

Sudan doctors protest state violence in post-coup rallies

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KHARTOUM: Sudanese doctors protested Sunday against violent attacks by security forces targeting medical personnel during pro-democracy rallies following last year's military coup.

"During every protest they fire tear gas inside the hospital where I work," one doctor, Houda Ahmad, said at the rally in Khartoum.

"They even attack us inside the intensive care unit," she added at the rally, where medical personnel carried pictures of colleagues they said had been killed.

The demonstration was the latest in the crisis-hit north-east African country, where protesters in the north also blockaded roads to vent their anger against an electricity price hike announced last week, and that has since been frozen.

Sudan's October 25 coup led by military leader General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan derailed a fragile transition to civilian rule, that had started with the 2019 ouster of strongman Omar Al-Bashir following youth-led mass protests. The military power grab has sparked an international outcry and triggered a new wave of street demonstrations, with another rally expected on Monday. During the turmoil of recent months, prime minister Abdulla Hamdok was detained and later reinstated but then quit, warning that Sudan was at a dangerous crossroads threatening its very "survival."

Deadly crackdowns have claimed the lives of 64 protesters, according to pro-democracy medics. A police general has also been killed in the street violence that has rocked Sudan, one of the world's poorest countries.

The UN World Health Organization said last week there had been 11 confirmed attacks on Sudanese health facilities since November.

The WHO said it was "also aware of the interception of ambulances, medical personnel and patients during their attempts to seek safety."

It called for the attacks to "stop now," pointing out that they threaten health care services needed more than ever during the Covid pandemic.

Covid-19 is a "grave threat" for Sudan, where 94 percent of the population has not been vaccinated, said the WHO.

Sudan has confirmed 93,973 coronavirus infections and about 4,000 deaths. In September, it said 64 percent of about 1,000 health workers tested had been found to be Covid-positive.

Sudan's 45 million people have also been dealing with a severe economic crisis and inflation approaching 400 percent.

On Sunday, hundreds blocked key roads in the Northern Province, 350 kilometers (229 miles) from the capital, angered by recent news electricity prices would double – a move that was then frozen, but not officially abolished.

"No vehicle will pass until the authorities have canceled this increase, because it signs the death certificate of our agriculture," protester Hassan Idriss told AFP by phone.

The protests that led to the 2019 ouster of Bashir had started after the government decided to triple the price of bread.

During the recent protests, Sudan has also often shut down the Internet and moved to limit reporting on the unrest.

In the latest move it revoked the license of Al Jazeera Mubasher, the live TV unit of the Qatar-based network, accusing it of "unprofessional" coverage of protests, the channel said.

The United Nations is now seeking to organize talks involving political, military and social actors to resolve the crisis.

UN special representative Volker Perthes announced the bid last week saying it was "time to end the violence and enter into a comprehensive consultative process."

The mainstream faction of the Forces for Freedom and Change, the leading civilian pro-democracy group, said Sunday it would accept the offer of dialogue if it were to revive the transition to civilian rule.

Sudan's military in April 2019 put an end Bashir's three-decade rule, leading to the arrest and imprisonment of the autocrat and many regime officials.

Bashir is also wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur.

An imprisoned former foreign minister under Bashir, Ibrahim Ghandour, has begun a hunger strike along with several ex-regime officials, his family said Sunday.

They will only end it "once they have been freed or brought before an impartial tribunal," his family said in a statement.

The public prosecutor's office had recently ordered the release of several ex-officials, but Burhan instead ordered they stay in detention.

Ghandour's family decried the "interference in judicial affairs."

The protester movement however accuses Burhan, who was Bashir's ground forces commander, of helping old regime figures come back to power.





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Sudan revokes license of Al Jazeera Mubasher citing unprofessional coverage
 Army chief thanks Saudi Arabia's leadership for supporting security and stability of Sudan

[Coalition in Yemen kills more than 280 Houthis in airstrikes on Marib, Al-Bayda](#)

Sun, 2022-01-16 16:38

RIYADH: The Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen said on Sunday that more than 220 Houthi militants were killed in airstrikes on Marib province, Saudi Press Agency reported.

The coalition added that 17 military vehicles were also destroyed during 45

operations targeting the Iran-backed Houthi militia in the oil-rich Marib province over the last 24 hours.

The coalition also said it had carried out 19 other operations targeting the Houthis in Al-Bayda province, killing more than 60 fighters and destroying 13 vehicles.

