

Algeria, Morocco, Sudan: Teachers on the frontline of the struggle for change

As a new wave of popular protests and uprisings sweeps through North Africa and Sudan, teachers are playing a key role in the battle for social justice and democratic rights. In Algeria, Morocco and Sudan, tens of thousands of teachers have been involved in strike action and protests demanding better conditions for teaching and learning, as well as supporting the rise of the mass movements calling for democratic change.

Algeria

Nationwide teachers' strikes in early 2018 were met with fierce repression and reports of hundreds of strikers being dismissed. Yet the independent teachers' unions were back out on strike again in early 2019, demanding better pay and conditions and in defence of the right to organise and strike.

As huge protests erupted over the announcement that Bouteflika would seek a fifth term in office - despite not having been seen in public for years - teachers and their students played a leading role in the emerging popular movement.

Six independent unions of teachers and education workers called on their members to walk out on strike on 13 March. The fall of Bouteflika on 2 April and attempts by his cronies to shuffle the top roles in Algerian politics among themselves has not stopped the teachers' unions, who were prominent among the trade unions calling for a general strike on 10 April.

Morocco

In Morocco, 55,000 teachers employed on casualised contracts through "regional educational and training academies" took to the streets of the capital Rabat on 23 March. The contract teachers have organised themselves through coordinating committees composed of elected representatives.

They are demanding integration into the national education system alongside their colleagues, in order to ensure professional stability and social and health insurance cover. Their campaign takes place against the backdrop of a draft law currently being debated by Parliament which provides for family contributions to the cost of



Sudanese teacher Ahmed al-Kheir was tortured to death by the police | Photo: via Facebook

education. The Moroccan authorities have struck back with repression - breaking up the teachers' sit-in in Rabat with water cannon and charges by the police. In response, education unions announced three days of strike action.

Sudan

Teachers have also played a key role in the uprising against dictator Omar el Bashir which began last December, following a government decision to triple bread prices. As in Algeria, teachers' strikes over issues such as non-payment of salaries preceded the emergence of a nation-wide uprising.

Since December 2018 mass protests have spread across the country, despite the authorities' efforts to crush them. The movement is coordinated by the Sudanese Professionals Association, which includes teachers and has involved large numbers of strikes.

Repression has been fierce, with at least fifty protesters killed by the security forces according to human rights organisations. Others have died in custody, such as teacher Ahmed al-Kheir from Kassala province in Eastern Sudan who was tortured to death after being arrested.

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Solidarity resolution

This branch notes

- **Teachers' unions are playing a crucial part in the wave of mass protests and uprisings for social justice and democratic change in Morocco, Sudan and Algeria since December 2018**

This branch resolves:

- **To send a message of solidarity to teachers' unions in Algeria, Morocco and Sudan**
- **To affiliate to Middle East North Africa Solidarity Network (MENA Solidarity) at a cost of £25 per year, to make a donation of £__ and to distribute information from the network to our members**

www.menasolidaritynetwork.com

for news, updates and campaign resources. Twitter: @MENAsolidarity