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SUDAN | Renewed Protests Call for Reform

Protesters gathered in several cities, towns and villages across Sudan on June 30 to commemorate the first anniversary of a power-sharing deal between the military and civilians, and to demand an acceleration in democratic reforms and the transition towards civilian rule.

The protests were called by the Sudanese Professionals' Association, and the "Resistance Committees," which played a key role in the 2019 pro-democracy movement, and took place in Khartoum, Omdurman, Kassala, Port Sudan, and Dongola. Protests also occurred in the restive region of Darfur, including in El Geneina, El Obeid, and in camps for the internally displaced.

The protesters contend that there has been insufficient reform since the removal of al Bashir and that justice has not been served in the killings of protesters during the 2019 demonstrations. Their demands included the creation of a transitional parliament representing every region, the appointment of civilian governors, and the realization of justice and accountability for human rights violations.

The demonstrations occurred despite the existence of a COVID-19 related curfew, and police have responded by using tear gas and force to disperse protesters. The government's spokesperson, Culture and Information Minister Faisal Mohammed Salih, reported that one person was killed in Omdurman and several others were injured in Khartoum and elsewhere during yesterday's gatherings. Describing the attacks on civilians as "unacceptable," Mr. Salih added that the judiciary would be conducting transparent investigations in order to bring perpetrators to justice.

In response to the protests, Sudan's Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok delivered a public address in which he pledged to put the transitional period "back on course." Promising decisive decisions "in the coming days," the Prime Minister reaffirmed "the government's principled obligations to achieve justice and retribution that ensure that crimes committed during the past 30 years are not repeated," but also warned of the possibility that "some parties" may foment dissent and instability.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "Despite a number of positive developments since the deposition of al Bashir and the creation of the Transitional Sovereignty Council last year, Sudan still has a long way to go. Numerous laws need to

be reformed in order to ensure that all Sudanese citizens enjoy full human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief. There is also an urgent need to conduct detailed investigations into the widespread violence that occurred during last year's nationwide demonstrations, and to hold all those found complicit in human rights violations to account. We reiterate our call for members of the international community who have pledged to assist Sudan economically to also prioritize financial assistance for the reform process. We also urge the Human Rights Council in particular to maintain a close scrutiny on the human rights situation in Sudan as the government advances the process of democratization in the coming days, as well as providing technical assistance.”

From December 2018 and during the first half of 2019, Sudan witnessed nationwide demonstrations in which citizens from diverse backgrounds and of all creeds and ethnicities came together to call for systematic reforms. Violence and human rights violations against protesters were observed throughout this time. Violations included murder, the targeting of hospitals and medical staff; the use of torture and other inhuman, degrading treatment; rape and other sexual and gender-based violence, and attempts by the state to limit information about events on the ground by shutting down internet and communications networks.

The protests eventually resulted in the deposition of former president Omar al Bashir and subsequent transfer of presidential power to the Sovereignty Council of Sudan. The council consists of 11 members: five representing the military, five representing the Forces for Freedom and Change, the political arm of the protest movement, and one civilian jointly elected by both groups.