

# SPECIAL REPORT

NO. 509 | MAY 2022

UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE [www.usip.org](http://www.usip.org)

## Sowing the Seeds of Nonviolent Action in Sudan

By Marija Marovic and Zahra Hayder



People crowd a train in Khartoum, Sudan, on April 23, 2019, during nationwide protests after the overthrow of President Omar al-Bashir earlier that month. (Photo by AP)

### Contents

Introduction .....	3
Capacity for Nonviolence.....	5
Civic Spaces in Sudan, 2013–18 .....	5
Civic Spaces and the December Revolution .....	10
Sudan’s Ongoing Transition.....	15

### Summary

- Sudan’s 2018–19 Revolution, also called the December Revolution, is a striking example of the power of nonviolent action even in repressive or otherwise challenging contexts.
- Successful nonviolent action campaigns do not usually materialize overnight. They are grounded instead in civil society development, which provides the necessary skills, knowledge, and interpersonal connections required for nonviolent action campaigns.
- The initial success of the December Revolution can be attributed to civic spaces that emerged and strengthened in the country between 2013 and 2018, including community volunteer groups, civil society workshops and training, and professional associations.
- The activities in these civic spaces endowed the December Revolution with several key attributes, including widespread mass participation, unity of leadership and purpose, and a commitment to nonviolent discipline.
- In the transition following the ouster of President Omar al-Bashir, these spaces remained active and helped in resisting the Sudanese military’s counterrevolutionary efforts, although movement leadership and unity have weakened. Restoring opposition unity and continued civic engagement is vital if Sudan is to successfully navigate this transition.



UNITED STATES  
INSTITUTE OF PEACE  
Making Peace Possible

# SPECIAL REPORT

NO. 509 | MAY 2022

---



## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report explores the foundations of Sudan’s 2018–19 revolution, tracing the effects of three key civic spaces—local demand groups, civil society workshops, and professional associations—on widespread mass participation, opposition unity and movement leadership, and nonviolent discipline. It then considers how these spaces have evolved since the revolution. The report was supported by the Nonviolent Action Program in Applied Conflict Transformation Center at the United States Institute of Peace.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Marija Marovic, a former director for Freedom House and the International Republican Institute in East Africa, is a senior adviser to the Gisa Group. Zahra Hayder is a lifelong Sudanese political activist.

---

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors alone. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Institute of Peace. An online edition of this and related reports can be found on our website ([www.usip.org](http://www.usip.org)), together with additional information on the subject.

© 2022 by the United States Institute of Peace

### United States Institute of Peace

2301 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20037

Phone: (202) 457-1700  
Fax: (202) 429-6063  
E-mail: [usip\\_requests@usip.org](mailto:usip_requests@usip.org)  
Web: [www.USIP.org](http://www.USIP.org)

Special Report No. 509. First published 2022.

ISBN: 978-1-60127-891-3



UNITED STATES  
INSTITUTE OF PEACE PRESS



Sudanese protesters participate in a mass anti-government protest outside the defense ministry in Khartoum on April 21, 2019. (Photo by Mohamed Nureldin Abdallah/Reuters)

## Introduction

Before protests began in December 2018, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir’s 30-year autocratic reign seemed impervious to popular mobilization for democracy. Bashir and his National Congress Party wielded censorship, surveillance, electoral fraud, and naked violence to dominate national politics. Repression of political rights and civil liberties was so profound, in fact, that Sudan was the tenth-lowest-scoring country in Freedom House’s 2018 “Freedom in the World” ranking.<sup>1</sup> The most recent popular challenge to Bashir’s rule, in 2013, was short lived, as his security forces crushed a wave of protests in Khartoum and Omdurman and killed several hundred demonstrators. Despite Sudan’s economic woes, successful nonviolent resistance in the country appeared to be, at best, a remote possibility. Sudan was too divided along stark ethnic, political, ideological, and socioeconomic cleavages, and its painful legacy of civil conflict further discouraged popular resistance.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, by spring 2019, the people had triumphed. Demonstrations began on December 13 in Ed Damazin, in Blue Nile State, where residents protested dwindling subsidies and rising commodity prices. Protests spread quickly, and within weeks a national uprising had emerged to demand Bashir’s resignation. Led by the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA) and the umbrella opposition coalition Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), this nonviolent campaign persisted for months despite repression, culminating in a climactic mass sit-in at the military headquarters in Khartoum. On April 11, the Sudanese army abandoned Bashir, arresting the beleaguered dictator. Yet peaceful demonstrations continued as the opposition rejected the leadership of the junta,



Adapted from artwork by kosmozoo/iStock

known as the Transitional Military Council (TMC), that removed Bashir. Boosted by a wave of protests after security forces killed more than 100 protesters at the sit-in site on June 3, the opposition successfully negotiated an agreement in August for a 39-month democratic transition, to be headed by a Sovereignty Council with power shared between civilians and the military.

