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Sudan

"The general strike can force the regime to go": Sudanese trade unionists speak out as killings continue

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A general strike has brought Khartoum and all major cities and ports in Sudan to a standstill in response to a deadly rampage by pro-regime militias, the army and security forces, Sudanese trade unionists and community leaders in the UK told a press conference yesterday. The Transitional Military Council, which seized power after a popular uprising forced dictator Omar el Bashir to step down, sent troops to attack a peaceful sit-in outside the Army General Command on Monday 3 June, killing at least 35 people according to reports from Sudan.

Dr Hashem Mukhtar, representative of the Alliance of Sudanese Political Forces said the protests, which began last December, were "full of art and joy". People were waiting to celebrate what Sara Beileil, another Sudanese doctor present called, "a day when we were expecting it to be the first Eid of a new Sudan", when they were brutally attacked.

The speakers called for the perpetrators to be held to account by the international community. They called on the UN, the ICJ, the African Union and Western governments to investigate the massacres as war crimes. They should break with any recognition of the Transitional Military Council, the TMC, saying they were not transitional as they had no intention of standing down.

Mr Salah Hassan of the Sudanese Trade Unions UK described how those patiently sitting outside the Army HQ in Khartoum had been mercilessly killed. He described how General Burhan, head of the TMC, had made a speech after the killing saying the military council disengaged from any agreement made with the Forces for Freedom and Change, the movement that has coalesced as the voice of the Sudanese uprisings. This showed the cynicism of the TMC who were nothing but a continuation of the old regime, he argued.

Dr Ammar Hamoda, spokesperson from the Forces for Freedom and Change, said the lies of the TMC would not be believed as people around the world understood who were the ones hindering change.

Medical workers have been beaten by the armed men attacking protesters, with evidence emerging that hospitals are under siege so that the injured were not able to access treatment. Mosques have become impromptu medical centres.

Hospitals and medical staff have been systematically attacked since the beginning of the revolution, Dr Hamoda confirmed.

Now the regime had successfully shut down Sudan's internet connection it is hard to verify how many more had been killed than the numbers first reported and that it appears that over 600 have been injured. A source in the Sudanese Professionals Association told Middle East Solidarity that a further 46 deaths were reported on 4 June.

Rapid Support Forces and other armed groups have surrounded key telecoms infrastructure sites and forced internet service providers to shut down, the source added.

Militia, army and police attacks have spread nationwide, Dr Hamoda said, ranging from assaults on farmers in West Sudan to attacks on groups of people queueing for bread or going to pray. Many of these forces were not Rapid Support Forces, they were simply militias and they were active everywhere in Sudan.

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Resistance is continuing, reported Salah Hassan of the Sudanese Trade Unions in the UK. "The general strike and civil disobedience will force the regime to step down."

Attempts by the regime to get the support of the old trade unions had failed, following 100 per cent support for the general strikes of 28 and 29 May.

The main opposition coalition, the Forces for Freedom and Change is behind the call for civil disobedience until the fall of the regime, Dr Hamoda confirmed. "Forty percent of Sudan is still at war" he added, "our demands remain for peace agreements, a census and participation in elections of all Sudanese."

The Rapid Support Forces militia, commanded by General Hemedti, deputy head of the TMC, is getting support from powers elsewhere in the region, especially from Saudi, the UAE and Egypt, and that these powers are acting in their own interests that were counter to the national interests of the Sudanese people, speakers affirmed.

"Everyone should support the general strike to continue the revolution", concluded Dr Farooq Fadul from the Sudanese Doctors Union UK.