

## Why is there a war in Sudan?

### A briefing and solidarity toolkit for trade unionists

The war which broke out in Sudan on 15 April is a conflict between two factions of the military regime which seized power in October 2021: the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces militia (which grew out of the Janjaweed paramilitary groups notorious for their role in genocide and ethnic cleansing in Darfur). The war is a disaster for the people of Sudan. The civilian population as a whole are being used as human shields in a conflict over political power and resources.

The revolutionary movement which mobilised millions on the streets and in the workplaces across Sudan to throw out the dictator Omar al-Bashir in 2019 has taken a clear stance opposing both sides in the war, calling for an immediate ceasefire and the provision of humanitarian aid.

Trade unions, neighbourhood-based Resistance Committees and other grassroots organisations are appealing for international solidarity. Read on to find out what you can do to help.

#### Civilians in the firing line

Hospitals, schools, markets and ordinary people's homes have been all targeted by the warring sides. In a press conference on 16 May the Sudanese Doctors' Union said that 20 hospitals had been forcibly evacuated and taken over as military bases. A further 50 are out of use or only providing very basic emergency care. Across the capital Khartoum drinking water, electricity supplies and access to food and medicine have been massively disrupted. The UN estimated in May that over 100,000 Sudanese refugees had fled to Egypt, 60,000 to Chad while hundreds of thousands of others had fled the fighting inside the country.

#### Resistance Committees

Activists from the neighbourhood-based Resistance Committees which have been the backbone of the mass movement mobilising for democracy since 2018 have played an essential role in providing aid, food and medical supplies. Volunteers are operating hospitals, electricity workers and water workers are reconnecting supplies and teachers



East Nile Hospital in Bahri city, near Khartoum after an air strike on 15 May | Photo: via Facebook

opening schools to shelter refugees. Towns and villages outside Khartoum have donated food and opened their homes to those fleeing the fighting.

#### Stop the war machine

The two sides in this war are backed by regional powers allied with Britain: Egypt, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Israel. All have contributed weapons, training, intelligence to one or the other recently. The British government has also stoked the conflict directly by granting export licenses for military equipment to Sudan worth £188,000 in 2021-22, and by integrating the Rapid Support Forces and other elements of the Sudanese security forces into 'migration management' initiatives along with EU states. For acting as Fortress Europe's proxy border guards, Sudanese government agencies received £187 million in 2017 alone.

#### Refugees welcome

Sudanese refugees seeking safety in Britain are being shut out by the government says Caitlin Boswell of refugee organisation JCWI. "The racism

of the UK's immigration system couldn't be more clear, with this government drawing policies affecting people seeking safety along stark racial lines. At the same time, ministers are using unashamedly inflammatory and far-right language, whipping up hatred towards black and brown migrants."

#### SOLIDARITY TOOLKIT:

- **Demand the government takes action - sign up to our postcard campaign for trade unionists online**
- **Write to your MP and press them to speak up**
- **Pass a motion in your union branch**
- **Make a donation to the Sudan Doctors' Union appeal ([tinyurl.com/sudanmedicalaid](https://tinyurl.com/sudanmedicalaid))**
- **Download resources, posters, model letters and motions here ([tinyurl.com/sudanwartoolkit](https://tinyurl.com/sudanwartoolkit))**