

6TH FEBRUARY 2019 WAGING PEACE BRIEFING ON CURRENT EVENTS IN SUDAN

- Sudanese citizens have been demonstrating almost daily. Contrary to media reports, these are not simple ‘bread protests’ Economic mismanagement of the economy catalysed a **long-standing movement for change**. In Sudan and in the Diaspora, Sudanese are calling for the resignation of President Omar al-Bashir, under the slogan *tasgut bass*, meaning “it [the government] must fall”.
- Sudanese experts suggest these protests are qualitatively different from earlier ones, involving a wide cross-section of society, notably the youth, and spearheaded by professional bodies, who have drafted viable transitional governance arrangements jointly with opposition groups. There is also an **unprecedented level of unity** within the UK’s Sudanese diaspora who recognise the need to join forces to rebuild Sudan in a post-Bashir era.
- Human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have documented the **killing of more than 51 innocent civilians**, while admitting the real number is likely far higher. Omar al-Bashir is on record at public rallies advocating “shoot to kill” policies against peaceful protesters. The government has detained thousands of opposition and political figures, and professionals, including doctors and lawyers. People from marginalised areas such as Darfur are accused of, and punished for, orchestrating the protests. Detention facilities are overflowing, and the government has opened makeshift detention centres in unused buildings to accommodate the overflow.
- **Torture is widespread**, leading to the deaths of several detainees. There is alleged use of rape against both male and female detainees. Security forces have teargassed and attacked hospitals, shot doctors assisting wounded protesters, and arrested civilians in waiting rooms.
- The **international response has been muted**. The Troika, of which the UK is a member, indicated that the suppression of protests would impact on bilateral engagement. However, the British Embassy recently hosted a conference on freedom of religion or belief, ignoring the fact that human rights are indivisible and interdependent. This suggested HMG may continue to adopt a ‘business as usual’ attitude to the regime.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- The UK government has been involved in Strategic Dialogue talks with Sudan since March 2016. These talks follow a change in policy from ‘no’ to ‘phased’ engagement. This process has not been meaningfully scrutinised by Parliament. The next round of talks is scheduled for May 2019. These talks should be postponed, and **the future of the Strategic Dialogue should be called into question**, at least until there is an **independent and credible fact-finding investigation** into the treatment of protesters, under the aegis of the UN Human Rights Council, where the UK is the penholder. If the Strategic Dialogue goes ahead, then a separate meeting with the same agenda should also be hosted with civil society and the diaspora.
- Any **bilateral security cooperation must be scrutinised and discontinued** if it is found that our engagement has inadvertently aided forces’ capacity to engage in human rights abuses. The UK’s Conflict, Security and Stability Fund programming must be reassessed, and Sudan’s Overseas Justice and Security Assessment should be revised. A DFID programme supporting the Sudanese police was discontinued following similar brutality in widescale protests in 2013.
- President Bashir has amended the constitution to allow himself to run for a 3rd term in 2020. The UK should signal its **unwillingness to support his campaign for re-election**. In 2015 the UK, along with Troika partners, concluded that because of the lack of a “free, fair, and conducive elections environment” the outcome of elections could not “be considered a credible expression of the will of the Sudanese people.” The same must hold true for 2020.
- The Home Office argues that Khartoum is a safe site for internal relocation, and threatens Sudanese asylum-seekers with forcible return. They must **revise their country policy information and guidance** accordingly.
- Please join the APPG on Sudan & South Sudan. Contact: Jack Patterson, Coordinator, appgsudan.southsudan@gmail.com, 07740856853

Waging Peace can help Parliamentarians with further information, including contacts in the diaspora or on the ground on info@wagingpeace.info or 0203 752 5815.

BACKGROUND

- President Omar al-Bashir took power by military force in 1989. He has remained in place for 29 years. He was indicted by the International Criminal Court in 2009 for War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity, and Genocide in Darfur.
- Sharia law in Sudan is responsible for ongoing suppression of women rights. Under the Islamist regime of Omar al-Bashir there is no freedom of religion and belief. Apostasy laws in Sudan come with a death sentence.
- Through his 29 years of power, Omar al-Bashir's dictatorial regime has marginalised black African Sudanese, implementing racist policies that do not promote equal citizenship. Black African Sudanese are widely referred to as "abid" (Arabic for "slave") and are denied equal access to health care, employment, and education. Their identity cards are marked according to their tribal affiliations which propagates discrimination.
- Sudanese are consistently in the top 5 largest groups of asylum seekers in the UK.
- Protesters from all parts of Sudanese society are united in calling for the resignation of President Omar al-Bashir and key members of his government.