



Sudan's Civilian Prime Minister Hamdok Resigns Amid the Military Coup's Continued Crackdown Against Pro-Democracy Protesters

The resignation of Sudan's civilian Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok has added further political uncertainty in the country. Large numbers of pro-democracy protesters have been demanding a departure of the military from control of the government since their seizure of power via an October 2021 coup and the genuine establishment of a democratic civilian government. The demonstrators have endured violent reprisals from the military and security forces, with at least 57 killed and hundreds more injured. The gains made in the country following the ousting of former despot Omar al-Bashir in 2019 have been jeopardized as the military coup has impeded the democratic transition process, and the Sudanese people are fighting against a return to an authoritarian government. Despite the violence of the military response to anti-coup demonstrations, greater numbers of protesters have stepped into the streets of Khartoum and other cities in preceding weeks. The fear for many observers now is that with the resignation of Hamdok, the last vestige of civilian rule, the military may feel even more unrestrained in its attempts to suppress pro-democracy protests.

Leaders of the civilian protests have said that it is clear to them that the military will not peacefully allow democratic rule to take place. When mass protests in 2019 toppled an oppressive autocratic government, a transitional government that allocated power between civilian and military authorities was established to oversee the functions of the state. Democratic elections that would transition the country to full civilian control were scheduled for February of this year. During the coup several months ago in October, the military arrested Hamdok, his cabinet, and other civilian leaders. Sudan's citizenry responded with mass protests, marches, and sit-ins at the gates of the Presidential Palace. The size and force of these protests pressured the military to reinstall Hamdok as prime minister, who agreed to continue serving if the military would release political detainees, allow for the independent appointment of a new cabinet, and respect freedom of expression.

The political independence stipulated by Hamdok for his return never materialized. In addition to this, the military reopened the notorious national intelligence service – implicated in the deaths of many Sudanese – under a new name. This specific action by the military has been cited as the final straw in Hamdok's decision to resign, seeing this as an indication that the military has no inclination to step away from power and will continue its repression of Sudan and its people.

The United Nations has said that it is willing to facilitate conversations between the different stakeholders in Sudan in order to avoid escalation of violence and further disaster. Sudan's largest political party, Umma, has said that a return to the 2019 agreement governing the transition period which requires the military to relinquish its control of the levers of government is the only way to save the country from destruction. The architect of the October 2021 military coup, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, was sworn in as Sudan's interim head of state in 2019 after the removal of the decades-long dictator Omar al-Bashir.