

Middle East **Solidarity**

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A revolt against the whole regime



Iranian activists speak out on the 'Woman, Life, Freedom' uprising

Special feature on COP27

Hamza Hamouchene
on the three decades of
'empty talk' behind the
UN climate summit

Climate change, debt and dictatorship

The fragile foundations
of Egypt's 'energy
transition'

#FreeThemAll #FreeAlaa

How Egyptian activists
mobilised to highlight
repression under Sisi's
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Sentenced to 34 years by Saudi court

Campaign continues for
Leeds University PhD
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About us

Events in the Middle East often dominate the news, but war, sectarian violence and western military intervention grab the headlines. Middle East Solidarity shows a different side to the region.

We report on resistance to repression and imperialism from Morocco to Yemen, covering the strikes and protests which are missed by the mainstream media.

We carry the voices and stories of the women and men who are still fighting for bread, freedom and social justice to new audiences. Our practical guides to campaigning and resources for activists aim to build a stronger solidarity movement.

Middle East Solidarity is a joint project of MENA Solidarity Network, Egypt Solidarity Initiative and Bahrain Watch, and is supported by funding from UCU, PCS, NEU and a number of Trades Union Councils and local trade union branches.

Find out more here:

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‘The uprising has entered a revolutionary dynamic’

Peyman Jafari, a historian of Iran’s labour movement, analyses the revolt which has gripped Iran since the police murder of Jina Mahsa Amini in September 2022.

December 7 marked the third of three days of protests and strikes announced in Iran. The date was not a coincidence because it is “Student Day”, which marks the events of 1953, when on December 7 students of Tehran University protested against the visit of Vice President Nixon and the resumption of relations with Britain.

Four months earlier from that date the US and UK had orchestrated a coup d’état in Iran against Prime Minister Mossadegh who had wanted to nationalise the oil industry.

So since that year, the 7th December

has been announced as Student Day and students have taken to the streets to protest domestic dictatorship and also foreign domination of Iran. I think today’s symbolism is that the protests of the last two and half months stand in that long tradition of Iranians fighting collectively for their freedom.

This uprising is a rupture in the history of the Islamic Republic

As a historian I’m always interested in what happened in the past, but we don’t have time to delve deeper into that history. However it is important to see that it actually covers the entire 20th Century. Iran experienced its first revolution and the first revolution in the Middle East in 1906, the Constitutional Revolution, which was also directed against domestic oppression and foreign domination.

But what is important I think about the demonstrations and the protests of the last two and half months, and we are nearly entering its third month, is that they really signify a change of mentality among millions of Iranians and a rupture in the history of the Islamic Republic.

Why is that the case? This is not because there haven’t been protests earlier on. We have seen mass protests in Iran in 2009, when 3 million people demonstrated on the streets of Tehran. But that was very much about political rights. The main slogan was “Where is my vote”, because the elections had been fraudulent. There was this idea that the system could be reformed by pressuring it from below by demonstrations and protests.

Like any social movement, those protests involved people from all walks of life: workers and middle class people. But the dominant force in those demonstrations was the middle class. In 2017 and 2018 there were

eruptions of protests against increasing inflation. And similar protests erupted in November 2019, when the government cut back subsidies on fuel. Those protests were all over the country, but involved mainly unemployed workers, impoverished workers in very precarious jobs.

So the slogans were mainly socio-economic, although they obviously also involved political demands. I think the significance of the protests happening today is that they indicate the fusion of demands for political freedom, demands for social justice and demands for cultural freedoms.

This fusion is not happening evenly, and I will come back to this point later. However, I think we are seeing the emergence of a fragile coalition of middle-class youth with working class people at a neighbourhood level. They are coming together and demanding fundamental change of the entire political system. Therefore I call this an uprising with a revolutionary perspective.

This is not because I do not want this to be a revolution. I very much wish for it. But I think that while the uprising has entered a revolutionary dynamic, we are not yet in the midst of a revolution. For that to happen, we need to see much bigger demonstrations on the streets of Iran. Currently they involve tens of thousands:

I think they need to involve hundreds of thousands and probably millions, and also to really bring Iranian workers into the movement through mass strikes. And for revolution to happen, we also need to see fractures increasing at the top of the regime, so that it can crumble and open up this space for the revolutionary movement.

I do think we are seeing all those dynamics happening, but at an early stage. We are definitely seeing development in that direction. What is clear is that the gap between society and the regime has increased to an unmanageable level. I do not think that there is any possibility of going back to the time before these demonstrations started, because a wall of fear has crumbled.

People are staying in the streets, despite massive repression. Already, more than 18,000 people have been arrested and imprisoned. More than 470 people have been killed on the streets. Today, I heard that nine people, probably 11, have been sentenced to death.

So the regime is trying to intimidate people, but this is really not working. For the coming months, I am expecting a change towards a parallel strategy of repression, and some level of concessions to try and calm down the situation. How far those concessions will go, I'm not sure. This is because they have to balance between the streets and the hardliners of the regime, mainly Ayatollah Khamenei, who is the Supreme Leader of Iran.

The protests have already won some victories. There has been a change in mentality around the images and symbolism of women for instance. Women are not only at the forefront of these protests, but women's rights are at the forefront of their demands. The image of women in the protests is not that of a victim of this system. Rather, it is of women revelling in being at the forefront of the demonstrations. So the persistence of the protest is very important.

Then we also have the trajectory of development of these protests. What is important for these protests to be successful, as I already mentioned, is for them to involve larger masses of the population because what has happened now is quite uneven.

“We are the workers’ children, next to the workers we will stand”

We have had ups and downs in the number of protests in the last two and a half months, but two elements have kept the fire going as it were. One is the universities where we are seeing protests again today.

For instance, today the students of Allameh Tabataba'i University were marching with the slogan: “We are the workers’ children, next to the workers we will stand” and “Student-worker unity, unity.” So that is very important. The universities are important places of organisation because there are networks of organising where students meet each other, gather and keep going.

The other important location that has kept the demonstrations and the protests going, despite the ups and downs, is the Kurdish region where the repression has been also the severest. That is again because there has been a tradition of political organisation and union organisation in the Kurdish areas. Therefore the strikes have been more

massive there as well. And these parts are keeping the movement going on.

But the challenge is the development of mass strikes in Iran. I do think we are seeing very positive signals of that in the last few days. We saw, for instance, strikes by shopkeepers in forty cities across Iran. Obviously, this doesn't mean that all the shopkeepers in these cities are on strike, but important segments of them are taking part. In Iran, there are 340 cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants. In almost 10 percent of these cities there were shopkeepers' strikes.

There have been some strikes in the industrial sector at the beginning of the protests, mainly by oil workers on temporary contracts, rather than permanent workers. That would be an important shift if permanent workers go on strike. We have seen protests in the Isfahan steel factory and by some car industry workers. But we haven't seen a mass strike in the industrial sector.

And in the service sector, we have seen the beginnings of strikes by teachers. And that is, by the way, very important because the majority of women workers are employed in the service sector in Iran, working in the health sector and in the education sector.

Iran has one of the lowest labour force participation rates for women at only 18 percent. And therefore, the protests are not only driven by the desire of getting rid of the social restrictions in terms of the dress code, but also of what women are experiencing in the public space and in the workplace.

Almost 60 percent of Iranian students are women, but when they try to enter the job market, they are confronted with all kinds of discriminatory laws and sexism in the workplace. So they are challenging that as well.

Finally, I just want to touch on what are the obstacles currently for the strikes to develop into a general strike. One is the absence of organisation and the government has tried to prevent the emergence of a national organisation. But I think there are important initiatives in informal networks of workers in a variety of sectors, such as the teachers and the oil workers, which in the coming months, can coordinate and collaborate and consolidate the strikes as protests continue.

The other has been actually the terrible economic conditions in Iran. I have been in touch with a number



Iranian school students show their contempt for current Supreme Leader Khamenei and his predecessor Ayatollah Khomeini | Photo: CCITTA via Twitter

of workers who are not on strike, who were all telling me “we are not striking because we cannot actually go on strike because there are no strike funds.”

They do not have reserves to go on strike because of sheer poverty. That poverty has been accelerated by the mismanagement and the neoliberal policies of the state, but also by the economic sanctions that have been imposed on Iran.

In this way, the sanctions are actually undermining the disruptive power of workers, who otherwise would be much more confident to actually organise mass strikes.

The third issue is the lack of social justice demands in the current movement. Lots of the slogans are about political freedoms, and rightly also about social and cultural freedoms.

But I think social justice has to be at the heart of the slogans as well, in order to give workers the confidence that if a revolution will emerge, the Islamic

elite will not be replaced by secular elites that will continue the policies of neoliberalization that we are seeing in European countries, in the US, and also in the Middle East and Egypt and other countries.

And I think that the possibility is there, because at the underground level, at neighbourhood levels, people are actually raising social justice slogans. The workers are doing this, and this is why the students’ slogan of student-worker unity is important.

Unfortunately, outside of Iran, we are seeing the political leaders of the West pushing a different discourse. Representatives of the movement who are in line with neoliberal politics are preferred by the West. Therefore, we are also not hearing enough from the opposition in Iran that is actually putting forward these slogans and has been facing repression.

Therefore, I want to end my introduction by remembering Leila

Hosseinzadeh, who is in prison. She is a leftist, a student activist, a member of Student Union and an organiser of workers’ solidarity. Her health is in a terrible condition as we speak, and she needs to be released. So I call everybody to also mention her name in the social publications and the social space to make sure that there is enough attention for those in prison currently in Iran.

This is an edited transcript of Peyman’s contribution to an online teach-out on Solidarity with the Woman, Life Freedom Uprising in Iran on December 7. The teach-out was co-organised by Cambridge UCU, Cambridge University Students Union, Cambridgeshire NEU, Cambridge and District TUC and MENA Solidarity. Go to www.menasolidaritynetwork.com for more information



‘Down with the Oppressor’

A revolt against the whole regime

Mass protests and strikes once again swept Iran in the week of 5 December. Middle East Solidarity interviewed women’s rights activist **Parinaz Partow** and social activist and former political prisoner **Haydeh Ravesh** about the uprising a few days later.

Are protests still happening? Where are they taking place?

Parinaz: Unrelenting protests continue across the country and videos are posted daily of these protests. In the first week of December there were videos of protestors in Arak, central Iran, Zahedan, Iranshahr, Nokabad in South-East Iran, Bandar Abbas in Southern Iran. Truck drivers in Sumar, Western Iran held strikes in solidarity with the nationwide protests.