This progress toward democracy was hard won. Unfortunately, Sudan’s ongoing transition to ci-

vilian rule faces grave challenges, especially from a security apparatus determined to preserve its power. Following the military’s October 2021 coup and Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok’s removal, reinstatement, and subsequent resignation just months later, in January 2022, the future of Sudan’s democratic experiment remains highly uncertain.

This report assesses the factors that gave rise to Sudan’s remarkable nonviolent campaign, in particular how civil society development in the period from 2013 to 2018 laid the foundation for successful mobilization. During this time, Bashir violently stifled organization of formal opposition. Nevertheless, Sudanese civil society actors managed to carve out a variety of civic spaces—institutions and organizations formed to pursue participants’ common desire for social change—that served to cultivate resistance capacity. Sudanese citizens connected in many such spaces, both virtual and physical, formal and informal. They launched local *mubadarat* (initiatives) and “demand groups,” participated in civil society workshops and activism training, and joined illicit professional associations. In the process, they fostered social trust, forged coalitions between civil society, political parties, and armed groups, and developed new skill sets in activism and civil resistance. Many of these civic spaces emerged to address community concerns and were not explicitly opposed to Bashir. Yet the knowledge and skills they generated ultimately enabled the Sudanese opposition to mobilize a decentralized, nationwide, and robust nonviolent campaign characterized by several key traits, including widespread mass participation, unity of leadership and purpose, and a commitment to nonviolent discipline.

Sudan’s December Revolution was not simply an outpouring of spontaneous protest. Bashir’s downfall was instead the product of years of tenacious civil society development in highly repressive circumstances. In the post-Bashir period, although civic spaces helped opposition quickly remobilize to resist the military’s coup attempt in October 2021, opposition leadership and unity are both dangerously waning. Going forward, reuniting the fragmented

opposition around a shared political vision is a necessary first step to get Sudan’s democratic transition back on track.

The findings in this report are based on interviews and focus group discussions with 42 key informants as well as on the authors’ experiences as civil society activists and trainers in Sudan. Most of the interviews took place in 2019 at the mass sit-in site at the Khartoum military headquarters from May 17 to 27 during the post-Bashir protests against the TMC. Interviewees include members of neighborhood resistance committees, the SPA, the FFC, and a wide range of other civil society activists. In light of ongoing security concerns, references to these individuals and some civil society groups are anonymized.

## Capacity for Nonviolence

Sudan’s 2018–19 revolution (its third, the first having been in 1964 and the second in 1985) adds to the evidence that nonviolent action is a potent tool for political change, even in repressive autocracies. Recent studies show that nonviolent campaigns are more likely than violent ones to achieve regime change and to successfully navigate the post-regime transition toward durable democratic consolidation.<sup>3</sup> Nonviolent campaigns are most effective when they generate mass participation across societal divides, maintain nonviolent discipline, and deploy diverse and creative tactics.<sup>4</sup>

Building a movement with these qualities, however, is easier said than done. In this respect, nonviolent campaigns benefit from prior capacity building, which provides a strong foundation for successful collective action. This organizational aspect of nonviolent action is often elided in popular discourse, which tends to focus on the rapid and spontaneous nature of mass protests—or, as Timur Kuran puts it, how activists conjure “now out of never.”<sup>5</sup> Yet in most cases, successful nonviolent resistance does not materialize overnight. Instead, campaigns draw on existing social networks to fuel mobilization and on activists’ learned skills and experiences to guide resistance strategy. Well-developed campaign infrastructure can help movements weather repression.<sup>6</sup> Training programs allow activists to cultivate firsthand experience with nonviolent action, to network with like-minded allies, and to build solidarity around a vision for social change.<sup>7</sup> These experiences of learning and laboring together also foster social trust, a key ingredient in diverse opposition coalitions.<sup>8</sup> Further, although repression makes civic space formation and capacity building more difficult, as Peter Ackerman writes, “[Repressive] conditions can never completely impede the development of skills that may prove over time to be decisive in shifting the course of a conflict.”<sup>9</sup>

