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Sudan

First setback for Sudan's isolated junta

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Wednesday 17 November was the deadliest day since the 25 October coup. There were 15 deaths. But this repression did not weaken the mobilization: two days later, thousands of people took to the streets again, as in Bahri in the suburbs of Khartoum, for the burial of the murdered demonstrators. And the junta has been forced to take a first step back because of its growing isolation.

At the time of his coup, General al-Burhane had counted on a weak mobilization with a rapid loss of momentum. This is far from being the case and his support inside the country is very limited.

Supported by warlords and fundamentalists

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok, the transitional government that emerged from the revolution negotiated a peace agreement with armed groups in Juba. As a result, Mini Minawi, leader of a faction of the Sudan Liberation Army, was appointed governor of Darfur and Djibril Ibrahim, leader of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), took over the Finance Ministry. These two warlords have chosen to ally themselves with their former enemies, the military, against the civilians.

The peace agreement and the integration of the rebels into the transitional structures, led by Hamdok, have thus weakened his position. However, the support of these two leaders for the putsch does not reflect the position of the people of Darfur, as shown by the large demonstrations in el-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state, or in Zalingei in Central Darfur.

Finally, the junta's military could only rely on former Islamist supporters of the National Congress, al-Bashir's party, many of whom have returned to their posts after being ousted during the transition period. The generals have failed to broaden their social base by integrating political parties or personalities.

... and by Egypt and Israel

Internationally, condemnation of the coup and the subsequent repression was unanimous in the West, the African Union and the Arab League. The main supporters of the Sudanese generals, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, have officially declared themselves in favour of a return to a dual transition between the military and civilians. These two countries have strong economic leverage over Sudan.

Only Egypt appears openly as the main supporter of the coup. The *Wall Street Journal* revealed that the day before the coup, al-Burhane was visiting Cairo. The Sudanese dossier is directly managed by the Egyptian security services who prefer a dictatorship that is supposed to stabilize the country. Moreover, Sudan and Egypt are opposed to Ethiopia over the management of the Nile with the Renaissance Dam.

Finally, the Western press is more discreet about the Israeli position and for good reason. Its Foreign Minister refused to condemn the putsch. A few days after the coup, an Israeli delegation went to Khartoum. The reason was given by an Israeli officer:

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The military is the largest force in the country and Burhan is its commander-in-chief. The events of Monday [25 October] therefore increase the likelihood of stability in Sudan [...] while increasing the chances of stronger ties with the US, the West, and Israel in particular. [\[1\]](#)

But contrary to Egypt's and Israel's analysis, the junta's coup has not brought the desired stability to the country.

A new manoeuvre

The junta has had to resign itself to accepting the proposal of Western capitals for a return to the previous status quo. This was negotiated by a group of Sudanese mediators. Hamdok has just regained his post as Prime Minister. The Internet, which had been cut off for weeks, has been restored and some of the political prisoners have been released. This new situation reflects a balance of power unfavourable to the junta. The resistance that has been organized throughout the country has borne fruit. However, to return to the previous situation is to maintain the junta's domination over the country. This is precisely what the demonstrators refuse when they demand: "No dialogue, no negotiation, no partnership with the army".

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[1] *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 4 November 2021 "[Israël-Soudan : la normalisation à l'épreuve du coup d'État militaire](#)".