The funerals of those killed by the regime are also galvanising the Iranian people to continue their struggle for regime change. The protests are widespread and whilst there are various videos of the regime pushing its suppressive forces into certain regions,

it is finding it impossible to silence the protestors like it has in previous uprisings.

Haydeh: The protests are continuing every day in all parts of the country, particularly in major cities such as Tehran, Arak, Shiraz, Isfahan, Gilan, Mazandaran, and Mashhad and of course in Kurdish cities. During the day, protestors are mostly organising at universities and high schools, in the evening it’s mainly in local areas.

On Monday 5 December a three-day national strike was announced by the Young Iranians group. Workers, students, shopkeepers, main market, lorry drivers and even athletes in Iran have joined this strike. Several parties, organisations and political and human

right activists outside Iran supported this national strike too.

Have the demands of the protests changed since September?

Parinaz: No. The demands of the protestors have remained consistent throughout this and previous uprisings, the voices have simply become louder and stronger. People are chanting “Harfe Aval – Harfe Akhar – Sarnegooni – Sarnegooni”. This is Farsi/Persian and means “Our first word and our last word – is regime change – regime change”. Therefore the people are demanding a complete overthrow of the Iranian regime in its entirety, by the Iranian people and for the Iranian people and with absolutely no concessions.

Haydeh: In the beginning, the main demands were on compulsory hijabs and asking to stop the so-called ‘Morality Police’. As the protests have evolved the most popular slogans and protest graffiti on the streets are “Down with the Dictator” and “Death to Khamenei” (the supreme leader in Iran), “Poverty, Corruption and Inflation, We Will Carry on Till the Government falls.” Calling the names of young people who were killed since September is also incredibly common at demonstrations in Iran.

How have the authorities responded?

Parinaz: The Iranian regime’s modus operandi for the past 43 years is to rule Iran with an iron fist and to crack down on dissent by unleashing a reign of terror on the Iranian people. To date, over 600 Iranians have been unlawfully killed, 10 percent of whom are minors and over 30,000 Iranians are currently being unlawfully detained, subjected to savage and brutal torture.

Haydeh: The authorities are using police forces to suppress and control the current uprising. They are employing a wide range of brutal methods. They use batons, tear gas, pepper spray, ball bearings, sound grenade, flashing water. In addition, they organise big groups of their army on motor-bikes to ride into the demonstrators to intimidate, hurt and even kill protestors. In some parts of Iran, they are using guns with real bullets. Alongside this, the authorities have deployed their media propaganda network against the uprising by calling

them: disturbing, spies for the USA and Israel, desperate for sex (with regard to women and veiling), agitated teenagers or a violent mob of radicals.

Are there strikes in solidarity with the Women, Life, Freedom uprising or over economic issues?

Parinaz: This Revolution was sparked by the death of Mahsa (Jina) Amini and while mandatory veiling is certainly one aspect of the demands, it is a symbol of the real and overwhelming cry which is regime change in its entirety. Iranian women and all freedom loving Iranians know that it is only by regime change that the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Iranians will be realised, irrespective of genders, race, religion, ethnic or linguistic differences.

Haydeh: First, I would like to mention that what is currently happening in Iran, after nearly three months from its beginning can be defined as more of a revolution than an uprising. However, Kurdistan was the very first province that went on strike just a few days after Mahsa (Jina) Amini’s death. In other parts of Iran, the strikes started weeks later. The main and widespread strike was over the three days in memory of the October 2019 riots which ended in the death of 1,500 people according to Reuters.

How does the current uprising relate to previous protests and strikes?

Parinaz: In the previous people’s uprising in 2019, the extortionate rise in the price of petrol was the trigger for people to take to the streets and to demand regime change. During the bloody crackdown of 2019, the Iranian regime unlawfully killed over 1,500 pro-democracy demonstrators and imprisoned over 12,000 others and the uprising was brutally and savagely put down in under a week by the Iranian regimes suppressive forces.

This time, nearly 3 months since Mahsa Amini’s savage killing by the so-called morality police, the demonstrations rage and school children, university students, workers’ unions, the lower and middle classes are united in their demand for freedom and democracy and a secular Iran where the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Iranians are protected. The people will not back down from this

demand and this is the beginning of the end for the Iranian regime.

Haydeh: What is happening in Iran is the outcome of 43 years of campaigns, strikes, petitions and writing letters to ministers and MPs. In addition to all this, women were attempting to challenge Islamic rules for hijabs, and then facing arrests, beating and fines. They worked hard by studying at universities and finding jobs and organising campaigns for rights to custody of their children, or against laws requiring their husband’s permission for travelling abroad, to be able to ask for divorce, to work as a judge and so on.

Can you tell us more about the role of teachers unions in organising strikes?

Haydeh: The teacher union’s history goes back longer than twenty years, when founding a union in Iran was not easy at all. They worked very hard, steadily and with dedication. It took years for them to attract committed teachers who were interested in union activity too. I would estimate that from about 3 to 4 years ago, they started to organise some demonstrations for their union’s demands. They were quite persistent and aware of avoiding redlines in Iran.

Last year they organised demonstrations and strikes across cities in Iran, at points over 200 localities were striking. When teachers go on strike, it affects about 14 million pupils and their families in Iran.

Western governments sometimes say they support the protests – is this popular with ordinary people in Iran?

Parinaz: The Iranian people are willing and more than capable of overthrowing the Iranian regime. They have never sought and nor do they desire international intervention of any kind. However, what the Iranian people expect and demand is that the British government and the international community take concrete steps to support the Iranian people in their democratic aspirations and their desire to live in a democratic and secular republic. Whilst the Iranian people certainly welcome condemnation of the Iranian regime by our government and others, the Iranian people now expect



Teachers organised a sit-in in schools in Kurdish regions of Iran on 23 and 24 October. The Coordinating of Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations said on Twitter "Today, Kurdistan schools are no longer just a place to teach textbooks, but have become a bastion of freedom for students and teachers." | Photo: CCITTA via Twitter

action in several forms. Firstly, shut down the Iranian Embassy, expel Iran from its seat at the United Nations, sanction individuals and organisations associated with the Iranian regime and most importantly, recognize the Iranian people's right to self defence to resist tyranny and oppression.

Haydeh: It is not easy to answer this question, as there is a dilemma about this. First of all, since 1979, this government has always claimed that all the dissent is related to foreign countries and they receive money and support from them. They are portrayed as 'agents' of enemy countries: America, Israel and England. Secondly, people in Iran are hoping that western countries will cease any negotiations with the Islamic government and actively disengage. I believe Iranian nationals are concerned about receiving support from western countries.

Is there any support for the idea of a return to the monarchy? Or are

protesters opposed to dictatorship in general, not just the current regime?

Parinaz: Since the beginning of this current uprising one of the most popular chants and slogans of this Revolution all over Iran has been "Marg Bar Setamgar – Che Shah Bashe – Che Rahbar" which is Farsi/Persian for "Death to the oppressor – Be it the Shah or the Ruler". This is indicative of the resounding sentiment of the Iranian people that they will not return to the old days and they will certainly not replace one dictator for another, especially given the dictatorial nature of the Shah's rule, which was the very reason for the 1979 Revolution when people took to the streets to demand a democratic republic and an end to the dictatorship of the Shah.

Haydeh: If we listen to the street voices in Iran, there is very little support for the monarchy. We even can hear slogans which are against the monarchy, for example, this slogan was

raised often at universities. However, Iranian demonstrations outside of Iran are different; one can see a number or even part of the Iranian demonstrators carrying Iran's flag and putting it on their shoulders, pictures of Reza Pahlavi (son of the last king in Iran) or pictures of the former monarchy. These Iranians support the monarchy and believe it is the best way to run Iran. But the full picture has to include that Reza Pahlavi, in his interviews, has mentioned that after the Islamic Government the type of government will be chosen by Iranians through a free election.

Most Iranians, particularly young people, more than 27 per cent of the population are under 34 years old and they believe in secularism and human rights. They are familiar with social systems and values in modern countries and when they shout out for a "normal life" they mean that style of life.

This article was edited by Anne Alexander from separate online interviews with Parinaz and Haydeh

How and why are young people in Iran participating in the uprising?

Child rights activist and researcher **Hamidreza Vasheghanifarhani** discusses how school students and young people across Iran have built a mass rebellion against the regime.

For many observers, the participation of adolescents in the Mahsa Jina Amini revolution has been a surprise. However, I believe that a closer look at the context of Iran and the daily life politics for a young person, shows that this participation is actually at the core of the uprising by its very nature.

In the last three months, parallel to observing and contemplating the different forms of adolescent participation, I had discussions with many young people and teachers to find out more. More specifically, I was trying to formulate a response to these two questions: why these young individuals are so eager about participating in this revolution, and how do they relate themselves to it and its main demands: Woman, Life, Freedom?

When I was discussing with adolescents, they noted several issues that contributed to their enthusiasm about the uprising and their moral responsibility feeling about it.

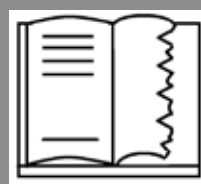
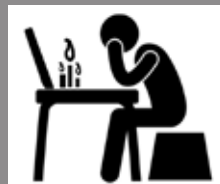
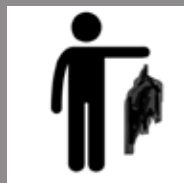
Many of them noted that they are witnessing discrimination in education as an institution. For example, one twelfth-grade student living in Kurdistan noted that “90 percent of seats in top universities go to graduates of private and non-public schools.” His concern is backed up by statistics showing that 80 percent of the top 3000 candidates in university entrance exams are from the first three richest deciles of the country’s population.

