new Prime Minister Hamdok is attempting to reconfigure the posture and image of the Sudanese government. He has opened up negotiations with the political parties and coalitions which created the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) movement and the TMC as well as seeking to resolve the conflicts led by the several groups within the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) based in Darfur, North Kordofan, South Kordofan, Blue Nile and other regions.

New Prime Minister Makes Further Overtures to Washington

While in the U.S., Hamdok addressed the Atlantic Council in Washington requesting the removal of sanctions and the delisting of Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism. He emphasized that the presence of leading military figures in the transitional government should not deter the Trump administration from normalizing relations with Khartoum.

His address pointed out that the civilian and military forces are working together to create a new political dispensation. Nonetheless, the prime minister noted that doubts remain in the U.S. among leading officials that a genuine transition is still not assured.

In an article published by the [Sudan Tribune](#) on December 6, it says that:

“Hamdok disclosed that he has a negotiating team in Washington that is conducting talks with the American administration on the delisting process. The direct and frank style that Hamdok adopted during the event shows an increase of confidence on the SST’s (State Sponsored Terrorism) rescission as he used in the past to make law-profile statements. The lifting process requires a formal review for over six months.”

National Security Advisor O’Brien said in a public statement that the U.S. administration is willing to delist Sudan from the SST. There were however, outstanding issues related to removing Khartoum from the list as these were compensation to families of those killed in an attack on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the destruction of USS Cole off the coast of Yemen in 2000 and the commitment by the interim government to assist the U.S. in its war against terrorism.

The previous NCP administration of President al-Bashir had denied any culpability in the attacks on the USS Cole warship or the embassy bombings in East Africa which killed hundreds of people. In addition, the NCP government had categorically rejected any responsibility for funding or training those organizations such as al-Qaeda which have been the propaganda target of Washington in its so-called anti-terrorist campaigns internationally.

Hamdok went as far as to pledge support to the Trump administration in carrying out joint operations against alleged terrorist groups operating in the North and West Africa region in recent years. The prime minister reiterated this position in a quote published by the [Wall Street Journal](#) stressing:

“When it comes to combating terrorism, we would like to benefit from U.S. experience, not only of training but intelligence sharing, gathering, equipment, training.”

Revolutionary Transformation Stifled by the Neo-Colonial Status Quo

Such statements from Hamdok shed light on the political outlook of the interim government now operating in Khartoum. How does this foreign policy posture towards Washington differ fundamentally from what was being pursued under former President al-Bashir?

The NCP government had been cooperating with the U.S. in its war against Yemen since March 2015. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have engaged in massive bombing and ground operations in Yemen under the guise of preventing the Ansurallah (Houthis) Movement from taking control of the entire country, the most underdeveloped in the Middle East region.

U.S. warplanes guided by the Pentagon’s targeting and refueling technology have facilitated the war against Yemen which has killed thousands and displaced many more. The social impact of the war on Yemen has been designated as the worse humanitarian crisis in the world today.

Although Hamdok announced after returning to Khartoum from Washington that Sudan had reduced the number of troops serving in Yemen from 15,000 to 5,000, he restated a commitment to maintaining his government’s participation in the continuing war which is in line with U.S. foreign policy towards Iran. The Ansurallah is accused of receiving military and political support from Tehran, a claim the Iranian government has denied. (See [this](#))

Since the military coup against al-Bashir, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE have pledged \$3 billion in assistance to Khartoum to prop up the interim administration. Just recently, the Sudan Tribune reported that the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) had conducted joint exercises with Qatar.

The [Sudan Tribune article](#) reports that:

“According to a statement by the Qatari Defense, the military exercise was attended by Major General Rashid bin Nasser, Head of Qatar’s Authority of Military Institutes and Colleges, and Major General Hafez al-Taj Makki the Red Sea Governor.

Al-Nasser praised the military training of the Qatari officers saying it would enable them to carry out their duties. However, he did not speak about the duration of the training of the exercises. The Sudanese army did not issue a statement about this exercise. On 29 November, the Eritrean government issued a statement accusing Qatar of continuing to provide military support to the opposition groups. Asmara did not accuse the Sudanese transitional government of taking part in this plot but stressed that Qatar uses Sudan as a springboard for its subversive activities.”

Of course states such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar operate within the imperialist sphere of influence and not only in the Middle East. There are numerous interventions through their military operations by these Gulf monarchies in the internal affairs of African nations such as Djibouti and Eritrea.

The Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) has been highly critical of the role of Saudi Arabia and the UAE in recent developments involving the interim government under Prime Minister Hamdok. Their criticism was so severe that it prompted a response from the UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash.

In an article published by the [Middle East Monitor](#), it reveals:

“Gargash explained that Al-Khatib’s comments: ‘are based on used and abused ideological concepts associated with his party.’ He continued: ‘Our relationship with Khartoum is historic, and the Arab role in supporting Sudan in its current circumstances is necessary.’ It is noteworthy that Al-Khatib delivered a speech in the Omdurman region, last Friday, accusing the UAE and Saudi Arabia of ‘quick intervention during the first days of the uprising’ in Sudan against Al-Bashir regime.”

The SCP in October called for mass demonstrations demanding the dismantling of the former governing party the NCP. The Communists have rejected the political agreements between the opposition FFC and the TMC.

Consequently, the direction of the foreign policy of the interim government is clearly reflective of its class politics related to the domestic situation. The Sudanese people will not be fully liberated within the context of imperialist domination. A struggle for genuine revolutionary democracy and self-determination is the only solution to the current crisis of governance and economic instability.

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