## Civic Spaces in Sudan, 2013–18

In the years before the December Revolution, civil society development was obstructed by a repressive autocratic regime. Omar al-Bashir’s regime routinely wielded violence to suppress popular mobilization, and his 2013 crackdown on anti-austerity protests (the largest mass mobilization in years) killed some 200 demonstrators. Sudan’s National Intelligence and Security Services detained and abused journalists and activists, often without charge and at undisclosed “ghost houses,” and censored critical media. The Humanitarian Affairs Commission, a government body

responsible for regulating nongovernmental organizations, routinely deregistered organizations and threatened their employees with prosecution. Bashir also embraced militia violence to eliminate opponents, most notably in Darfur, where the regime's ethnic cleansing campaign earned him an indictment for crimes against humanity from the International Criminal Court.<sup>10</sup>

This endemic repression limited the possibilities for concerted opposition to Bashir's rule. Nevertheless, the period still saw the development of a diverse array of civic spaces across Sudan, sparks of collective action that prepared civil society for the nonviolent campaign to come. These spaces fall into one of three broad types: local mubadarat and demand groups, civil society workshops and activism training, and professional associations.

## MUBADARAT AND DEMAND GROUPS

Soon after the failed 2013 protests, local mubadarat and demand groups began to proliferate. Following the concept of *nafeer* (call to mobilize)—a deeply rooted tradition of communal work in Sudan—groups of volunteers engaging in mubadarat stepped in wherever the government was failing to provide much-needed social services. For their part, demand groups performed political advocacy aimed at rectifying specific policies harming local communities. The central feature of these civic spaces was that they were not organized around partisan politics or direct opposition to Bashir, but instead pursued issue-based mobilization at the local level.

Mubadarat and demand group activities spanned a wide range of issue areas. Among them, a 2013 youth initiative (called Nafeer) organized thousands of volunteers to provide humanitarian relief for victims of that year's unprecedented flooding; the Hawadith Street Initiative offered medical care to those who could not afford it; the Education Without Borders Initiative collected used schoolbooks and distributed them to poor Sudanese neglected by the state; and nonprofit organizations such as Sadaqat operated networks of volunteers across the country, addressing humanitarian and social issues.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, demand groups organized resistance against policies harming local communities, such as the construction of dams in Northern State or foreign land grabbing from farmers in Gezira and Sennar States. In parallel, student associations organized advocacy networks within universities, which filtered into Sudan's peripheral regions when students returned to their homes.

The emergence of mubadarat and demand groups can be attributed to several factors. Economic conditions in Sudan were steadily worsening; and the formal secession of South Sudan in 2011 alongside collapsing global oil prices deprived the Bashir regime of the petrodollars required to sustain state patronage.<sup>12</sup> In these dire circumstances, Sudanese civil society took matters into its own hands. At the same time, the Bashir regime was cracking down on political opposition after the failed 2013 protests, arresting opposition politicians, increasing scrutiny of NGOs registered with the Humanitarian Affairs Commission (causing many to move to neighboring countries), and launching military campaigns against the armed opposition. In this climate, the 2013 Nafeer campaign offered a useful model of civic engagement—participants could avoid formal political registration but still provide for their communities as the regime targeted more overtly political actors.

Neighborhood resistance committees (NRCs) are a related form of highly localized civic space. These loose groups of like-minded activists and citizens gathered to discuss community needs and organize advocacy. NRCs first appeared during the September 2013 protests as opposition activists organized based on the neighborhood grid of Khartoum to mobilize demonstrations and

Local civic spaces coalesced into an organic grassroots infrastructure for collective action, initially as separate building blocks but later assembled into the diverse, loose coalition that made up the December Revolution.

defend protesters. Although the 2013 demonstrations were crushed, several NRCs in the Omdurman area survived and went on to function as a vehicle for campaigning on local issues. These core groups intensified their work in 2016 and 2017, both to expand locally and to support the formation of similar units in other neighborhoods that could act independently. Like the mubadarat and demand groups, NRCs

attracted people who shared an interest in community engagement and local-level reforms.

These local civic spaces coalesced into an organic grassroots infrastructure for collective action, initially as separate building blocks but later assembled into the diverse, loose coalition that made up the December Revolution. Their local focus earned them the respect of the communities they served and made them more appealing than political parties, which were perceived as ineffective and out of sync with popular grievances. They offered participants firsthand experience with collective action and introduced them to networks of similarly motivated peers. Some groups also organized internal training for volunteers, drawing on political participation and civil society training (discussed in the following section). When the December Revolution began, the Sudanese opposition turned to these networks to jump-start and sustain nonviolent mobilization.

