

Sudanese teachers on the frontlines of revolution



The people of Sudan by their bravery and determination, by their solidarity, protests and strikes, toppled the 30 year-old dictatorship of Omar el-Bashir in 2019.

Their demand for civilian rule brought a Transitional Government into office, where power was shared between civilian opposition politicians and el-Bashir's old generals and paramilitary leaders like Mohamed Dagalo (known as Hemedti) head of the brutal Rapid Support Forces which grew out of the Janjaweed militias responsible for genocide and ethnic cleansing in Darfur. But in October 2021 a military coup led by General el-Burhan forced civilian parties out of power.

Since the coup the Sudanese people have mobilised massive regular protests to drive forward their demand for an end to military rule. Neighbourhood-based Resistance Committees took on the leadership of the revolutionary movement, mobilising hundreds of thousands in demonstrations and days of civil disobedience rejecting the military government.

The regime uses weapons, internationally recognised as criminal, against civilians. It targets and arrests activists: thousands have been injured, hundreds imprisoned, many are beaten and tortured, over 92 have been killed.

Trade unions have faced a severe crackdown, including the Sudanese Teachers' Committee which was targeted by the military in the early days of the coup as its activists led protests.

While Western governments talked in behind-the-scenes negotiations about the importance of democracy, Sudan's generals attempted to tighten their grip on the state, carrying out mass arrests of teachers. At least 100 teachers were arrested by the military authorities in early November following



Members of the Sudanese Teachers' Committee on strike in March 2022 | Photo: STC

'Education is a right and should be free'

Gamariea Omer is Vice President of the Executive Office of the Sudanese Teacher's Committee

We expected that the Sudanese Revolution would bring about radical and fundamental change, and that development would take place through education, enabling democracy to become rooted during the transitional period.

We thought the transitional period would lead to the development of education, and the Sudanese Teachers' Committee had a plan to bring about radical change, but Al-

Burhan blocked that road through the military coup of 25 October. It is clear that education will not develop under military rule or dictatorship.

The military regime, and especially the previous dictatorship under the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood, interfered constantly in the curriculum.

Technical Education, which is vitally important to development, almost completely collapsed ... Education budgets have been cut, even during the Transitional Government, although the Education Ministry should be providing a service to all. Education is a right and should be free, according to the Constitution."

[Turn to the back page for a solidarity motion you can use in your branch.](#)

a violent attack on a teachers' protest outside the Education Ministry where at least 87 were detained. Coup leaders pushed ahead with appointing el-Bashir's former cadres to work in all ministries and government facilities, including in the education system, while forcing out of their posts those opposing military rule.

The regime has kidnapped people from their homes and workplaces, some are still missing. They have fabricated allegations, imprisoned and tortured minors like Tupac, a young activist.

But the scale of the protest movement paralysed the military's government, forcing its civilian figurehead, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok to resign in January 2022. The huge network of over 5000 Resistance Committees across the country repeatedly brought hundreds of thousands into the streets, and engaged tens of thousands in democratic discussion about what an alternative to the military's dictatorship should look like.

Alongside the protests in the streets, important struggles have developed in workplaces, and activists are making links between the fight for economic dignity and the battle for democracy and political freedom.

January saw strikes by court workers for a living wage and by bank workers against dismissal. The battles in the courts and at the Bank of Khartoum sparked solidarity campaigns and efforts to bring together striking workers and activists from the Resistance Committees. When 7 activists were killed on Jan 17th a general strike was called for the next two days.

Health workers, rail workers, trade unions and workers committees joined the strike. A statement by trade unionists published by the Sudanese Workers Association for the Restoration of Trade Unions stated:

"We as elected union bodies call on workers in sectors connected to our members to engage in complete civil disobedience on 18 and 19 January. We must organise in the workplaces to make the battle to defeat the military coup a battle to build the unions. Democratic unions are the most effective in preparing successive strikes and guaranteeing high levels of democratic participation in the strike

Resistance Committees lead the revolution



Arkawit Resistance Committee mobilised public health volunteers during the Covid crisis



School students lead a protest organised by the Resistance Committees, March 2022

When we speak of leadership we speak of collective leadership. It's only the authority of the nation, of the movement, and is not about forcing things but rather about building upon the tracks of each and every step we've taken.

So it's a leadership not of representation but one where every participant in the street is actually part of it, and part of the decision-making. We hold three 'No's: no

negotiation, no legitimacy, and no partnership with the military. It might sound a little bit radical but we have found it's the only way to salvation from the military leaders come back after every victorious uprising and kidnap democracy. So we ask you to respect and stand in solidarity with the things that we uphold.

Resistance Committee activist, December 2021

and complete civil disobedience."

Protesters are taking to the streets daily. There are 8 main demonstrations planned each month plus other local ones. The military have intensified their crackdown. A Sudanese Teachers Committee (STC) activist reported, "The previous intelligence system has been reactivated; their authority was limited in the last government, now they have been given full power. They are conducting mass arrests of activists. They show up in large numbers, armed with war-like ammunition. They are practicing horrible torture, verbal

aggression, and violence against the protesters and detainees. At least 200-300 are imprisoned and 2000 injured. Those arrested are kept in unknown locations and have no formal charges."

The political crisis has been accompanied by rising social distress, with massive increases in the cost of living and services such as cooking gas. Since the coup, Western donor countries have cut aid and charities have warned the war in Ukraine, which provides over 80 percent of Sudan's wheat imports, will deepen the economic crisis.



