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UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL MUST CONVENE SPECIAL SESSION ON SUDAN

Amnesty International joins other civil society organisations in calling on the Human Rights Council (HRC) to urgently convene a special session to address the human rights crisis in Sudan. In the context of such a special session, the HRC should establish an independent investigative mechanism to investigate serious human rights violations in Sudan, with a view to preventing further deterioration of the situation.

BACKGROUND

The Sudanese people have been protesting since December 2018 when they took to the streets to express their anger over rising costs of living and the decline of political freedom. Their pressure worked and on 11 April, Sudan's military overthrew the National Congress Party (NCP) government, arresting President Omar al-Bashir and other senior party leaders. But while al-Bashir's 30-year rule has come to an end, the human rights situation in Sudan, which has deteriorated dramatically since the beginning of the protests, continues to worsen. Many of the protestors calling for peace, justice, rule of law and economic reforms have paid the price of change with their lives and liberty. Since 13 May, there have been reports of the Sudanese security forces brutally suppressing the protests by unlawfully killing protestors, beating them in the streets, and unlawfully detaining and subjecting them to torture and other ill-treatment. Security forces have stormed hospitals firing live ammunition and tear gas at patients and medical staff attempting to arrest injured protestors, in an outrageous violation of international law.

Since 3 June, the situation has further drastically deteriorated, with media outlets widely reporting attacks on protestors with live ammunition, teargas, whips and sticks by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary officers across Sudan. According to the Central Committee of Medical Doctors, more than 100 people have been killed. The World Health Organization (WHO) Sudan reported that over 700 people were injured. The security forces tried to conceal their acts by dumping dead bodies weighted with bricks in the River Nile, 40 of which are reported to have floated back to the surface, according to the doctors' committee. At the same time, access to the internet has been blocked across Sudan since 3 June.

Hundreds of people have been arrested and detained since 3 June, including recently returned opposition leader Yassir Saeed Arman. Yassir, who is the deputy chairperson of Sudan's People Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) and was one of the SPLM lead negotiators during the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the war between the north and south of Sudan in 2005, has an unwarranted death sentence hanging over his head. Together with his SPLM-N colleagues, he was released on 10 June and deported to South Sudan.

The senseless killing of protestors must be stopped immediately, and those responsible for the bloodbath, including at command level, must be held fully accountable for their dreadful actions.

At the same time, Amnesty International has [disturbing new evidence](#), including satellite imagery, showing that Sudanese government forces, including the RSF and allied militias, have continued to commit war crimes and other serious human rights violations in Darfur. In the past year these have included the complete or partial destruction of at least 45 villages, unlawful killings, and sexual violence. Senior commanders in charge of the Transitional Military Council (TMC) – which includes the RSF – are the same individuals responsible for carrying out atrocities in Darfur.

UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, has strongly condemned the excessive use of force by Sudanese security forces and called on authorities in Sudan to facilitate an independent investigation into the deaths of protestors and hold those responsible [accountable](#). The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [has also expressed grave concern about the situation in Sudan](#) and has proposed “the rapid deployment of a UN human rights monitoring team to examine allegations of human rights violations committed since 3 June 2019,” while a [group of Special Procedures](#) have urged the Human Rights Council “to establish an independent investigation into violations against peaceful protesters since the start of the year.”

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HRC SPECIAL SESSION

In this context, Amnesty International joins [other civil society organizations](#) in calling on the HRC to urgently convene a special session to address the human rights crisis in Sudan, and to urgently dispatch an investigative mechanism to monitor, verify and report on the situation in Sudan, with a view to making recommendations on preventing further human rights violations and abuses in relation to peaceful demonstrations, and ensuring accountability for these violations and abuses.

Given the importance of a coordinated approach between the UN and African Union (AU) in addressing the crisis, such a mechanism should be designed so as to ensure complementarity and coordination between the institutions. The mechanism should, to the extent possible, draw on the expertise of appropriate regional and international bodies, such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

The mechanism should be mandated to prepare and present a report to be shared with the HRC and the UN Security Council. It should be operationalised as swiftly as possible and mandated to provide regular updates on the human rights situation in Sudan.

In addition to the creation of an investigatory mechanism, points that must be addressed during the session, and included in a resolution adopted during the session, include the following:

- The TMC must immediately withdraw all members of the RSF from policing and law enforcement anywhere in Sudan and especially in Khartoum. They must be ordered off the streets and confined to their barracks in the interests of public safety.
- Access to the internet and social media must be immediately unblocked to allow the people of Sudan access to information, a critical component of the right to freedom of expression.
- The Sudanese peoples’ rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, which are critical for the transition, must be protected, respected and fulfilled.
- The government must immediately and unconditionally release all people arrested for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association since the protests began in mid-December 2018, including the Darfuri students arrested in December 2018.
- Army officers, police and intelligence officials suspected of involvement in crimes

under international law and other serious human rights violations must be immediately suspended, pending investigations and the suspects must be prosecuted where there is sufficient admissible evidence.

- Investigations into all allegations made since December 2018 of unlawful killings, torture and other ill-treatment and death in detention must be fair, effective, comprehensive and transparent. All security officers, politicians and others suspected of serious human rights violations and crimes under international law, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, must be prosecuted in fair trials, without imposition of the death penalty.
- The authorities must disclose the whereabouts of all arrested and detained NCP members, and charge them with a recognizable criminal offence in line with Sudan's obligations under international law, without recourse to the death penalty, or release them. Respect the rights of these detainees, ensuring they have access to lawyers of their choice, family visits and medical treatment. They must not be subjected to torture and other ill-treatment while in detention.