## CIVIL SOCIETY WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING

The prerevolutionary period also saw an expansion of civil society workshops, training, and conferences, which further educated Sudanese on their rights and obligations as citizens as well as on the practice of peacebuilding and nonviolent action. Numerous organizations participated in this civic education: many had been operating in Sudan for more than 10 years, but the 2013 to 2018 period was distinguished by an increased emphasis on nonviolent action and strategic planning. Their activities targeted both activists and the broader public and, considering the constant threat of government repression, were remarkably widespread.

For instance, the Regional Centre for Training and Development of Civil Society, founded in 2006, conducted youth-focused training on civic engagement and, in 2011, held workshops across the country on constitutional dialogue. Participants discussed how a new democratic constitution could best reflect the needs of Sudan's diverse society.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the Reading for Change mubadara published more than 50 discussion papers from Sudanese scholars on democracy and human rights, distributed a quarter million books, and held thousands of weekly discussion sessions across the country from 2015 to 2019. Some youth-led organizations that were more overtly committed to regime change, such as Sudan Change Now and Girifna (We're Fed Up), began training programs as early as 2010. The former focused on civil rights and participation generally, the latter on nonviolent action in particular. Additionally, despite their weakness, political parties ran in-house training sessions that prepared their members to deliver speeches, engage with constituents, distribute information, and organize demonstrations. Some of these groups received support from international organizations and thus had enough resources to coordinate workshops in multiple regional centers and to send members to international conferences outside Sudan. Others were decentralized and localized, implemented by community organizations in peripheral regions such as Darfur, North Kordofan, Blue Nile, and the eastern states.



People take part in a protest in Khartoum on July 18, 2019, condemning the military's crackdown on the sit-in at military headquarters in June that resulted in more than 100 deaths. (Photo by Mahmoud Hjjaj/AP)

Like mubadarat and demand groups, civil society workshops nurtured the opposition and increased resistance capacity throughout Sudanese society. They raised popular awareness about civil rights and good governance, inspired youth to embrace grassroots mobilization, forged community networks, and fostered a common vision for democratic reforms. As one activ-

ist from the Nuba Mountains put it, “Nowadays, Sudanese people are participating in many kinds of civil society organizations which are mobilizing Sudanese people and educating Sudanese people on their political rights. [In 2013], people . . . didn’t know their rights.” Although these workshops initially took place in the absence of a national opposition movement, and many were highly localized in scope, their cumulative effect was to lay the groundwork for a mass democratizing campaign.

Moreover, training provided activists with a space to reflect on past mistakes and strategize for the future. In 2013, Sudanese activists thought they were close to igniting a nationwide social movement—as one put it, “We were an inch away in 2013. But it was a long inch.” The 2013 protests were marred by violence, as rioting protesters threw rocks and set fire to government buildings. As one interviewee explained at the time, “Whenever we see something of the government, we need to burn it—a car, anything related to government we targeted. So we didn’t hear of nonviolence and peaceful demonstrations.”

In this respect, activism training provided a crucial civic space for the opposition. Training instilled the importance of nonviolent discipline and armed the next generation of youth activists with a new repertoire of nonviolent tactics. Although precise figures are unavailable, the number of activists trained in nonviolent methods grew dramatically, easily into the thousands, between 2013 and 2018.<sup>14</sup> Training sessions were often designed to teach participants how to train others in their communities, thereby disseminating nonviolence praxis to marginalized communities usually excluded from international training. For instance, one Sudanese democracy organization that received international training went on to train more than 2,000 activists in eastern Sudan and in North Kordofan, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile States; meanwhile, a youth development organization trained more than 800 members in Omdurman and Khartoum.<sup>15</sup> In this way, the opposition “democratized” nonviolence capacity building, creating a critical mass of trained activists who would help drive national mobilization in 2018 and 2019.



Workshops and training also provided activists with the opportunity to learn from other regional uprisings. Civic groups such as Girifna and Sudan Change Now were inspired by the popular revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria (the latter especially as a cautionary lesson against violent escalation), which Sudanese of all stripes followed online.<sup>16</sup> Activists communicated over WhatsApp and Twitter with their peers in North Africa, and the Arab Spring uprisings were the subject of local discussion groups. For instance, the al-Khatim Adlan Center for Enlightenment offered mobile screenings of documentaries on the Arab Spring revolutions to audiences across Sudan, followed by discussions about how the lessons of these revolts could be applied to Sudan.<sup>17</sup> Some activists even attended in-person exchanges with movement leaders in Egypt. These workshops reaffirmed the importance of nonviolence and helped convince participants that democratic change was possible in Sudan.