STC members hold signs saying 'I am a teacher, I am on strike' during their national strike | Photo: STC

'I am a teacher, I am on strike'

The Sudanese Teachers' Committee launched a national teachers' and education workers' strike demanding a rise in the minimum wage and the abolition of an unfair pay structure on 12 March. No teacher in Sudan can live on the present salary. Families survive on remittances from abroad.

The STC's strike committee includes representatives from all parts of the country, and the union represents approximately 350,000 teachers. The strike, covering cities, villages and rural areas, has had unprecedented levels of response, in many areas 100 percent of schools were closed. The STC said "The reports received from the field committees in the localities of Khartoum State and all the cities and countryside of the states of Sudan documented an unprecedented response to the call for strike, as the strike covered cities, villages and rural areas. According to the initial reports

submitted, we affirm the overwhelming success of the first day's strike, with a rate of no less than 99% in the states, and even in a number of localities in Khartoum State, the response rate reached 100%."

As teachers and public education workers walked out for pay justice, school pupils showed solidarity with the strike. Videos circulated on social media show hundreds of pupils chanting revolutionary slogans in solidarity with striking teachers.

The authorities have responded with vicious repression in some areas. STC activists reported: "The arrest of a number of teachers of Nyala Secondary School for Boys took place on Monday, March 14, 2022, at 9.30am. Amongst them is the school headteacher, Mr Omar Muhammad Muhammad Mustafa, Mr Adel Abdul Rahman Adam and Mr Muhammad Hamdallah. They were beaten and insulted by an armed

force led by a lieutenant from inside the school, the situation is out of control!"

Security forces attacked striking teachers and sprayed primary school pupils with tear gas in Atbara, according to eyewitness video reports. A teacher said "Tear-gas grenades were thrown to Zat Alnitagain girls primary school in Atbara city. Girls were panicking and screaming. Number of girls and teachers fainted and the parents were running towards the school to check on their children."

On 24 March the Ministry of Education used a different tactic to break the strike, dismissing teachers who it claimed had "not complied with the decision of excluding politics from the education sector." Forty teachers were dismissed that day in just one area Bahri, Greater Khartoum.

The STC needs your solidarity - turn to the back page for a model motion

www.menasolidaritynetwork.com

for news, updates and campaign resources. Twitter: @MENASolidarity

'We will continue to strike for our rights'

Sania Ibrahim Khojaly Al-Ashqar is a member of the Media Office of the Sudanese Teachers' Committee, and a member of the Teachers' Committee in White Nile province.

The White Nile Teachers' Committee started in difficult circumstances, at the beginning of 2012, as all teachers struggled with the authoritarian Islamic Front regime. After forming local committees we created a regional committee in the state capital, Rabak. It communicated with all the committees in the other localities and communicated with the Central Teachers Committee in Khartoum.

The committee's main objectives are to address the issues with salaries, bonuses and all the issues with the salary structure of teachers in Sudan and the White Nile State in particular. The committee announced a strike four times in the White Nile State fighting for teachers' rights.

Now we are striking to implement the salary structure change agreed by the Cabinet before the 25 October coup. The committee is holding on



STC activists march for dignity in Bahri, Greater Khartoum | Photo: STC

to the teachers' right to strike. The strike is very successful despite the confrontations encountered with the coup forces and the cadres of the coup authority within educational institutions.

One of the reasons that led to the strike's success was the stressful economic conditions.

The teachers expected the implementation of the new 2022 salary structure that the Ministry of Finance had committed to before the coup, but the ministry dropped all commitments prior to the coup.

The Sudanese Teachers' Committee had presented a study and a proposition earlier to the Ministry of Finance. That called for a minimum wage of 24,000 Sudanese pounds (£40) per month based on the cost-of-living

study submitted by the STC to the Cabinet. The Cabinet then approved a new salary structure with a minimum wage of 12,000 Sudanese pounds (£20), while maintaining allowances and bonuses according to the old salary structure.

It is not logical to have a dual salary structure, which is deceiving to government employees, with an increase that does not fulfil essential needs. Therefore, as teachers, we refuse to accept the new salary structure and stand in solidarity with the call by the Sudanese Teachers Committee for a comprehensive strike. The teachers confirm they will continue to strike until they get their full rights despite the oppression and violence inflicted by the coup authority.

Take action in solidarity: pass this resolution

This NEU District/Branch notes that:

The people of Sudan toppled the 30 year-old dictatorship of Omar El Bashir in 2019. The military coup of October 2021 put back in power many of El Bashir's former regime and has been followed by vicious repression.

On 12 March a nationwide strike organised by the Sudanese Teachers Committee began. The strike for pay rises as wages are well below a living wage, has been very well-supported, with 100 percent of schools closed in many areas.

The regime responded with

brutality, firing tear gas into one school, and beating up teachers. On 24th March as the strike continued the Ministry of Education issued an order to dismiss teachers who took part in strike action.

This NEU District/Branch resolves to:

1. Send a message of solidarity to the Sudanese Teachers Committee
2. Invite a member of the working group set up by MENA Solidarity, NEU members and Sudanese activists to build solidarity with Sudanese teachers to address our members.

3. Send a message condemning attacks on the STC and other bodies supporting the Sudanese revolution to the Sudanese authorities, copied to the Foreign Secretary and our local MP.

5. Affiliate to MENA Solidarity and circulate information about the Sudanese revolution to our members.

Go to www.menasolidaritynetwork.com to download a copy of this resolution and other resources and information about the Sudanese revolution: https://menasolidaritynetwork.com/SudanSolidarity_education/

www.menasolidaritynetwork.com

for news, updates and campaign resources. Twitter: @MENAsolidarity