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Sudan

“Overthrow the regime and prepare the future”

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Can you summarize the current situation in Sudan?

The military-Islamist regime of Al Bashir has been in power since 1989, that is almost 30 years, and is now facing the worst economic crisis in its history. The Sudanese pound has lost most of its value in 6 months. The price of bread has increased from 1 to 3 pounds. There is a general shortage of gasoline, and the country is cut off from the outside world.

The Sudanese government is on the verge of bankruptcy and is trying to secure regional allies. There is an economic partnership with China. The essential fact is that there is no more money, the country is on the verge of bankruptcy. Wealth exists, but it is monopolized by a clique linked to the regime.

What do you think about the current mobilizations?

The regime is facing unprecedented demonstrations. This movement exists in all major cities in the country with the exception of a few conurbations. There are broad social categories mobilized, the impoverished middle class is very present. Many women are participating. It should be noted that these demonstrations are peaceful. The government is responding with excessive use of force.

What are the demonstrators' goals?

Mobilization began in response to measures that significantly increased the prices of basic necessities. From the first week, it was totally clear that this was a mainly political uprising, focused on demanding regime change. "The people want the regime to fall" is the unifying slogan. The professional associations, the Sudanese Professionals Association, which independently brings together official pro-regime trade unions, Sudanese professionals, doctors, engineers, etc..... has been the unifying group of this mobilization. The political parties opposed to the regime have also come together around a "Declaration for Freedom and Change". The axes are clear: the overthrow of the regime by peaceful means, and above all, organising the transition to a democratic regime with the right to free expression, freedom of assembly, and putting an end to the concentration of wealth in the hands of an Islamic-autocratic minority.

How can these goals be achieved?

The calls for general mobilization, initiated by and around the Sudanese Professionals Association, have made it possible to organize massive and regular mobilizations in the workplace and in the neighbourhoods. Spontaneous night demonstrations also take place and are really massive. The regime has blocked Facebook and Whats'App, but videos are still being broadcast daily by demonstrators, informing the media and the Sudanese diaspora around the world. Rallies in support of the popular uprising have been held in a significant number of countries, but it must be acknowledged that there has been relatively little media coverage and external support.

According to professional associations, the overthrow of the regime requires a massive uprising, a strategy of

peaceful civil disobedience and the goal of a general strike. There is no support to be expected from the official trade unions controlled by the government, they are content to ask for the legitimacy of the regime to be respected and wait for the 2020 elections. Today these structures are out of the game. What is at the heart of the political debate is the immediate fall of the regime.

What is the position of the various Sudanese political parties?

The parties opposed to the regime have been participating in the uprising since the beginning, without being in the driving seat. They have joined the collective framework coordinated by the Association of Professionals. Today, there are three main blocs of parties with different strategies.

The Sudan Call is a group of a number of organizations that had participated in previous negotiations with the Sudanese government under the aegis of the African Union. It includes the Umma party of former Prime Minister Sadek al-Mahdi, overthrown in 1989 by the Al-Bashir coup, Malik Agar's SPLM North, Minni Minawi's SLM, Gibril Ibrahim's Justice and Equality Movement, the Sudanese Civil Society Confederation.

The Sudan Consensus Force is a group whose fundamental focus is the refusal in principle to negotiate with the regime. It includes the Sudanese Communist Party, Arab and Nasserian nationalist parties. It is a progressive group.

Les Unionistes, is a grouping around the Democratic Unionist Party, one of Sudan's major institutional parties. To this must be added other structures that are, to get to the point, former splits of this Party. The Unionists act for the peaceful overthrow of the regime.

A word must also be said about the armed movements that play an important role in conflict areas. The Sudan Liberation Movement of Abdulwahid Al Nur in Darfur, and the Sudan People Liberation Movement in the Nuba Mountains region. These movements also categorically reject negotiations with the regime, and act independently of the political groupings mentioned above.

During the first days of the uprising, premises of the Al-Bashir National Congress Party were burnt down. The regime then accused the Sudan Liberation Movement of being at work, allegedly with the complicity of Israeli intelligence. Fortunately, this propaganda did not find a response. The response of the demonstrators was to refuse to let themselves be divided, the slogan on everyone's lips was "we are all darfuris".

Can you describe the strategy of the regime?

I would say there are three main axes.

First, there is the assertion that the demonstrations are the work of foreigners, that parties and professional associations obey foreign embassies by which we should essentially understand the Western powers.

Then there is the assertion that demonstrations can lead the country to chaos, as in Syria and Yemen. The current regime prides itself on providing stability.

Finally, the regime is playing on racist discourse. Al-Bashir dares to say "If the regime falls, the darfuris will dominate the country". That means the black populations in Sudan. Arab and Muslim culture is said to be under threat. There is a strong racial and ethnic component centred in this discourse. Fortunately, this kind of talk does not succeed in

dividing and demobilizing. This type of propaganda no longer works.

A word must be said about the role of the army. With each major popular uprising in Sudan's history, 1964 and 1985, the army has played an important role in the transition. Today, the army has been completely rebuilt by the regime, it is an ideological and ideologized army. The ex-Janjaweed militias affiliated to the regime, responsible for the genocide in Darfur, were integrated into the armed forces in 2017 under the name of Rapid Support Forces. The army is considered non-independent, composed of some ethnic groups in northern Sudan. The decisive factor is that today the army is no longer able to play a soft transition role within the regime as it once did.

What about the current mobilizations in support of the Sudanese people's mobilization?

The Sudanese in exile have mobilized strongly, particularly in France. There have been civil society positions. Unfortunately, for the time being, this has been done in relative isolation from those most affected.

Western governments are taking prudent positions, they condemn violence against demonstrators, but no firm positions against the regime.

In conclusion, I would say that it is up to Sudanese abroad to meet with democratic organizations and political parties, to broaden support, to act to overthrow the regime and to prepare for the future.

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