

The emergence of an alternative in Sudan

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On 25 October 2021, Generals al-Burhan and Hemidti ended the transitional government that emerged from the 2019 revolution in Sudan with a coup. Since then, mobilization has continued despite the repression. The resistance committees, the backbone of the struggle, have adopted a charter invoking the need for grassroots people's power.

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To counter its isolation, the junta is trying to rely on Muslim extremists from the former dictatorial regime of Omar al-Bashir. In 1989, he seized power with the complicity of the fundamentalists led by al-Turabi. The latter had imposed a particularly restrictive Islamic regime and had been the champion of war against the people of South Sudan by invoking jihad. Ten years later, al-Bashir got rid of al-Turabi but kept the fundamentalists, well established in the state apparatus and unwavering supporters of the dictatorship. They were dismissed during the revolution, but al-Burhan has just reinstated them.

A disastrous coup

The economic situation is catastrophic, commodity and energy prices are rising, and Western loans are frozen. The only solution for the dictatorship is to try to find other donors. On the very day of the Russian intervention in Ukraine, Hemidti was going to Moscow to seek diplomatic and financial support. Given Putin's setbacks, it's not certain that the Sudanese generals can count on Russia's financial assistance. Another solution is Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, both interested in maintaining the dictatorship. Indeed, thousands of Sudanese fighters have been sent by Hemidti to Yemen to fight against the Iranian-backed Houthis.

For the junta, the diplomatic and economic disaster is also political, as it tries in vain to put down popular mobilizations that are not weakening. Demonstrations succeed one another with the only slogan being the departure of the junta.

Political alternative

This demand for the departure of the junta does not correspond at all to the agenda of the various mediations driven by the West via the UN or the African Union. Their solution would be to return to the previous situation with a sharing of power between military and civilians. This proposal is inconceivable for those who lead the struggle, primarily the resistance committees which, through the neighbourhoods of the country's major cities, structure the movement. They play a leading role in the mobilizations, and now they are present in the political debate.

We have previously talked about the charter of people's power that is under discussion. The greater Khartoum resistance committees presented this at a press conference in mid-May. It includes democratic demands such as equal rights regardless of gender, race or religion, a total break with the military regime including judicial punishment for those responsible for the coup. At the security level, the charter favours an overhaul of military institutions and the withdrawal of troops from Yemen. An economic recovery plan against poverty, the fight against corruption and the cessation of the involvement of the army in economic activities. Finally, and perhaps a major step forward, the charter considers that the source of power must be the rank and file.

The political solution proposed by the resistance committees is:

The formation of a legislative council made up of the living forces of the revolution, which functions in a federal way: neighbourhood councils, federated at the level of cities, federated at the regional and finally national levels. This bottom-up legislative council, federally organized, must become the main political organ of the country. The aim is to transfer the maximum power from the centre to the regions, and to the local level.

This desire to organize popular control is the result of recent experience of negotiations after the revolution where the resistance committees were discarded in favour of the political class. It also reflects the more distant history where the popular movements have supported, against the military regimes, the two main Sudanese parties from the religious brotherhoods. Each time these parties have led the country to bankruptcy.

Such a charter should lead us to redouble our efforts to carry out concrete solidarity actions such as union twinning, like Britain's National Education Union which has forged links with members of the Sudanese Teachers' Committee and supported them during their strike on wage issues.

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P.S.

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