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By Jean Shaoul
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Military junta launches counter-revolution in Sudan

The counter-revolutionary bloodbath launched by the junta in Sudan's capital Khartoum and its twin city Omdurman ongoing since Monday has killed some 100 people, including an eight-year old child, and injured hundreds more.

The number of victims includes 40 bodies pulled from the Nile River that the army dumped there. But with many protestors still unaccounted for the final total is likely to rise. A Sudanese journalist on Britain's Channel 4 cited a former security officer who said that some of those thrown into the Nile had been beaten or shot to death and others hacked to death with machetes, declaring, "It was a massacre."



Victims of Monday's massacre

The bloodbath is part of a broader move by the Transitional Military Council (TMC) to forcefully close down the protests and sit-ins in Khartoum and throughout the country. The TMC had seized power on April 11 after months of mass protests, in a preemptive coup against the 30-year rule of President Omar al-Bashir in a bid to preserve the military-dominated regime.

It is a prelude to a bloody military dictatorship along the lines of General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's Egypt, with the full backing of Washington's reactionary and ruthless regional allies, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt. It was el-Sisi, then the Defence Minister in the elected government of Mohammed Mursi's Muslim Brotherhood-led government, who led the murderous assaults on pro-democracy demonstrators in Cairo in 2013.

On Tuesday, TMC chief, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, announced the cancellation of a three-year power-transfer deal tentatively agreed with opposition leaders organized under the umbrella of the Alliance for Freedom and Change (AFC). Instead, it would hold elections in nine months' time under "regional and international supervision."

The Sudanese Professional Association (SPA), one of the groups within the AFC, rejected the move, accusing the junta of a "systematic and planned" crackdown. Calling for the "overthrow of the military junta," they urged demonstrators to return to the streets for Eid

al-Fitr prayers, marking the end of Ramadan, to honour those killed on Monday and to “demonstrate peacefully” in a nation-wide “civil disobedience” protest.

The SPA also called for an international inquiry into the killings, rejecting the junta’s investigation. It is opposed to early elections which, if indeed they are held, would likely be rigged and/or dominated by ousted dictator President Omar al-Bashir’s National Congress Party (NCP), the only organised political party with the resources to mount an election campaign.

On Monday, the TMC had cut off electricity to the central area of Khartoum and country-wide access to the internet, before deploying convoys of heavily armed members of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) to guard the entrances to the bridges across the Nile and patrol the streets around both cities.

The RSF, previously known as the Janjaweed and notorious for their brutal suppression of the uprisings in Darfur and the east of the country, is controlled by the TMC’s deputy leader, Lieutenant General Hamdan Dagalo (known by his nickname “Hemeti”), who has ambitions of stepping into al-Bashir’s shoes. He was given carte blanche to unleash a general carnage.

Dagalo’s forces used live ammunition, stun grenades and tear gas to break up the more than five-month-old sit-in outside the country’s defense ministry in Khartoum, where tens of thousands of Sudanese had encamped demanding an end to military rule and the transfer of power to a democratically elected government. They then set about demolishing the barricades, beating up anyone who resisted, with protestors shouting in disbelief, “During the month of Ramadan?”

Videos on social media show the military shooting and beating unarmed, defenceless civilians and setting fire to the tents. One soldier was filmed shouting to other soldiers, “Kill them, kill the child of the dog.” There were also reports of the paramilitary forces raping women.

Much of Khartoum is now under lockdown. One resident told the BBC, “We have reached the point where we can't even step out of our homes because we are scared to be beaten or to be shot by the security forces.” Another said members of the Janjaweed had pulled him from his car and beaten him on his head and back.

The TMC justified its crackdown with ludicrous claims that the security forces were pursuing “unruly elements” who had fled to the protest site and were causing chaos. The

RSF's Major General Othman Hamed accused the sit-in of attracting prostitutes and hashish sellers and demonstrators of throwing stones at soldiers.

The Sudanese Doctors' Committee, a supporter of the SPA that has played a key role in organizing the protests, appealed for "urgent support" from international humanitarian organisations to help the wounded. It said that it was struggling to cope, with people being treated on hospital floors, while soldiers patrolled outside, preventing doctors and even volunteers from entering.

According to witnesses, the RSF and the military had looted and destroyed property in hospitals and threatened doctors and medical workers with reprisals if they treated the wounded.

Video clips showed troops beating medical staff at Khartoum's Royal Care Hospital, in some cases so severely that they too needed hospital treatment. They demanded the evacuation of all the patients. Soldiers arrested one of the doctors, Waleed Abdullah, after shooting him in the leg. One Sudanese doctor told the *Middle East Eye* web site, "If they know I'm a doctor, they will arrest me," while another said it was "chaos everywhere."

The assault on the protest had been openly prepared for days after negotiations between the junta and the civilian opposition popular alliance broke down over whether a military or a civilian figure would head a joint military-civilian regime during a proposed three-year transitional period in preparation for presidential elections.

Demonstrators had remained in the streets, rejecting the protracted transition and demanding an immediate end to the ruling junta. Last week, the country was paralysed by a two-day general strike called by the SPA.

The murderous crackdown began just after the TMC chief al-Burhan and deputy Dagalo's tour of the three countries--Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE--that have backed the junta and are Washington's chief allies in the Arab world.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE had already pledged \$3 billion to prop up Sudan's junta. The quid pro quo is the dispatch of Sudanese troops to support Saudi Arabia and the UAE's near-genocidal war against Yemen. After the meeting in Riyadh, Dagalo declared that "Sudan stands with the kingdom against all threats and attacks from Iran and the Houthis [Yemen's anti-Saudi rebels]."

The military junta's brutal crackdown gives the lie to the treacherous line of Britain's Socialist Workers Party, which backed its sister party, the Egyptian Revolutionary

Socialists' (RS) support for the Egyptian military's ouster of Mursi, that paved the way for el-Sisi's bloodbath and repression that have been even more ferocious than that of his predecessor Hosni Mubarak.

RS' Hossam al-Hamalawy, writing in SWP's monthly journal *Socialist Review*, called for Sudan's revolutionaries to negotiate and ally with the lower ranks of the officers and among soldiers, and seek their participation.

The SPA and AFC, under the influence of the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP), are seeking to build a broad popular alliance of workers with political parties and armed groups, the same groups that have dominated Sudan since independence, to form a civilian-led transitional government. The notion that such a government--in a country dominated by a small, wealthy clique—would be capable of resolving the enormous social and economic problems confronting Sudanese workers is a dangerous illusion.

Egypt's revolutionary struggles contain enormous political lessons, obtained at a terrible price, for the working class throughout the Middle East and North Africa where there is a growing movement of strikes and demonstrations by workers in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.

The only way to establish a democratic regime in Sudan is through a struggle led by the working class, independently of and in opposition to the liberal and pseudo-left forces in the middle class who will stop at nothing to block a social revolution, to take power, expropriating the regime's ill-gotten wealth in the context of a broad international struggle of the working class against capitalism and for the building of socialism.

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