Meanwhile, Yemeni Information Minister Moammar Al-Eryani said the government strongly condemned the targeting of a hospital in Taiz which provides services to thousands of people in the city with mortar shells.

1- We strongly condemn targeting of Al-Thawra Hospital in Taiz by mortar shells, which caused material damage & panic among the management, staff and visitors of the hospital, which provides its services to thousands of people in the city that has been under siege for 7 years.

– معمر الإرياني (@ERYANIM) [January 16, 2022](#)

“Since the coup, Al-Thawra Hospital and the government, private hospitals, schools, facilities, infrastructure, private objects, citizens’ homes in Taiz was subject to indiscriminate attacks by the militia, which killed and wounded thousands of civilians, in flagrant violation of international laws,” Al-Eryani said in a tweet.

He expressed his “regret” at the international community’s silence, including that of UN and US envoys, “regarding the war crimes and crimes against humanity against Taiz, which accommodates (the) largest population in Yemen.”

He called for “firm stances” to be adopted to stop the Houthis from shooting and bombing civilians and civilian objects in Taiz.



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Houthis reject UN call to release hijacked UAE-flagged ship
Yemeni forces inflict heavy losses on Houthis in Marib

[Egypt, UK ministers talk climate change agenda ahead of COP27](#)

Sun, 2022-01-16 16:15

CAIRO: Egypt and the UK have committed to tackling climate change in a “critical decade” following a ministerial meeting.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, president-designate of COP27, and COP26 President Alok Sharma, discussed climate change issues, priorities and areas of cooperation as part of a post-COP26 meeting to prepare for the next session of the summit, which Egypt will host this year.

In a joint statement after the meeting, the two sides promised to work to advance the guidelines of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and Paris Agreement.

The statement said: “As the current and incoming UNFCCC COP Presidencies, we affirm our joint commitment to accelerating the fight against climate change during this critical decade.

“In this context, we agreed that the UK and Egypt would strengthen bilateral cooperation to fight climate change and to maintain and build on the current momentum for global climate action.”

Both parties promised to work together through 2022 and beyond to keep the 1.5 degrees Celsius target within reach, and to support the efforts of developing countries in adapting to the negative effects of climate change.

The UK will “extend its full support to Egypt to achieve ambitious results during COP27,” the statement added.

“We will work together to encourage all parties to meet their commitments across mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage and finance; requesting that

by the end of 2022, parties revisit and strengthen their 2030 emissions target to align with the Paris temperature goals and make progress towards doubling of adaptation finance on 2019 levels, as envisaged in the Glasgow Climate Pact,” the statement said.

“To this end, we agree to continue close consultations in the months ahead, both on the ministerial and technical levels.”



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Tomb from Greco-Roman era discovered in EgyptEgypt completes a \$3bn loan for green and Islamic financing

[Turkey lifts PCR requirement for unvaccinated in some areas](#)

Author:

Sun, 2022-01-16 02:06

ISTANBUL: Turkey will no longer require unvaccinated individuals to take a PCR test for COVID-19 before using planes, buses or other transportation, or before attending events such as concerts, plays or movies, the state-owned

Anadolu Agency said on Saturday.

Citing the Interior Ministry, Anadolu said unvaccinated civil servants, private sector employees and school personnel will also not be required to take a PCR test.

Turkish Airlines CEO Bilal Eksi said separately on Twitter that the carrier will not require PCR tests on domestic flights.

Meanwhile, scientists have warned that omicron's whirlwind advance practically ensures it won't be the last version of the coronavirus to worry the world.

Every infection provides a chance for the virus to mutate, and omicron has an edge over its predecessors: It spreads way faster despite emerging on a planet with a stronger patchwork of immunity from vaccines and prior illness. That means more people in whom the virus can further evolve. Experts don't know what the next variants will look like or how they might shape the pandemic, but they say there's no guarantee the sequels of omicron will cause milder illness or that existing vaccines will work against them. It's why they urge wider vaccination now, while today's shots still work. "The faster omicron spreads, the more opportunities there are for mutation, potentially leading to more variants," Leonardo Martinez, an infectious disease epidemiologist at Boston University, said. Since it emerged in mid-November, omicron has raced across the globe like fire through dry grass.

Research shows the variant is at least twice as contagious as delta and at least four times as contagious as the original version of the virus.