While many students do not use terms such as financialization and commodification of education, they are experiencing it in their everyday life. When they reach the age of taking the



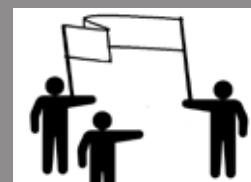
Empty class during a school strike, Sanandaj | Photo: CCITTA via Twitter

Forms of protest by school students



- Removing forced hijab in school and on their way to school
- Refusing to repeat the regime’s ideological slogans in class
- Singing and chanting songs and slogans in classes, school yard and nearby streets
- Holding memorials for young people killed by the police
- Removing pictures of Khamenei and Khomeini from the first pages of their books

- Posting their paintings and artworks on social media
- Organising demonstrations inside and outside schools
- Refusing to attend classes and joining school strikes
- Removing photos of Khomeini and Khamenei from classrooms and replacing them with artworks or photos of young people killed by the regime.
- Forcing the visiting authorities of the Ministry of Education to leave their school



A wave of repression

- At least 70 children and adolescents have been killed by the regime since September



Sarina Esmailzadeh's memorial after she was beaten to death by the security forces | Photo: Iranian activists

university entrance exam, it becomes evident, as a student notes, “how the limited facilities and quality of their public school have left them unqualified for a good performance on the university entrance exam” -an exam which is more than an exam and determines almost their destiny.

Many students mentioned the “harsh disciplinary atmosphere” in schools, from forced hijab to other issues such as physical inspection, lack of privacy, and mandatory participation in ideological events. Interestingly, some students noted that despite the general atmosphere of schools, they also have had teachers “who have informed them about their rights as children and students”, including the right to free, inclusive and quality education, the right to participation, and the right to being protected against any form of abuse.

Another reason that has contributed to the anger of students is the ideological curriculum. This includes not only praising the Supreme Leader, faking facts about the progress of the regime in science, medicine and more recently “defeating Covid-19”, but also representing girls in school textbooks as mothers, housekeepers and responsible for domestic labour. These examples show that they are fed up with the regime’s propaganda, more specifically when it comes to gender roles.

In addition, students are witnessing their peers, parents, neighbours and relatives being beaten, detained or even killed. This has raised empathy on a national scale. Any girl can see that she or her friend could be Nika Shahkarami, or Sarina Esmailzadeh, only two of the teenagers who were killed by the regime

forces, among many.

In a wider historical context, students have also witnessed discrimination against themselves and their peers. Baha’i students after finishing high school cannot enter universities. In Balochistan, the southeastern part of the country, many children cannot go to school due to not having an ID or because of the spatial distance, lack of facilities or poverty.

The right to be taught (in) their mother tongue for Kurd, Balouch, Turk, Turkmen, Arab and many other ethnicities is not recognized in practice and only is an empty promise on paper.

Even some teachers and activists such as Zara Mohammadi, a Kurdish female teacher and cultural activist, are prosecuted, imprisoned and charged only because of teaching the Kurdish language and literature to children and promoting this right. Also, LGBTQIA adolescents and young adults are stigmatised in the formal education system and thus this uprising has allowed them to raise their voices.

Many students are also directly witnessing and experiencing the environmental crises caused by mismanagement, fraud and discriminatory approach of the Islamic Regime. Most of the big cities in Iran have the problem of air pollution which causes several days of school closure every fall and winter and many cases of casualties.

Many areas have a problem with drinking water, from Balochistan and Khuzestan to the mountains of Zagros and even north of Iran. This problem is the result of using water for industrial purposes, such as steel and

industrial agriculture. Steel industries are located inside the country, instead of being established near the seas, since provinces which have coastlines are mainly populated by non-Shia and non-Fars ethnicities.

Also, while in many rural areas farmers have no right to use water resources, industrial agriculture companies consume water on large scales without any accountability. Even when students do not experience such crises directly, they have access to news on social media and see photos that are posted by people from other areas of the country.

Above all of these, financial and economic hardship which is a direct cause of market-oriented and neoliberal policies is a very apparent issue.

On one hand, adolescents see and experience this hardship and on the other hand, the fraud inside the regime has become more apparent than at any other time. Let us just take one example of many cases.

Recently it turned out that the ruling elite has embezzled more than 2.5 billion dollars from the Steel Industry of Mobarake during the past decade, despite the regime’s claims of economic hardship as a result of international sanctions.

In addition, we can list the generous budget for Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (one of the regime’s armed forces, which also acts as the main intelligence, economic, political agent of the regime, inside and outside the country, to sustain its power), for the Shia Hawza (Clergy Schools) and other ideological and religious organisations as well as the costs of war against the Syrian people.

The undemocratic allocation of the state's budget has left insufficient funding for schools, public health and the environment. Any student who looks forward to their future in Iran will eventually ask themselves, does this land remain liveable if the Islamic regime continues this way?

During the last three months, the Regime has tried to suppress students and young individuals whether at schools or in the streets. Security and plain-clothed forces have attacked several schools. They have also inspected the schools' CCTV footage to identify students. There are several reports of arresting students and teachers and school staff who showed solidarity with students and refused to cooperate with security forces.

Recently, several adolescents have undergone unfair and extrajudicial trials, facing charges of "waging war against God," or "Moharebe". Moharebe is amongst the most frequent criminal charges used by the regime, and according to Shari'a law and the criminal code of the Islamic regime of Iran usually results in death penalty or long jail terms including life imprisonment.

Amir Mohammad Jafari (who has been brutally tortured), Arian Farzam Nia and Mahdi Shokrollahi are three teenagers, each of them sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment in a recent trial. Parnis Hamnava, a 15 year old girl from Balochistan is another victim who was beaten by security forces because during their school inspection they found that Parnis had removed photos of Khomeini and Khamenei from her books.

Sadly, Parnis died after four days of hospitalisation. Since the start of the uprising at least 70 children and adolescents have been killed by the regime and many have been arrested and tortured. During this period many activists and child rights defenders including Samaneh Asghari, Mina Jandaghi, Niloufar Fathi, Atefeh Charmahalian, Saeed Shirzad, Sarvenaz Ahmadi and Mahsa Gholamalazadeh have also been arrested.

After many weeks of solitary confinement and interrogation, some of them have been released on heavy bail and are awaiting trial, but some are still in custody.

Go to www.menasolidaritynetwork.com for more details of how to take action in solidarity

A message from 'No to Women's Oppression' in Sudan

The Sudanese movement No to the Oppression of Women (La liqahr al-nisa'a) published this statement on their Facebook page in Arabic.

The regime of Omar al-Bashir in Sudan, who was overthrown by a popular uprising in 2019, used similar tactics to the Iranian regime to instil fear and division by attacking women for 'immodest' dress and punishing them on suspicion of violating its repressive laws.

As in Iran, many women paid a heavy price for this, facing beatings, jail and even death at the hands of the police. Awadia Ajabna was shot dead by Al-Bashir's "public order police" in the Sudanese neighbourhood of Al-Daim as they opened fire on her family and neighbours in 2012.

Nadia Saboon, who earned a living selling tea, was another victim of the public order police in 2010. She was caught up in a police raid and fell onto a piece of metal, sustaining a fatal injury as she tried to escape.

Awadia Ajnaba and Nadia Saboon's names and stories were carried forward by activists, and became part of the story of the revolution itself, as millions of women took part in the huge protests and strikes which brought down Al-Bashir and continue to resist his successors.

"From Awadia Ajabna and Nadia Saboon, the martyrs of Sudan's public order police to Mahsa Amini, the martyr of Iran's morality police."

The Women's Revolution is against oppression and subjugation.

It is against the domination of political religion and the mentality of those who see women's bodies as theatres in which to enact their control and domestication of the people.

Women and girls have been killed by the public order police in Sudan, and now Mahsa Amini in Iran has been killed by the morality police.

The "No To Women's Oppression" initiative stands in solidarity with the women of Iran in their struggle against murder and against oppression. Anything that affects the rights of any woman in the world is our issue.

The morality police in Iran are the public order police in Sudan. They are oppression, repression and killing, disguised as morals and political religiosity.

No to the Oppression of Women"

Read the statement in Arabic and Farsi online at www.menasolidaritynetwork.com



Against climate change, against dictatorship

Egypt's authoritarian regime was happy to portray itself as leading the fight against climate change at COP27.

Miriam Scharf analyses how in reality the summit entrenched debt-fuelled investment benefiting the military dictatorship.

On Sept 27 2019 seven million people worldwide marched in climate strikes inspired by Greta Thunberg. In Egypt the security forces made sure there would be no protests.

As Cairo resident and journalist Omar Hamilton writes: 'Here, the energy transition becomes an opportunity for greenwashing and profiteering as countries and companies queue up to sign energy installation deals with a dictatorship that has a surplus of power and of political prisoners.'

The Egyptian government tolerates no activism but it sees the climate crisis as an opportunity. Egypt needs huge loans for the large infrastructure projects that could address the threats caused

by climate change: desertification, soil salinisation, floods, and water shortages. But international financial institutions like the IMF want to be sure of a return on their investments.

The IMF will not support projects which return even limited power and resources to communities to build their own solutions. The lack of centralised control that this might entail would be completely anathema. The IMF lends to states.

Debt service on foreign loan instalments in 2022-3 took up one third of Egypt's total public expenditure

And they are happy to deal with authoritarian dictatorships like Sisi's. But they want to know the money will actually be used for projects not frittered away through corruption, that they will get a return on their investment, and that the projects will actually address the climate issues on which productivity depends.

Since Sisi's regime came to power in 2013, foreign debt rose from \$38 billion to \$155 billion. Previous IMF loans to Sisi required removal of subsidies to

piped and cooking gas, fuel and water, and the currency floated — bringing its value down 50 percent, and bringing misery to millions.

During talks during 2022, the IMF requested once again that the Egyptian government scale back bread subsidies. According to independent news website Mada Masr, one minister suggested reducing the weight of the subsidised loaf while keeping the price the same.

Analysis by the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) on the state of Egypt's foreign debt in October 2022 found that debt service on foreign loan instalments during 2022-3 took up one third of total public expenditure.

The COP27 summit in Egypt in November 2022 presented a golden opportunity for the Sisi regime to secure more loans and investment under the banner of 'climate finance' to support 'adaptation'.

The reality, as Hamza Hamouchene outlines in the interview overleaf, is that Egypt's 'Energy Transition' is further entrenching both the military dictatorship and its allies in the fossil fuel companies looting and burning the planet.

Additional reporting by Anne Alexander

‘An expansion of fossil fuel interests’

MENA Solidarity spoke to Algerian activist **Hamza Hamouchene** before the COP27 summit about the prospects for genuine change.

The MENA region is at the forefront of some of the impacts of climate change. What do you see as the key questions which ought to be addressed by the COP talks?

