



Sudan's Attacks on Peaceful Protesters and Physicians

July 2019

Overview

Since December 19, 2018, tens of thousands of Sudanese students, professionals, religious and community leaders, and workers across many fields have participated in largely peaceful marches and rallies against a chronically corrupt and repressive government. In response, the government shut down internet access, closed media offices, arrested and imprisoned scores of people, including medical professionals, and attacked and killed protesters. On February 22, 2019, President al-Bashir announced a state of emergency, effectively dissolving federal and state governments and replacing civilian leadership with military leaders in an effort to end protests and regain authority. The ouster of president al-Bashir on April 11, 2019, which put in place a Transitional Military Council (TMC) government, only intensified repression.

Physicians and other medical personnel have supported the rights of protesters, played a leading role in organizing the protests, and cared for the wounded. In response, during al-Bashir's presidency, National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) forces have entered medical facilities, arrested health professionals, fired tear gas and other weapons into hospital wards, and closed access to medical care for citizens. Physicians for Human Rights' (PHR) report, "Intimidation and Persecution," focuses on these human rights violations, as virtually all of them are explicitly prohibited by international law and by Sudanese national law. Even after the installment of the TMC and the gradual abatement of NISS attacks in favor of TMC-sponsored, Rapid Support Force attacks, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) is working with Sudanese colleagues to bring attention to the egregious violations of the human rights of protesters, and the specific targeting of health care.

PHR Findings

In research conducted between December 19, 2018 and March 17, 2019, detailed in PHR's report "Intimidation and Persecution: Sudan's Attacks on Peaceful Protesters and Physicians," PHR found that:

- NISS killed 60 protesters, including two medical students and one practicing doctor
 - Sudanese security personnel used excessive force against protesters, including frequent use of tear gas and stun guns
 - 136 health personnel were arrested
 - State security forces attacked at least seven medical facilities
 - 15 physicians were detained — and possibly tortured
 - Barred access to health care through specific targeting of health facilities by NISS
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Updates

Since March 2019, under the transitional military council:

- 30 more peaceful protesters have been killed
 - 200 protesters have been injured
 - More hospitals and medical professionals have been attacked
 - Doctors fear retribution for treating the injured
 - Internet access continues to be denied
 - The transitional military council has failed to establish a civilian government
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Recommendations To the Sudanese Government

- Immediately cease all attacks on and release both medical personnel and peaceful demonstrators who are being held without charge or trial for exercising their fundamental rights.
- Allow medical personnel to freely fulfil their medical obligations and care for their patients irrespective of their or their patients' political affiliations.

“I know that if a doctor gets arrested, they will be detained for a long time. I’m afraid of being a doctor in Sudan. We are all afraid.”

Recommendations

To the Sudanese Government *continued*

- Immediately end torture and ill-treatment of all detainees. Allow for inspections and access to prisoners by families, attorneys, and international observers.
- End policies of contempt for and criminalization of basic rights and freedoms, including peaceful assembly and freedom of speech, which have been further restricted in the recent emergency orders.
- Prohibit all forms of violence against peaceful protesters and respect United Nations standards for the use of force, which must always be based on the principles of necessity, proportionality (minimum level of force), legality, and accountability, and enforce these laws.
- Ensure accountability mechanisms for all those responsible for unnecessary and disproportionate use of force and other human rights violations. Specifically, remove the immunity provisions for the National Intelligence and Security Services in the National Security Act.
- Form an independent commission of inquiry to investigate human rights violations and to hold all perpetrators of violence against medical personnel and/or facilities accountable according to fair and transparent legal procedures.
- Respect and protect the independence and autonomy of the Sudanese Professionals’ Association and other respected independent organizations for their critical contributions to the health and human rights of Sudanese citizens.
- Adhere to provisions of Sudanese law that affirm basic human rights principles, including the Bill of Rights of the National Interim Constitution.

To the United Nations, African Union, Arab League, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and European Union

- Introduce a resolution at the Human Rights Council that would mandate the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish a commission of inquiry regarding the protests in Sudan and subsequent human rights violations.
- Identify suppliers of tear gas, lead pellets, and other crowd-control weapons to Sudanese security forces and make concrete efforts to limit export of these weapons until the government of Sudan has ensured adherence to regulations on their use.
- Press Sudan to extend an open invitation to the UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, and the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.
- Introduce sanctions against identified individuals responsible for extrajudicial killings and/or torture.

To the United States Government

- Reintroduce and pass the Medical Neutrality Protection Act (H.R. 2033, 113th Congress), which authorizes accountability mechanisms for governments that attack medical personnel, facilities, transport, or supplies.
- Pass legislation that would prohibit the export of tear gas or other riot-control items to Sudan until such a time as the Secretary of State certifies that the government of Sudan no longer uses such weapons to repress peaceful dissent.
- Appoint and confirm a new U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan (a position vacant since January 2017) to more effectively engage with the Sudanese government to advance the international recommendations outlined above.
- Sanction senior Sudanese officials responsible for gross human rights abuses under the Global Magnitsky Act.



Physicians for
Human Rights

For more than 30 years, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) has used science and the uniquely credible voices of medical professionals to document and call attention to severe human rights violations around the world. PHR, which shared in the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for its work to end the scourge of landmines, uses its investigations and expertise to advocate for persecuted health workers and facilities under attack, prevent torture, document mass atrocities, and hold those who violate human rights accountable.