Omicron is more likely than delta to reinfect individuals who previously had COVID-19 and to cause "breakthrough infections" in vaccinated people while also attacking the unvaccinated.

The WHO reported a record 15 million new COVID-19 cases for the week of Jan. 3-9, a 55 percent increase from the previous week.

Along with keeping comparatively healthy people out of work and school, the ease with which the variant spreads increases the odds the virus will infect and linger inside people with weakened immune systems – giving it more time to develop potent mutations.

"It's the longer, persistent infections that seem to be the most likely breeding grounds for new variants," said Dr. Stuart Campbell Ray, an infectious disease expert at Johns Hopkins University.



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Turkey and Armenia hold talks in first steps towards normalization
Turkey pursues new mechanism with US to consolidate ties

[Lebanese Shiite scholar attacks Hezbollah leaders, denounces party's policies](#)

Sat, 2022-01-15 23:41

BEIRUT: A Lebanese Shiite scholar has denounced Hezbollah, as well as its leader Hassan Nasrallah and his deputy Sheikh Naim Qassem, in a sermon published on his Facebook page and shared across social media.

Sheikh Abdul Salam Dandach, from the Baalbek–Hermel region, said in the

video: "Our resistance is different from theirs (Hezbollah's). We are not the rulers of this land and we are not new parties that came to Lebanon. Our parents and ancestors are deeply rooted in this land."

The party is referred to as the "resistance" in Lebanon.

He addressed Nasrallah, saying: "You resist using deception and encroachment. You live off your resistance, based on the bliss of the US dollar, whereas our resistance comes from hunger and poverty. You resist through surfeit and ingratitude. We resist your lies. We resist the illness and ignorance that you caused in the region. We resist the destruction and havoc that you created."

FASTFACT

The Shiites in Baalbek–Hermel constitute 60 percent of the population.

Since the beginning of the economic and social crisis that has hit Lebanon, many in the Shiite community of Baalbek–Hermel have complained about the rampant insecurity that the region is witnessing due to the emergence of a de facto power that controls people's lives with its weapons and allows the formation of gangs involved in smuggling, kidnapping and extortion.

An activist from the region, who did not reveal his identity, told Arab News: "Baalbek–Hermel doesn't have any patron. The government has been neglecting it for years and Hezbollah tries to avoid it, turning its back on the complicated social and economic crises."

The Shiites in Baalbek–Hermel constitute 60 percent of the population, whereas the Sunnis and Christians represent 20 percent apiece.

Fewer than 30 percent of the Shiites belong to political parties, mostly the Amal Movement and Hezbollah, whereas the rest belong to a clan.

On Oct. 17, 2019, massive protests swept across Lebanon in an unprecedented movement against government failures, poor living standards, rampant corruption, the lack of basic services, overwhelming sectarian rule, and the imploding economy.

One of the Oct. 17 activists said: "Sheikh Dandach is not the first opposition voice to rise in the region against Hezbollah. People were previously silent because the economic situation was acceptable. But when everything collapsed, there were no more reservations, the pain became bigger and the voice louder.

"The dominant mindset in the region is a clan mindset ruled by the logic of dignity that refuses to be dictated as to what to do and what not to do."

The activist said the people of Baalbek–Hermel drew comparisons between the situation in their neglected areas and in the prosperous areas of southern

Lebanon.

“They feel that the south is receiving greater attention from Hezbollah and enjoys many benefits and economic projects that aren’t provided to the Baalbek–Hermel region. They refer to Hezbollah’s chief Hassan Nasrallah and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri as the ‘Southern Duo.’”

According to a political activist in the region, Dandach derived his power from his family in Hermel, the biggest city in the Baalbek–Hermel governorate. “This family is linked to those involved in murders and smuggling. So, Hezbollah may not pay attention to what Dandach says.”

But this did not mean that Dandach’s words would not harm Hezbollah and allow other voices to be raised, including those of opponents active in the revolution, he added, demanding that all those in power, including Hezbollah, changed their primary decision-making partners in the country.

“Dandach’s words reflect a situation of great malaise within the Shiite community in the region, which may be reflected in the upcoming parliamentary elections, but the problem lies in the counter-fight against Hezbollah, which may be in the interest of the party itself.

“Terming Hezbollah as an Iranian occupation force is an uncomfortable expression in the region and may cause people to gravitate back toward Hezbollah.”



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