Climate change is already a reality in North Africa and the Middle East, and in the Arab region in general. It is already undermining the social, economic and ecological basis of life in the region. We are seeing huge impacts from droughts, water poverty, wildfires, sea level rises and coastal erosion in many, many countries. The Arab region is one of the first victims of these processes, it is at the forefront of the climate crisis and its impacts.

For me, the COP process, with its 27 rounds of negotiations so far, has produced three decades of empty talk. All those COPs have failed. Or, as the Swedish activist Greta Thunberg has described them, they are ‘blah, blah, blah’. I don’t believe they will resolve the climate crisis and I don’t believe they will put in place adequate and just solutions which will help impoverished countries and communities in the Global South to address that question.

In terms of the questions and the priorities which need to be on the table, at least in the priorities of the global climate justice movement, and progressive organisations in the region and outside it, first of all is the question of democratisation. You cannot have climate justice without democracy, and without civic spaces for discussion and debate.

COP27 is taking place in a military dictatorship where tens of thousands of political prisoners are in jail, in a climate of repression and suppression of freedoms. That poses questions we cannot ignore and which need to be

linked to questions of climate justice.

The other question for me which needs to be on the table is the question of loss and damages. A lot of countries in the Global South are already facing the impacts of climate change: people



are dying, people are being displaced, livelihoods are being destroyed.

This needs to be taken into account, these people need to be helped not with additional debts but with transfers of wealth and transfers of technology to help them adapt to the climate crisis, and help them with the needed global, rapid transition towards renewable energy. Here we are talking about climate reparations and climate debts which need to be put on the agenda.

What would you see as the goals of the various regimes in the region at this particular moment, both in terms of the climate talks and in terms of

their relations for example with other powers such as the European powers, the US, Russia and China?

That’s a complex question, but let’s unpack it a bit and look at the details of the reality of climate adaptations in the region, the money put into climate adaptation efforts and the reality of the “energy transition”. This phrase is in quotation marks because right now fossil fuel regimes like Algeria are just continuing to drill and explore and export gas, especially in the current context of the war in Ukraine, which has exacerbated the crisis and in a way derailed any effort towards a transition in those countries themselves.

We have seen how the EU has been trying to convince many governments in the region to export gas to it, including the Algerian regime and the Egyptian regime, and including the settler-colonial state of Israel. So it is all about gas in reality in the short to medium term. And it is not about the transition. That’s why a lot of scholars and activists are saying we are seeing an energy expansion, not an energy transition.

Is it fair to say that the COP itself, far from reducing dependency on fossil fuels, is playing a role in cementing the role of gas expansion?

COP 22 took place in Morocco in 2016 and it was an opportunity for the Moroccan monarchy to greenwash its crimes, to greenwash its pollution, to greenwash its occupation of Western Sahara. It is the same story again with COP27 and will be with COP28, scheduled to be held in the UAE.

The Egyptian government is going to use it as an opportunity to present itself as sustainable and to mask the ongoing human rights abuses, the authoritarianism, the exploitation and dispossession of people. The Egyptian government is vying to place itself as an “energy hub” in the region in order to export energy to Europe.

This is not just renewable energy, this is gas, this is green hydrogen, this

is oil. So, in reality we are seeing an expansion of those fossil fuel interests, we are not seeing a real transition. This is of course related to deals which are taking place with multinationals, with foreign companies and with Western governments.

Can you tell us a bit about ‘green hydrogen’ because there has been a lot of hype about this being a cleaner alternative fuel?

It is exactly as you’ve described it: hype. And I see it as a back door for the fossil fuel industry to continue its own operation. This is because in the short to medium term it is not ‘green hydrogen’ which is going to be produced, but blue and grey hydrogen from gas.

Blue hydrogen is basically hydrogen from gas, with CO₂ captured and stored somewhere, so the fossil fuel industry is part of the lobbying efforts at the level of the EU. You find companies like Shell, Total, ENI pushing for hydrogen-based economies because they know they are going to continue exploiting and extracting gas.

The EU is concocting all these plans, creating a ‘hydrogen strategy’ and along with those companies involved from Siemens to ENI, they want North African countries to produce green hydrogen, and then to build new renewable energy plants in solar and wind for export.

So we are seeing the same neo-colonial mentality being reproduced once again, with those countries once again playing the role of producers of cheap natural resources for export. Meanwhile, the social, economic and ecological costs are externalised to those countries.

Those green hydrogen projects will need a lot of land, water and energy. Instead of North African countries using green energy to produce electricity for their own purposes, to advance towards their own green transition, they will spend it safeguarding EU energy security and helping the EU reach its own climate targets.

If you go around London you’ll see adverts for Octopus Energy which boasts it has a solar farm in Morocco producing clean energy. You’re saying this is actually a repetition of the same pattern as in the past?

I am seeing it as just the same colonial pattern where we are seeing

the unrestricted flow of cheap natural resources from the Global South to the Global North, including green energy this time. While Fortress Europe builds its own fences and walls and lets people die in the Mediterranean, or get executed and massacred when trying to jump through the walls. We’ve seen that in Melilla recently in northern Morocco.

For example in Tunisia we have TuNur, which is owned by a British company, Nur Energy. In collaboration with some Tunisian and Maltese capitalists the company is building a huge solar plant of 4.5 Gigawatts in order to export energy to Europe, including to the UK.

I followed that project. In 2017 and 2018 they were saying clearly and openly that they want that energy for export, not for local users. Tunisia depends for its energy on Algeria, on the gas pipeline which goes through it to Italy. Isn’t that neo-colonialism? Isn’t the priority to produce green energy for local consumption? To satisfy local energy needs? To exercise some kind of sovereignty?

Another project being proposed by the ex-CEO of Tesco is Xlinks. This is a collaboration with a Saudi company called Acwa Power. The idea is again to export green electricity from southern Morocco using undersea cables to the UK. That is a project which costs around 30 billion dollars.

One wonders where would that money come from? Why don’t these projects think about the local needs? Think about the local communities, and transferring technology and helping Moroccans in their own green transition. For me this is simply green neo-colonialism.

What would an alternative strategy look like? How do you fit together the pieces of the question of democracy and political freedoms with the question of the transition?

Most of the projects I mentioned are public-private partnerships, which is a euphemism for privatisation of the profits and socialisation of the loss. Basically, we are seeing a global tendency, well articulated in the region, of privatising the renewable energy sector, liberalising the energy sector, and giving much more power and influence to multinationals and the private sector.

For me, the alternative is to have public ownership of the energy infrastructure, of those energy projects.

We need to see energy as a right. People need to have access to energy. It needs to be defined as a right, not as a commodity.

Public ownership goes hand in hand with democratisation. That means involving local communities. Involving workers, including those in fossil fuel industries, in shaping the decision-making around these projects, in shaping the transition that would work for everyone, not necessarily dispossessing them from their resources and land.

Of course, this is not a linear process. It would be fraught with tensions and contradictions, mistakes would be made, compromises must take place. But if the communities and workers are behind those projects, it would be smoother. We need to have a different value system, which sees energy as a right, that sees the involvement of communities in a radical, participatory, democratic way at the heart of that just transition.

Finally, what do you think trade unionists and activists in places like Britain should be arguing for and what demands should we be putting on our government around these questions?

I think that first of all, argue for public ownership of energy and to de-commodify the energy sector, especially in the current climate crisis. The window is closing and a rapid, urgent energy transition needs to take place as soon as possible. The private sector cannot deliver on that front, it needs to be owned by public authorities, by communities, by workers.

The other thing I would emphasise is for workers and people in the Global North to exercise pressure on the multinationals that are headquartered in cities like London and Paris. Do not allow them to go and plunder the resources of the Global South and continue fossil fuel projects as well as committing environmental crimes and land grabs.

Pressure needs to be exercised here in the Global North. And also put pressure on them over the question of wealth transfer and technology transfer. A rapid transition cannot happen without technology transfer.

Hamza Hamouchene was talking to Anne Alexander



Protests for climate justice highlighted repression in Egypt | Photo: Alisdare Hickson

Activists called for summit boycott

Anne Alexander

The Egyptian government was keen to put its “green” credentials on show to international delegates at COP27, but Egyptian activists condemned the regime’s charade.

Mona Shazly, whose two brothers have been locked up by the Sisi dictatorship, told MENA Solidarity, “whoever is the main reason for chronic human and environmental problems cannot be part of the solution.” The Egyptian state is not only responsible for torture and imprisonment of tens of thousands, but it is an “assassin” of the natural world, she added.

“The brutal regime is dramatically chopping down ancient trees, and removing whole public parks for the sake of converting them into buildings. Cairo is the most polluted place across the globe, and one of places with the most lung cancer cases as statistics show.”

The Egyptian Revolutionary Council, Birmingham Egyptians, Egyptians for Democracy, Women Against the Military Coup and Medics for Freedom said in a statement issued in the run-up to COP27:

“General Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi who is hosting COP27 in Egypt is a dictator who is concerned primarily with maintaining his brutal regime in power

and not advancing our common human goal. His policies in Egypt over the years since he led a military coup in 2013 has shown nothing but the deep contempt he and his fellow officers in the military junta that governs Egypt feel towards human rights as well as their kleptocratic attitude towards the economy and their abuse of the environment.

His goal is to use the pomp of the ceremony as a tool to continue to control Egyptian civilians.”

This regime does not represent the Egyptian people nor does it represent the African continent or the Global South.

The British TUC also condemned the Sisi regime’s assault on human rights and trade union freedoms while LGBTQ+ activists raised the alarm over the torture and harassment of LGBTQ+ people in Egypt. The Italian CGIL union federation announced a boycott of COP27 in protest at ongoing repression by the Sisi regime and in memory of Italian researcher Giulio Regeni who was tortured to death in Egypt in 2016.

The CGIL statement noted that the Sisi regime continues to grant “impunity to those who tortured and killed Giulio Regeni, detained Patrick Zaki, as well as many other activists, solely for having expressed their ideas.

The trade union federation also condemned the “climate of repression”, “criminalisation of protests” and attacks

on trade union freedoms, concluding “social justice, climate and human rights are interconnected and must be addressed simultaneously and acted upon with radicalism, urgency and justice.”

Egyptian activists called on grassroots movements around the world not to fall into the trap of allowing the Sisi regime to “greenwash” its reputation by attending COP27 while Egyptians themselves are unable to express themselves or protest, and tens of thousands are locked up in jail on fake charges in statement published by Egypt Solidarity Initiative.

