

Over 100 Sudanese detainees, including high-profile politicians, start hunger strike

Author:

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KHARTOUM: More than 100 Sudanese detainees, including high-profile politicians, began a hunger strike on Tuesday, allied lawyers and doctors said.

The detainees are part of the protest movement against an Oct. 25 army coup that ended a civilian-military power-sharing arrangement that followed the overthrow of long-ruling autocrat President Omar Bashir in 2019.

The coup prompted mass protests during which 81 people have been killed, most recently two on Monday, and more than 2,000 injured, according to the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors.

"More than 100 unlawful detainees in Soba prison entered today in an open hunger strike due to their unjustified and illegal detention," the Defense Committee for the Unlawfully Detained and Martyrs of Arbitrary Killings said in a statement.

The group said separately that one suspect in the killing of a police brigadier general had been tortured while another was in solitary confinement.

Civilian politicians Khalid Omer Yousif and Wagdi Salih were taking part in the hunger strike, said Abdelqayom Awad, a member of Yousif's Sudanese Congress Party.

Along with former Sovereign Council member Mohamed Al-Faki Suleiman who was arrested on Sunday, the men face corruption charges apparently stemming from their work on a taskforce dismantling the network of Bashir.

The Sovereign Council was a body of civilian politicians and military men set up after Bashir's overthrow to lead a transition to democracy.

It was dissolved after the October coup, setting back those plans.

Military leaders say the coup was necessary due to political infighting and for the country's security, but they say they are still committed to elections in mid-2023.

Military leader Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan said in an interview on Saturday he was not involved in the arrests of Yousif and Salih – who were also detained temporarily in the coup – but that their work on the committee had diverged from its aims.

On Monday, thousands rallied in the capital Khartoum and its twin city of Omdurman, while protests also took place in the eastern city of Port Sudan and in the western Darfur region, according to witnesses.

In Khartoum, protests had begun with crowds waving national flags and carrying red balloons, as the rallies coincided with Valentine's Day.

"Today is the nation's love day," one banner read.

Some shouted slogans demanding the authorities release activists who had been arrested, while others carried pictures of protesters killed.

"We are demanding the release of resistance committee members and politicians who were unjustly arrested, and some of whom are facing fabricated charges," protester Khaled Mohamed said.

But as crowds tried to approach the presidential palace, security forces fired volleys of tear gas canisters.

One protester was killed after he was shot in "the neck and chest by live rounds by coup forces" in Khartoum, the independent Central Committee of Sudan Doctors said.

Another protester was later killed in Omdurman after being struck by "live bullets to the left shoulder which penetrated the chest," the committee said.

Sudanese police said in a statement that at least 102 police were "severely wounded" while one suffered "a gunshot to the foot."

It also noted that protesters have "smashed the front" of the parliament building, set a fire near an adjacent gas station, and damaged several vehicles and a mosque in Omdurman.

Damage was also reported to several parts of the Ministry of Youth and Sports in the city, and items belonging to security guards were looted, it said, adding that police only "exercised the reasonable legitimate force" in response.

The authorities have also arrested scores of activists accused of belonging to the "resistance committees" that have been instrumental in organizing protests.

"The number of people detained arbitrarily and without criminal charges has exceeded 100," the Sudanese Professionals Association said Monday.

On Sunday, authorities arrested Mohamed Al-Fekki, a civilian former member of the ruling Sovereign Council, which led the country under the now stalled 2019 power-sharing agreement.

Last week, authorities arrested ex-minister Khaled Omar Youssef and Wagdi Saleh, the spokesman of Sudan's main civilian bloc, the Forces for Freedom and Change.

Those arrests came just a day after they joined an FFC delegation for talks with UN special representative Volker Perthes, as part of efforts to resolve Sudan's deepening crisis.

The October military power grab, the latest coup in Sudan since its independence, has sparked widespread international condemnation and punitive measures – but authorities have shown little inclination to compromise.



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Ex-Sudan official detained as 2 killed in anti-coup protests Sudan rejects Western criticism of arrests as 'blatant interference'

[US officials meet Tunisians civil society members](#)

Wed, 2022-02-16 00:16

TUNIS: US officials have met with Tunisian civil society representatives amid Washington's concern over the dissolution of the Supreme Judicial Council, the US Embassy in Tunisia said on Tuesday, escalating international pressure on President Kais Saied.

Saied last week dissolved the council, one of the remaining institutions in Tunisia that was able to work independently of him, in the latest of a series of moves his opponents have described as being part of a coup.

US Deputy Assistant Secretaries Karen Sasahara and Christopher Le Mon met with Tunisian civil society representatives to discuss recent political and judicial developments, the US Embassy said in a statement.

"We are concerned by Tunisian President Saied's decree. Last week, we joined like-minded partners in emphasizing that an independent judiciary is a core element of an effective and transparent democracy," State Department spokesman Ned Price had said a day earlier.

Tunisia's president cemented his grip over the judiciary on Sunday with a decree that lets him dismiss judges or block their promotion, helping consolidate his power after he seized executive authority last summer.

Saied outraged his opponents and alarmed democratic foreign allies with his announcement about the judicial body.

Saied, meanwhile, relieved the temporary head of national radio, Chokri Cheniti, from his position, the presidency announced in a statement.

Saied had appointed Cheniti as the temporary head of the national radio, Radio Tunisienne, in September. He did not name a replacement for Cheniti.