“This regime does not represent the Egyptian people nor in any way does it represent the African continent or the Global South. Sisi will do everything he can to greenwash the regime and highlight a few showcase projects of alternative and renewable energy. The reality is that he is ravaging both the Egyptian people and the environment. The aim of this greenwashing is twofold: first, to extract as much financial aid as possible from the rich industrialised countries.

Most of this money will end up being syphoned out of the country into the bank accounts of Sisi and his generals in those same industrialised countries. Second, is to distract from his abysmal human rights record, and as usual, the leaders of the supposedly democratic Western governments will allow him to get away with it.”

Read more at www.egyptsolidarityinitiative.org



Demonstrations against the military coup continue in Sudan | Photo: Sudanese activists via Facebook

Revolution and repression: Sudan at the crossroads

Sudanese activists **Khalid Sidahmed**, **Mohammed Siddeq** and **Rania Obead** analyse the current crisis in Sudan. Mass protests and strikes have continued to mobilise tens of thousands in defiance of the leaders of the military coup which took place in October 2021. More recently, as **Khalid Sidahmed** explains, protests

have begun against a new political agreement for a 'power-sharing' arrangement between civilian opposition parties and the military supported by some of the civilian political forces removed from power by the coup. **Mohammed Siddeq** explores how splits have emerged between the leaders of the coup, with the head

of the Rapid Support Forces militia, **Hemedti**, publicly denouncing the October 2021 events. Meanwhile, the Resistance Committees, grassroots revolutionary bodies, have continued to develop and put down roots in Sudanese society. **Rania Obead** charts how they are mapping a new political course for the country.

‘Power belongs to the people’

On February 28th, 2023, Sudanese revolutionary Ibrahim Majzoub was killed by the police during a demonstration against the military coup that took place on October 25th, 2021.

The protesters were also opposing the political framework agreement that is supported by some Sudanese political parties and capitalists, UNITAMS-AU-IGAD (the Tripartite Mechanism formed by the UN, the African Union and another intergovernmental body formed by states in East Africa), and the Quad and Troika groups of foreign states (Norway, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States). The framework agreement only helps its supporters to exploit and plunder Sudan's wealth.

This incident is a tragic reminder of the ongoing struggle of the Sudanese people for democracy and justice. The revolution started in December 2018 and overthrew the long-time dictator Omar al-Bashir in April 2019. However, the transitional government that followed has been struggling to establish stability and democracy in the country.

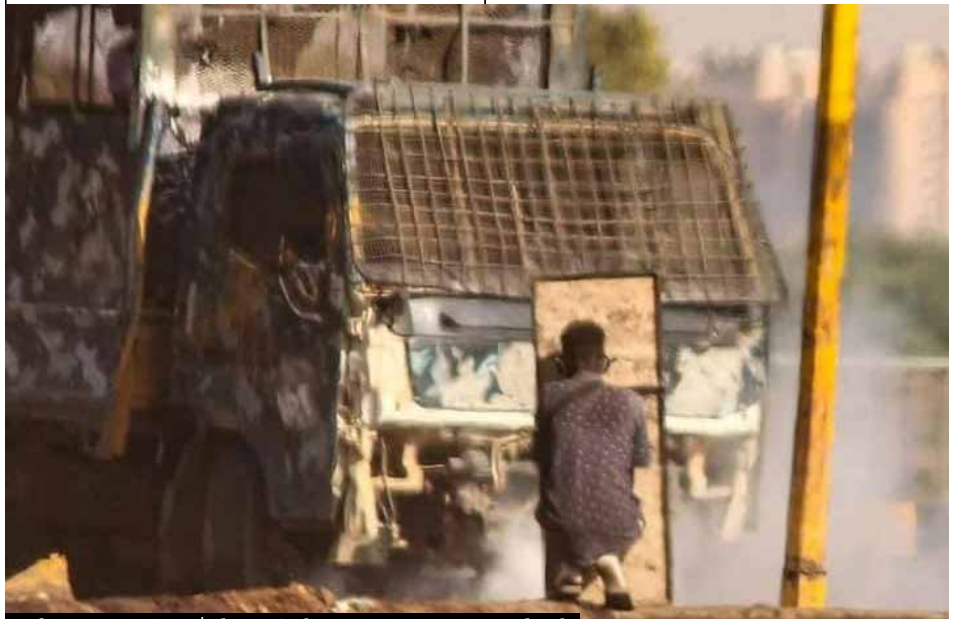
The resistance committees, the unions, and the working class must unite to advance the revolution

The military coup of October 25th, 2021 disrupted the fragile democratic process in Sudan and sparked widespread protests. The resistance committees, which are grassroots neighbourhood networks of Sudanese residents, have been leading the protests and demanding a civilian government that is elected by the people to serve the people.

The unions are also playing a crucial role in this revolution. They are still building themselves and have the potential to unite with the resistance committees to strengthen the movement.

To succeed, the unions must act quickly and in a coordinated manner. Without the support of the working class and unions to unite with the resistance committees, the revolution will face significant challenges.

If they can unite, they can organise



Defying repression | Photo: Sudanese activists via Facebook



Striking teachers | Photo: Sudanese Teachers' Committee

continuous strikes and demonstrations, bringing the economy to a standstill and forcing the coup militias to retreat and surrender. The power, unity and clarity of vision of the revolutionaries and the working class are essential in the quest for change and democracy.

However, the road to victory is not easy. The revolutionary movement is facing a well-funded and well-organised opposition. Nonetheless, the Sudanese people are determined to continue their struggle until they achieve their goals of democracy, justice, and equality.

In conclusion, the killing of revolutionary activists is a tragedy, but it

will not stop the people's will to fight for their rights.

The resistance committees, the unions, and the working class must unite to advance the revolution and bring about real change in Sudan. The power belongs to the people, and only they can shape their future.

By Khalid Sidahmed

Go to www.menasolidaritynetwork.com to find out how to show your solidarity with Sudanese trade unionists and activists.

Can a wolf become a hunting dog?

Behind the coup leaders' quarrels

In February and March tension has escalated between Sudanese Army leader al-Burhan and his ally Hemedti. Recently, and for the first time, the Army commanders have publicly spoken about integrating RSF into the military, and the RSF leader responded in the latest episode of the series of public speeches by admitting that the military intervention to topple the government in October 2021 was a coup, whereas he described it previously as a “corrective action.”

He also said he regarded it as a mistake he would like to correct. (We might describe this as Hemedti's law of the correction of the correction). Hemedti also called for justice for the martyrs, despite the RSF's consistent role in killing protesters!

The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) is a paramilitary unit which grew out of the Janjaweed militias in Darfur. The force was renamed and changed administration a few times before given the current name to operate under the Commander in Chief after legislation passed by the previous regime in 2017.

In the midst of the storm of the revolutionary uprising in April 2019, the RSF announced they were taking the protestors' side and would not participate in the repression of protests. The leader of the RSF, Mohammed Hamdan Daglo (known as Hemedti) formed an alliance with the Sudanese Army chief, General al Burhan, to create a military bloc which aimed at stopping the revolution from achieving radical change.

They signed a power-sharing agreement with the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), the broad political coalition that formed the uprising's political leadership in 2019.

The road to this compromise was paved with violent repression, led by the RSF and Sudanese Security Forces who repeatedly attacked protesters.

The military bloc worked to undermine the fragile power-sharing experience that was supposed to lead to a democratic transition. They attempted several manipulations and eventually seized power on the 21st of October, 2021.

Hemedti has been rejecting calls to

integrate his forces into the army within a Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) programme as demanded by civilian parties. On the other hand, the army leaders have been reluctant and sometimes confused to discuss the issue, sticking to the cliché that the RSF is already part of the army.

Hemedti's latest announcement is not unexpected as it brings into the open one of the deferred confrontations in Sudanese politics reflecting conflicts of interests between the leaders of the Armed Forces and the RSF in relation to state power, and their economic and political ambitions.

The confrontation was accelerated by pressure from the persistent struggle of the Sudanese people resisting the coup since the dawn of October 25th 2021. The effect of the early resistance on the junta was confessed by Hemedti when he said that he realised the mistake on the first day.

This clash carries the long-feared risk of armed conflict between the Army and RSF. However, the scene's complexity makes it difficult to predict the likelihood. For example, the expansion of the RSF all over Sudan in the past few years could indicate the risk of urban warfare.

However, at the same time, this expansion was at the expense of the loyalty to Hemedti since the composition of the troops shifted from being semi-tribal militia to paramilitary forces that were built by recruited Army elements that are saturated with Sudanese Army “chauvinism”, which could make Hemedti thinks more than twice before ordering attacks on the Army.

Moreover, despite conflict, the interests of the two sides can bring unity between the opposites because these interests are privileges that they would not be willing to give up easily.

It is not the first lie by the coup leaders and will not be the last. Both sides of the junta were involved in crimes against humanity in Darfur during the early 2000s, the massacre on 3 June 2019 in Khartoum, and other parts of the country, when the RSF was involved in breaking up mass sit-ins by protesters and killing at least people in Khartoum alone.

The armed forces and RSF have killed a further 124 martyrs during demonstrations against the coup since October 2021. So, many actions they have taken are motivated mainly by the desire to clean up their image and distance themselves from criminal responsibility. The risk of sharing this common fate is another factor that could make them work on settling their fights. However, the contrary may also be the case, in other words that the narcissism and brutality of these characters will fuel conflicts between them, outweighing any common interests.

One of the risks manifested in the current situation is that politicians lean towards one side among the armed bodies of men associated with the state in an attempt strengthening their stance, thinking of using the wolf as a hunting dog to run after the other predator.

The signatories of the framework agreement, the central link in the running compromise, led by the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), welcomed Hemedti's speech, repeating the mistake of April 2019 when the political forces welcomed an RSF statement alleged supporting the uprising shortly before the fall of the previous regime.

That was a mistake the political coalition lived the following years with its consequences and ended up hunted by the wolves.

Also, it is a political miscalculation to welcome a speech in which one admits a coup while the leaders of another coup are being put on trial (al Bashir and his group). Military coups were criminalised during the time of the Transitional Government 2019-2021, through legislation passed when the majority of the forces which welcomed Hemedti's recent speech were in government. Logically, therefore, Hemedti's admission that he carried out a coup ought to lead them to call on him to surrender the power and then submit to a fair trial, rather than welcoming his remarks.

By Mohammed Siddeq

This is an edited version of an article published on www.menasolidaritynetwork.com



A meeting of the Abu Adam Resistance Committee | Photo: Abu Adam RC via Facebook

Building an alternative from below

The idea of forming Resistance Committees (RCs) in Sudan started early, some people say it can be traced back to 2008, while others say it was formed in 2013, but their major role became evident during the December 2018 Revolution.

RCs played a major role in organising protests, deciding the routes and destinations of the demonstrations while protecting the neighbourhoods from the security apparatus attacks, taking care of the wounded, and following up with the arrested.

Following the fall of dictator Omar al-Bashir in April 2019 and negotiations between opposition parties, and trade union alliances such as the Sudanese Professionals Association grouped under the banner of the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) on one hand and the Transitional Military Council which took over power on the other, a joint civilian-military government came into office to rule for a transitional period until elections could be held.

RCs continued organising and helping at the local level by providing people's daily needs. RCs put great pressure on the transitional government to implement the revolutionaries' demands, and at the top of their list was justice for all victims of violence.

In October 2021, military and militia

leaders seized power and threw civilian parties out of office. The RCs began a new chapter as they resisted the coup by organising weekly protests and working on formulating the Resistance Charters to set their vision on how to build and govern Sudan.

The creation of the RC Charters shows an extraordinary democratic process in action, as the discussions started in each single Resistance Committee until they reached an agreement in October 2022 on the Revolutionary Charter for Establishing People's Power. The Charter was defined as "a political document for initiating a deep-anchored holistic political process, with the ultimate goal of formulating a political vision of national unity that digs deep into the very nature of the national state, governance, economy and transfer of power." The Charter answers fundamental questions such as how to construct people's power from the bottom and how Sudan's economy must be built.

Now, the RCs face a complicated situation, including the cost of living crisis, which affects all Sudanese people. According to the World Food Programme 18 million people in Sudan, 40 percent of the population, are facing acute hunger while inflation reached 83.6 percent, the highest level for 50 years in

January 2023.

They must also grapple with the problem of international and regional support for a new political agreement reached between the coup authorities and civilian forces led by the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) in December 2022. Amidst this situation, the RCs must navigate practical steps to implement their vision on the ground.

Most of the RCs members are from the lower and middle classes, with a considerable number of students and fresh graduates. Those groups are highly affected by the cost-of-living crisis and must look for employment and work more hours to afford their essential needs, which lessens the time they can offer to work in the Resistance Committee.

The RCs disagreed with the new political agreement between the military leaders and some political parties because the agreement didn't consider any steps towards justice for hundreds of victims who lost their lives during this revolution, although the available evidence indicates that the army and the Janjaweed militia are responsible.

The agreement mentions reforming the military and integrating the Janjaweed militia into the national armed forces. However, the question is whether it is possible to have a

democracy in a country where the army and the militia have great economic and political powers besides their military capacity?

The Sudanese military totally controls all defence industries and during recent years has started investing in other sectors such as food production. It is estimated that the total military investments account for 80 percent of the country's economy

Also, this agreement doesn't have any vision about solving the economic crisis. Instead clearly goes down the same road of connecting with the imperialist power and implementing their policies, which leave millions of Sudanese in poverty as production is geared towards the demands of the international market with no consideration of people's needs.

Another important factor is Sudan's level of indebtedness to international lenders which puts massive pressure on the government's budget.

Therefore, this agreement with the army and Janjaweed leaders accepts their role in the political process with no intention to remove them from power.

Furthermore, the compromise deal doesn't offer alternatives to establish peace, which is the primary issue in Sudan.

For all these reasons, the RCs are fighting for radical change. They believe that Sudan's problems should be solved by Sudanese people, the majority of ordinary people who have suffered for decades; it is now their time to decide how their country should be governed.

The Resistance Committees are fighting for radical change. They believe that Sudan's problems should be solved by Sudanese people

The RCs have a clear vision demonstrated in their charters about the main issues in Sudan, such as how to reform and restructure the army and disband the Janjaweed and all militias and armed movements, how to build the Sudanese economy to benefit the Sudanese people, and how to establish a peace process that can lead to

sustainable peace in the country.

Now, the RCs are working on implementing the Charter by taking the following steps: continuing building up the resistance movement by adding and organising more people, and continuing the protests and demonstrations. Another important step is supporting and coordinating with the strike movement, while many trade unions are either on strike or trying to build up for one. The RCs coordinate with these groups as they did with the teachers' strikes. The coordination with trade unions should continue as it is essential to build up and escalate the resistance movement.

RCs are powerful resistance tools because they are a grassroots movement. In the last four years, they have become more mature and learnt by doing. Now, this movement is spreading throughout the country, and despite the complex political and economic situation, the RCs are more determined to move forward in building the country they dream of.

By Rania Obead

Choices facing the Resistance

The Resistance Committee of Al Riyadh (a suburb in Khartoum East) hosted a meeting for open discussion on Saturday, March 11, 2023 under the title "The Choice of the Resistance." The meeting was advertised on the Facebook pages of many resistance committees and the audience included members of RCs from across the country. The meeting was broadcast live and widely viewed.

In recent months the military and militia forces which carried out the coup in October 2021 and civilian parties of the Forces of Freedom and Change and their allies appear to have reached a compromise through a political settlement which claims to set Sudan back on the road towards a transition to democracy.

For the Resistance Committees (RCs) and the other opponents of the settlement, this compromise can only be achieved by overlooking the crimes of the coup leaders, continuing of the path of pre-revolutionary policies in foreign relations and perpetuating economic policies of exploiting the resources of the country for the benefit of the economically and politically privileged



Uthman Abdullah (R) | Photo: Al Riyadh Resistance Committee

class. Also, the compromise involves maintaining the Juba Peace Agreement, which has proved ineffectual and even the security in Darfur and all over the country worsened after it was signed.

On the other hand, the RCs, which adopted the slogan "No negotiation, No partnership, No compromise" in late 2021, voicing their radical stance against the military coup, have been and still are determined to make the

choice that fulfils their name. The speaker at the meeting on March 11 was Uthman Abdullah, a member of an RC in Omdurman.

The meeting aimed to discuss three aspects: the current social and political situation from the point of view of the revolutionaries, the necessity of the choice of the resistance and its required tools, and the last part was an open discussion with the audience.



March against gold mining companies | Photo: TAM via Facebook

The speaker reviewed the development of the revolutionary bloc and the RCs and their learning by doing, including formulating independent charters in contrast to the RCs' practice earlier when their positions used to be passive, in a sense that they were reactions to the actions of the political parties.

The charters of the RCs attempt to answer critical questions, he said. Of prime importance to them is the protection of the revolution from being hijacked, as happened in the previous uprisings and is at risk of happening now.

Furthermore, the charters target changing the political and economic structures inherited since the independence of Sudan by establishing the power of the people.

The speaker explained the objectives of the resistance as dismantling the economic power of the Rapid Support Forces and demobilising their troops; terminating the Juba Peace Agreement; convening peace and constitutional conferences, and implementing an economic programme in a transitional period that guarantees that the basic needs of all Sudanese will be met.

However, the implementation of the charters and the choice of the resistance has been affected by the economic hardship impacting the membership of the committees and dispersing them to

search for work and securing an income for themselves and their families.

Consequently, their organisational capacity was considerably reduced.

The speaker believes that achieving the goals of the choice of the resistance requires that the committees and the revolutionary bloc work to overhaul the organisational capacity and work efficiency through firstly connecting the endeavours of the resistance in the urban centres with those in the peripheries.

This connection is necessitated by the unity of struggle as the people in rural areas suffer from the intensification of state exploitation, evident in the policies impeding or seizing production, in addition to security deterioration.

The charters target changing the political and economic structures inherited since the independence of Sudan by establishing the power of the people.

As for the masses of the urban centres, most of them are working class whose impoverishment is accelerating and deepening due to the same policies.

The RCs are capable of accomplishing this connection because of their broad

social background (urban and rural areas) and their roots in different sections of society (students, employees, unemployed, and self-employed) thus enabling activities extended over large networks to connect different groups and constituencies.

Secondly reinforcing the connection and integration of the masses by the joint work with the trade unions and demand-based campaigns, especially since we are witnessing a development in the work of these bodies that is noticeable in the organisation of general assemblies and elections in some unions, and in strikes and protests such as the teachers' strike and the activities of the various demand-based bodies.

This reinforcement should also be exercised in interactions with the issues facing the committees' membership, such as tuition fees for students, and taxes and job employment for the self-employed or unemployed.

The speaker concluded that such steps guarantee the committees a continuous presence in their social spheres and thus an organic connection to their problems, gaining new adherents and improving organisational capacity and work efficiency through practice. Hence, coordination, organisation and efficiency produce action plans at the most immediate levels.

Report by Mohammed Siddeq

The people demand change

The Alliance of Demand-Based Campaigns (TAM) has over 70 affiliates across Sudan ranging from workers' organisations to campaigns for environment justice and refugee rights. We spoke to **Khalid Taha** of TAM about the role of strikes and protests in the revolution.

Sudan has witnessed an important wave of strikes in different sectors over the past months. Some have been organised by workers' committees and not unions, why?

The recent strikes by workers in different sectors and services have indeed been mainly organised and prepared by committees formed on a temporary basis, or for the purpose of mobilising over specific demands, rather than trade unions.

This is not only due to the absence of unions in some sectors where workers are raising demands or organising strikes and protests, but also because the trade union work has been suspended by the authorities since the military coup on October 25, 2021.

Even before that date unions were not being led effectively by executive bodies elected by the rank-and-file or arising from it. There were union "steering committees" pushed by the authorities (which was the civilian government at the time), but regardless of the scale and type of this drive from above, these committees represented a blatant interference in workers and wage earners' choices of their representatives in any kind of public action.

How are workers organised in these sectors without a trade union structure? For example, do workers meet to discuss their demands?

Each sector has specific ways and means to choose its representatives, especially in trade union affairs. These include holding meetings and direct voting, taking into account factors such

as the history of trade union struggles in that sector, workers' organisational coherence and their experience in general.

Of course, talking about the absence of a trade union structure does not mean that it did not exist at all. There are cases where the battle is to build stronger and more effective organisation, and efforts are focused towards correcting and restoring trade unions.

What is the state's position towards the demand-based campaigns?

If we talk about "the position of the authorities" towards anything, it has to be understood that these "authorities" seized power from the people by force of arms.