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[UN special envoy for Yemen condemns Houthi attacks on UAE](#)

Tue, 2022-02-15 23:13

LONDON: The UN special envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg echoed the Secretary-General's condemnation of recent Houthi attacks on the UAE on Tuesday.

Speaking at a Security Council meeting, Grundberg said that following Houthi attacks on the UAE last month, including a drone attack in Abu Dhabi that killed three people, "it should be obvious to everyone just how high the stakes have become."

He continued: "The Secretary-General has condemned these attacks and I echo that condemnation."

He added that Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE "indicate how this conflict risks spiralling out of control unless serious efforts are urgently made by the Yemeni parties, the region, and the international community to end this conflict."

The Yemen envoy added that ending the war in Yemen is a choice and is possible despite the challenges.

"There is a way out of this war, allowing the war to continue is a choice, and so is ending it," he told the council.

"We all know that ending it will not be easy, but I firmly believe that it is possible," he added.

He said that dialogue and compromise are required if Yemenis are not to be left suffering until parties to the war are tired of fighting.

"A political process under UN auspices is our best way forward," he said.

Grundberg said that he is developing a framework that will set out his plan to move towards an inclusive political settlement, including the

establishment of a multi-track process.

“Through this process, the warring sides’ interests can be addressed within the context of a broader Yemeni agenda along the three tracks of political, security, and economic matters,” he explained.



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Dozens of Houthis killed in raging battles outside Marib in Yemen
Houthis ‘primary obstacle to peace efforts’ in Yemen: US special envoy

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in anti-coup protests

Author:

Tue, 2022-02-15 01:25

CAIRO: Sudan's military authorities have arrested a former senior government official a second time, his party said, and at least two demonstrators were killed as thousands once again took to the streets around the country Monday to protest an October military coup.

The Unionist Alliance party said Mohammed Al-Faki Suliman, a former member of the ruling Sovereign Council, was detained Sunday in the capital of Khartoum. It said security forces stopped his vehicle as he was heading from his home to the party's headquarters.

Suliman was also deputy head of a government-run agency tasked with dismantling the legacy of former autocratic President Omar Al-Bashir's regime.

Also on Sunday, security forces arrested two former members of the agency, according to a security official who spoke on condition of anonymity. The agency is known as The Committee to Dismantle the Regime of June 30, 1989, in reference the Islamist-backed military coup that brought Al-Bashir to power. The official said the three were taken to the Souba prison in Khartoum. He said they were facing charges related to the work of the agency, which the military disbanded following the Oct. 25 takeover.

Suliman had been detained in the coup and was released a month later as part of a deal between the military and then-Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok.

He was the latest of a series of former government officials and activists to be detained in recent weeks as military rulers stepped up crackdown on anti-coup groups.

Last week, authorities also rearrested Khalid Omar, a minister in the ousted transitional government. Also arrested was Wagdi Saleh, another committee member. Omar is a leader with the opposition Sudanese Congress Party. The party said prosecutors ordered Omar and Saleh to remain in custody for 15 more days. It did not provide further details.

The detentions have intensified in recent weeks as Sudan plunged into further turmoil with near-daily street protests since the coup.

The takeover upended Sudan's transition to democratic rule that began after three decades of international isolation under Al-Bashir, who was removed from power in 2019 after a popular uprising.

Protesters once again marched in Khartoum and its twin city of Omdurman on Monday, demanding the establishment of a fully civilian government to lead the transition, according to the pro-democracy movement. There were protests in other cities, too, including Port Sudan and Wad Madani, it said.

The movement shared footage online that showed protesters in Khartoum beating drums and holding the Sudanese flag while marching in the streets of Khartoum. Others held posters with images of arrested activists and former officials, with a slogan reading: "Freedom for the detained."

Security forces violently broke up protests in multiple places in Khartoum and Omdurman, using live ammunition and tear gas, activist Nazim Sirag said. At least two men were shot dead, he said. The Sudanese Doctors Committee said the first was shot in his neck and chest in Khartoum, and the second on his

shoulder in Omdurman.

Many others were wounded, including with gun shots during the heavy crackdown on protesters, especially at the Sharwani bus station located south of the Presidential Palace in Khartoum, Sirag added.

Security authorities in the capital had called on protesters to assemble in public squares to avoid more clashes with forces. A deadly crackdown on protesters has killed at least 81 people and wounded 2,200 others since the coup, according to the medical group.

Sudan has been politically paralyzed since the coup. The turmoil has worsened since the resignation last month of Hamdok, who complained of failure to reach a compromise between the generals and the pro-democracy movement.

African Union Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat, meanwhile, met Sunday with Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, head of the Sovereign Council, in Khartoum as part of international efforts to find a way out of the crisis, the council said. Mahamat also met with the Sudanese Professionals Association, which reiterated its demand of the removal of military from power, the association said.

The generals, however, said they will hand over power only to an elected administration. They say elections will take place in July 2023, as planned in a constitutional document governing the transitional period.



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Tue, 2022-02-15 00:00

LONDON: Kuwait's cabinet scrapped the PCR test requirement for travelers and unvaccinated students attending schools and universities, Kuwait News Agency reported on Monday.

Social distancing in mosques was also abolished and unvaccinated people will now be able to enter shopping centers.

People are still required to wear face masks in public and the new rules will come into effect on Sunday Feb. 20, KUNA reported.



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