Given the absence of constitutional mechanisms, the activity of the repressive machine, and the attempts of the coup authorities to impose a fait accompli by various means, we cannot talk about a "position of the state", as there is no "state" as such. Rather, there is a brutal regime confronting a peaceful resistance movement, which is seeking to restore normality and establish the foundations of a democratic civil state.

Are the demands only related to material problems or are there political demands as well?

These campaigns generally do raise demands for political reasons, because they are the result of wrong policies and unfair treatment. Some of the causes are chronic and go back to the beginning of the period after colonialism. The most important and fundamental aspects of the demands are related to political issues, building the institutions of the state, and programmes for economic development, services and human rights. Demands of a direct material nature thus have constitutional and human rights dimensions and cannot be reduced to questions of finance or temporary solutions.

To what extent is there coordination between the demand-based campaigns and the other revolutionary forces, such as the Resistance Committees, trade unions and civil organisations? The demand-based campaigns are part

of various civil society groups. They work within and with them, engaging in coordination, participation and networking.

What is the future outlook for the demand-based campaigns in the event that a purely civilian government comes to power?

The Alliance of Demand-Based Campaigns and our affiliated bodies are generally not interested in participation or access to power. We are not concerned who is to govern Sudan, but expect a fair answer to the question: how is Sudan to be governed? Any future authority must be civilian, democratic, and guarantor of the rights of all. In that sense a civilian authority by itself is not enough: we will certainly not accept a military or civilian dictatorship or even a mix of the two. Our criteria relate to the form and content of the system of government and not its name, and of course we will not be satisfied with the repetition of experiences which failed in the past.

What is the role of international organisations and forces in the Sudanese revolution?

The African Union has been fire-fighting internal issues in Sudan and providing temporary solutions, but as a body it does not know anything about democracy as most of its members are from the military. The international community, if it is serious, should listen to the voice of the revolutionary forces, but they want to support only those who share their interests and the interests of the World Bank.

The Sudanese revolution is still standing firm against both Western and Eastern camps, despite them spying on the revolutionaries, shutting down websites, flooding the media with disinformation and supporting the looting of Sudan by militias which are fomenting internal conflicts. The Sudanese revolution is at war with both the Western and Eastern powers.

Go to www.menasolidaritynetwork.com to read other interviews with TAM's activists and translations of their statements

Sudan Solidarity conference links activists and trade unions

MENA Solidarity

Trade unionists and revolutionary activists in Sudan and Britain exchanged messages of solidarity, pledging support for each others' struggles at a conference organised by a wide range of unions from both countries on 6 November. The hybrid event brought together around 30 participants in person in London, with around 100 more viewers online.

The conference was sponsored by MENA Solidarity (Britain), National Education Union (Britain), Edinburgh TUC (Scotland), Doctors in Unite (Britain), Unite the Union, Barts Health Branch LE384L (Britain), Portsmouth Unison (Britain), Portsmouth TUC (Britain), UCU, Sudanese Teachers' Committee (Sudan), and TAM – The Alliance of Demand-based Campaigns (Sudan). We had speakers from the NEU and from the UCU alongside nine speakers representing the active forces of the Sudanese revolution.

Louise Regan of the NEU national executive committee and one of the organisers of the conference sent this message.

"As we in Britain also face attempts by the Tory government and big business to make workers pay for the spiralling economic and social crisis there is a lot that trade unionists here can learn from these struggles. At the same time, activists in Sudan need our support and solidarity in the face of our government's collusion with the military regime."

Justine Mercer, national President-elect from University and Colleges Union (UCU) also addressed the conference. She said:

"I am delighted to bring solidarity greetings, in person, from the University and College Union. UCU represents around 120,000 workers in post-16 education, in universities, Further Education colleges, Adult and Community Education, and prisons. International work is a key element of our mission.



The conference heard speakers from across Sudan | Photo: MENA Solidarity

The UK trade union movement has become a key player in the fight against austerity and the cost-of-living crisis. Over the summer, trade unions and community organisations formed a campaign group called "Enough is Enough". It is demanding fairer pay, lower energy bills, an end to food poverty and decent homes for all, paid for by taxing the rich. It is turning thousands of people into activists for social justice via meetings, rallies and demonstrations in every corner of the UK. Obviously, I'm not equating our struggles with the violence and oppression experienced by the Sudanese people. But I am saying the two are connected because both groups of people share a common desire for radical change and social justice."

Trade unionists from Sudan told the conference about their battles to build independent unions in order to fight for workers' rights and take part in the struggle for democracy and social justice. Taher Al-Mu'tasim, Secretary of External Relations from Sudanese Journalists Syndicate explained how for the first time in decades, Sudanese journalists were able to hold free elections for their union leadership,

33 years after the coup which brought dictator Omar al-Bashir to power. "Many of those who attended said that they had never put a ballot paper into the election box in their entire life, and this was their first time. In a large demonstration, the elections ended, the results were announced, and the Sudanese press gained its union and its legitimacy, and began accomplishing many goals and setting comprehensive plans to advance the profession of journalism."

Osman Tahir, president of the Alternative Port Workers' Union in the Red Sea Ports told the conference that under the dictator Omar al-Bashir trade unions were run by political parties, "didn't represent the will of the workers." Faced with the threat of privatisation, workers decided to form their own, independent union to fight the attacks on jobs, pay and conditions.

"A lot of workers answered our call. Our arguments got a hearing in the media, people got to know us because of resistance to privatisation. We were successful in stopping the privatisation project, which had been backed by the United Arab Emirates. The UAE did everything in its power to win this



battle including providing support to the government because of the strategic location of the Red Sea and the 700 km-long Red Sea coast.”

The battle over the port saw striking workers demonstrate their power to challenge the government in Khartoum and the UAE, Osman said.

“We shut down the port with containers as part of our mass, peaceful collective action. We also played an effective role in the December revolution which toppled the regime of Omar al-Bashir. We were part of the demonstrations which brought down the regime.”

Sami al-Baqir is from the Sudanese Teachers’ Committee which represents tens of thousands of teachers across Sudan and is leading mass strikes to demand better pay and conditions for teachers and more funding for public education. He told the conference that the STC began organising resistance to the coup as soon as the military takeover was announced in October 2021.

“In the Sudanese Teachers’ Committee we agreed that the announcement of the coup means a declaration of civil disobedience in education, and this is exactly what happened. On November 7, 2021, the Sudanese Teachers Committee marched a procession rejecting the coup towards the Ministry of Education as the first event that confronted the coup by the professional sectors, and the slogans of the procession exposed the behaviour of the coup which was returning the elements of the former regime to education.”

Musab Elrifaii, a trade union activist from Kenana Sugar Factory, where workers organised a month-long strike two years ago said that the military regime stoked up conflicts in order to try and keep itself in power.

“The people are supposed to be the supreme authority, but they find themselves unable to remove the government because of the various policies that the government uses to silence them, such as distracting them by creating crises and fabricated wars and other means that tyrants always use to stay in power.

Workers’ resistance is the most powerful weapon that can paralyse the movement of the state. The narrow stakeholders bow to the demands of the workers, by means of mass pressure and civil disobedience, but often those

who pay the price are prominent in any labour movement and are accused of being instigators and subjected to trials or at least dismissal from work.”

Women and girls have played a key role in the revolution, but they have also faced horrific violence from the state and in wider society. Ahlam Nasir from one of Sudan’s best-known women’s organisations, No to Women’s Oppression, told the conference:

“The human rights situation of girls and women has become bad, as they suffer from state and societal violence, and repression includes violence of all kinds, including sexual violence.”

The social crisis has deepened enormously over the past year, she explained, but this is driving resistance through protests and strikes.

“The economic and social situation is very bad, and the international community has stopped economic support because of the coup, which has led to a third of the population of Sudan suffering from poverty and hunger. Civil service institutions are witnessing a wide protest movement that includes strikes, sit-ins, vigils and memoranda of demands to improve wages and the work environment.”

Workers’ resistance is the most powerful weapon that can paralyse the movement of the state.

Kisha Abdelsalam is the father of Abdulsalam Kesha who was killed in the massacre of 3 June 2019, when military and Janjaweed militia forces stormed the sit-in outside the Army High Command in Khartoum and murdered over 100 people. He told the conference:

“We are a free people who are deprived of a decent life and cannot exercise our sovereignty as a result of military coups d’état carried out in Sudan by agents of foreign powers and conspiracies to plunder the wealth, capabilities, and resources of this nation.”

The conference heard how the revolution has posed fundamental questions about the nature of the Sudanese state. Amani Gafaar from Reparations for Peace and Development said stopping the cycle of war and conflict was connected with giving people across the whole of Sudan a say

in political decisions and a share of the country’s wealth.

“The Sudanese revolution will continue, but the ranks have differentiated. We need a new alignment between groups or living forces committed to the slogans of the December revolution and groups demanding guarantees of real change which meet the aspirations of citizens for justice and freedom. This includes closing the file of war and the return of the displaced and refugees to their regions, participation in political decision-making through the decentralisation of governance, and the decentralisation of wealth.”

Yousif Mlouk from TAM – The Alliance of Demand-Based Campaigns, said that ignoring ordinary people’s demands and voices would lead to further injustice and violence.

“Supporting and promoting any attempt to reach a political agreement that ignores the opinion of the Sudanese masses means participation in the dissipation of the values of justice, the deepening of injustice, the continuation of war, the curtailment of freedoms, and the continuation of violations and impunity, that is to say, total destruction.”

The Resistance Committees, neighbourhood-based revolutionary bodies which have played a leading role in organising popular resistance to the military coup, were represented in the conference by Osama Omar of the Revolutionary Charter for the Establishment of People’s Power. He explained how the charter has been written through discussion and debate organised by Resistance Committees across Sudan and provides a framework for fundamental reforms to the state. The demands of the charter include transitional justice, a peace conference addressing the root causes of Sudan’s internal conflicts and the rights of the people displaced by these wars.

“The charter also deals with how to establish a commission to reform the security system, because we want to reach the end of the transitional period after the overthrow of the coup to a single Sudanese army, whose main mission is to protect the constitution, protect the country’s borders, safeguard it against any external aggression, and to ensure that the army does not get involved with politics.”

Full report online at www.menasolidaritynetwork.com

Sudanese unions join anti-racist protests

MENA Solidarity

Sudanese unions and community organisations in Britain joined MENA Solidarity Network, trade unionists and activists in building for mass protests against the government's racist anti-refugee laws and joined demonstrations in London, Cardiff and Glasgow on 18 March.

In statement before the demonstration, the Sudanese Engineers Union – UK, the Sudanese Diaspora Roundtable – UK, the Nuba Mountains Solidarity Abroad in the UK and the Sudanese Community Association in Cardiff & South Wales said:

“The British government's proposed “Illegal Migration Bill” is an attempt to shift the blame for the country's chronic problems onto refugees and immigrants and mask its own role in creating these crises. The bill is laden with racism and xenophobia, which will only serve to embolden far-right groups and increase violence against already vulnerable communities.

Large numbers of Sudanese refugees are among those who risk their lives crossing the Channel by so-called “illegal routes”. The British government has shut down legal means for them to reach safety, and at the same time is deeply complicit



Sudanese activists joined the demonstration in London | Photo: Miriam Scharf

in creating the conflicts, poverty and repression they are fleeing.”

The statement also condemned the British government's support for the coup leaders and counter-revolutionary forces in Sudan.

“The British government's claims to support democracy in Sudan stand in contrast to its actions. It has continued to treat Al-Burhan as a legitimate head of state, even issuing an invitation to him to attend the Queen's funeral. It has said and done nothing to stop its allies including UAE, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Egypt stir up conflict in Sudan through providing military and political support for counter-revolutionary forces such as the RSF.

The British government's backing for military and militia bodies which want to crush the movement for democracy exacerbates the effects of the long history of British colonialism on Sudan.

In addition, Britain's historic role in fossil fuel emissions is fuelling climate breakdown which has a major impact on Sudan, destroying livelihoods and homes through floods and droughts.

Despite facing brutal repression, including the killing of thousands and the rape of many, the people of Sudan remain steadfast in their struggle for justice and freedom.”

Read the full statement online at www.menasolidaritynetwork.com

‘Enough is Enough!’ A message across borders

MENA Solidarity

Thousands of striking workers and activists fighting the rising cost of living in Britain heard a strong message of solidarity from Sudan for their struggles on the “Enough is Enough” day of action on 1 October. Mick Lynch, general secretary of the rail and port workers' union RMT

received a message of support from TAM, the Alliance of Demand-based Campaigns in Sudan and told the cheering crowd of thousands at Kings Cross station. Workers need to stand together, across different industries and sectors and between different nationalities and religions, Lynch said.

“What this movement is about is giving a voice to workers. And let's be clear about what we mean. All of the workers. And what we've been very careful about in these campaigns with People's Assembly and Enough is Enough, is that it's the whole working class community. We refuse to be divided. We refuse to pitch rail workers against nurses. We refuse

to pitch care workers against private sector workers. We refuse to pitch black versus white, Muslim versus Hindu, whatever it is, we will take this campaign into every town and village. Every temple, every synagogue, every gurdwara, every church. The whole working class, no division. No worker is illegal in this country, we will stand together as one united working class.”

MENA Solidarity gathered dozens of signatures from activists from rail, post, local government, teachers and university and college unions on a giant postcard with the demands of the Enough is Enough campaign in English and Arabic.



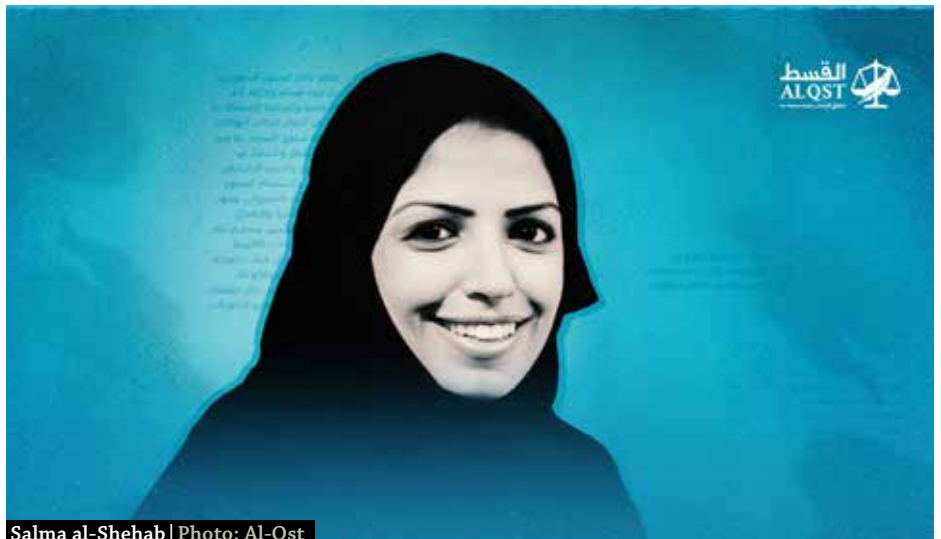
Campaign continues for Leeds student handed harsh Saudi sentence

Anne Alexander

Leeds University PhD student, Salma al-Shehab, is one of a group of women activists handed punitive jail sentences for simply expressing their opinions on social media. We spoke to Al Qst, a Saudi-focussed human-rights organisation about Salma's case and what trade unionists in Britain can do to help.

"Salma was arrested on 15 January 2021 while on holiday in Saudi Arabia, and subjected to solitary confinement and lengthy sessions of questioning over a period of nine and a half months before being brought before the Specialised Criminal Court (SCC), a court used as an instrument of repression to silence dissent in the kingdom. She belongs to the country's Shi'a Muslim minority, who have long suffered from the government's repression."

She was sentenced under Saudi Arabia's draconian Counter-Terrorism Law, facing charges including of



Salma al-Shehab | Photo: Al-Qst

publishing tweets "that disrupt the public order", in connection with posts on her account (@I_Salma1988) where she expressed support for Saudi prisoners of conscience such as women's rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul.

Initially handed a six-year sentence in March 2022, Salma's sentence was increased to a shocking 34 years in August 2022 during the appeal process, one of the longest known prison sentences handed down against a peaceful activist for their free speech in Saudi Arabia. It was reduced to 27 years in January 2023 following retrial, highlighting the farcical nature of the Saudi court system; her case is currently pending before the Supreme

Court.

The Saudi authorities are susceptible to international pressure, which when applied sufficiently and in coordinated fashion can lead to human rights victories on the ground, such as the release of prisoners of conscience.

There has been significant support for Salma so far, including among trade unions; both the UCU General Secretary and UCU branch at the University of Leeds have condemned her sentence and called for her release."

Go to <https://www.alqst.org/en> to download resources and a toolkit for Salma's case and those of other imprisoned activists in Saudi Arabia.

Boycott campaigns target Israeli apartheid

Miriam Scharf

Palestine Solidarity Campaign continues to organise boycott events and actions around the country including against PUMA, for its sponsorship of the Israel Football Association (IFA) which includes football teams based in illegal settlements and serves to sportswash Israel's human rights abuses. Activists have also organised against Barclays Bank who invest heavily in companies which arm Israel.

The PSC lobby of Parliament this



PSC activists protest outside Barclays in East London | Photo: Miriam Scharf

year March 22nd was against the government's planned anti-boycott bill which threatens to erode local democracy, restrict freedom of expression, and undermine campaigns for social and climate justice. Boycott and divestment have long been used

to campaign peacefully for progressive change in this country and around the world. They were important tools in the fight for against Apartheid in South Africa and we should be able to use the same to dismantle Apartheid Israel.



Vigil for Alaa Abd El Fattah | Photo: Alisdare Hickson

Climate justice activists stand in solidarity with Egyptian prisoners

Egypt Solidarity

The case of Alaa Abd el Fattah, a British-Egyptian software developer and political activist jailed on trumped up charges by the military regime in Egypt, grabbed the attention of the world's media in the run-up to COP27.

Alaa's family explained that he had begun a hunger strike and started refusing water in protest at his unjust imprisonment. His sister Sanaa made a powerful appeal for solidarity to the climate justice movement and called on the British government to put pressure on the Sisi regime to release Alaa.

"He's not in prison because of the Facebook post they charged him with. He's in prison because he is someone who makes people believe the world can be a better place. He's someone

trying to make the world a better place," she said.

"We know that they are happy for him to die, the only thing they care about is that it doesn't happen while the world is watching. But the world is watching and it's not only watching the Egyptian authorities but also other governments, including the UK government and other Western governments complicit in our oppression, who benefit from our oppression. Everyone always talks about how strong the UK and Egypt's relationship is. Is torturing a dual citizen part of that relationship?"

We know that they are happy for him to die, the only thing they care about is that it doesn't happen while the world is watching.

I would like to also remind you that my family's ordeal is an extreme example, but not the only example. There are tens of thousands of political prisoners in Egypt, there are more around the world. Climate justice activities are targeted around the

world. We face the same oppression"

During 2021 Egypt issued more death sentences than any other state worldwide and carried out at least 83 executions.

Over the past ten years the Sisi regime has constructed over 60 new prisons: human rights organisations estimate that the regime is holding at least 60,000 political prisoners, many held in indefinite detention without trial.

At the summit itself, some delegates wore white to show solidarity with Egyptian political prisoners and joined protests inside the heavily-policed and surveilled resort.

Climate justice activists outside Egypt also highlighted repression by the Sisi regime by wearing white and carrying banners and placards linking the struggle for human rights with the fight for climate justice.

Despite promises from the British government to raise Alaa's case with the Egyptian regime, he and tens of thousands of others remain imprisoned.

Read more online at www.egyptsolidarityinitiative.org and www.freealaa.net



Disabled activists join a protest in Tunisia in 2011 | Photo: Nasser Nouri

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Strike
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MENA Solidarity

menasolidaritynetwork.com

MENA Solidarity is a network of activists from different unions in the UK engaged in building solidarity for struggle to win social justice and workers' rights in the Middle East. We are supported by the UCU, PCS and NEU unions and a number of other trade union regions and branches.

BAHRAIN WATCH

Bahrain Watch

bahrainwatch.org

Bahrain Watch is an independent research and advocacy organisation formed in February 2012 that seeks to promote effective, transparent and accountable governance in Bahrain.

Egypt
مصر
SOLIDARITY

Egypt Solidarity

egyptsolidarityinitiative.org

Egypt Solidarity launched on 11 February 2014, the third anniversary of the fall of Mubarak, in order to campaign in defence of democratic rights in Egypt.