## SHADOW UNIONS AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Last, professional associations also came into their power between 2013 and 2018. Fearing a repeat of Sudan's 1964 and 1985 nonviolent uprisings, in which organized labor played a central role, Bashir had outlawed trade unions in 1989 when his rule began and arrested many of their leaders. He went on to consolidate and co-opt labor organizations, ensuring that regime loyalists ran a tightly controlled set of formal labor groups. Thus, by 2011, the Sudan Workers' Trade Union Federation was the only labor organization legally permitted to operate.<sup>18</sup>

Labor group organization nonetheless persisted underground as various professions sought to maintain shadow trade unions. The regime was unable to fully eradicate informal labor organizing, nor was it particularly motivated to do so, given its domination of the formal unions. Its ire during the prerevolutionary period was more focused against explicitly anti-Bashir opposition. Ultimately, however, these informal organizations would come together to form a critical element of the December Revolution—the Sudanese Professionals Association.

The SPA was initially formed in 2012 when a frustrated university professors' association joined forces with the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors and the Teachers Committee. Because of the regime's ongoing suppression of labor movements, the union was not formalized until October 2016, when the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, the Sudanese Journalists Network, and the Democratic Lawyers Association drafted a formal alliance charter. Over time, the SPA umbrella expanded to include 17 professional associations. Significantly, the SPA was exclusively concerned with improving working conditions and salaries for its members, not opposition to Bashir. Its first consequential action was a countrywide strike in 2016 as doctors protested the lack of resources and poor working conditions that prevented them from delivering quality care.<sup>19</sup> Although Bashir suppressed the strike by detaining participating doctors, the regime ultimately promised to increase health-care funding. In November 2018, the SPA also released a widely publicized study and draft proposal to increase the national minimum wage, which increased broader awareness of the SPA and its activities.<sup>20</sup>

As the SPA rallied support for its minimum wage proposals, its apolitical nature began to shift. The shift was punctuated by the SPA's call for mass demonstrations on December 25, 2018, which propelled it to the top of Sudan's political scene. It quickly came to occupy a central leadership role in the December Revolution.

# Civic Spaces and the December Revolution

The prerevolutionary period in Sudan was characterized by determined civil society development in a variety of civic spaces, despite regime repression of traditional NGOs and political organizations as well as military offensives against the armed opposition. The fruits of activists' labor were evident in the December Revolution, which was powered by a vibrant and resilient nonviolent movement. Three key features of the campaign to oust Bashir were enhanced by these civic spaces: widespread mass participation, opposition unity and corresponding leadership, and a commitment to nonviolent discipline.

## MASS PARTICIPATION

The most important determinant of successful nonviolent campaigns is the size and diversity of participation.<sup>21</sup> Relative to armed resistance, nonviolent action is better suited to recruit a wide range of participants, transcending social cleavages and undermining regime support. That lesson held true in Sudan, where massive nationwide protests brought the country to a standstill, spread security forces thin, and eventually compelled the regime to meet the opposition at the negotiating table.

Mass participation in the December Revolution was made possible by earlier civic organizing. To start, activism training had improved the opposition's strategic planning. Along with lessons in nonviolent action, reflective discussions led activists to recognize that an elite-led, Khartoum-centric movement that did not resonate outside the capital would not generate nationwide participation. Earlier attempts to galvanize protests were perceived as narrowly political, and the opposition had failed to conduct community outreach beyond dedicated activists. As one seasoned activist explained, "In the 2013 revolution . . . only the 'elite,' a handful of people participated. . . . [In 2019,] three of four youth are not involved in political parties."

Learning from these mistakes, organizers emphasized the link between everyday hardships and regime corruption. Between 2013 and 2018, activists distributed leaflets at breadlines and bus stops on local grievances involving food insecurity, water and electricity shortages, and economic malaise, explaining in plain language how these problems were caused by corruption. Their efforts discredited the regime's excuses as hollow propaganda. Notably, the December Revolution was sparked by protests on December 13 in Ed Damazin, the capital of Blue Nile State, against cuts to food subsidies and rising bread prices, a grievance the Sudanese quickly connected to corruption and government failure. That message resonated in Atbara, Gadarif, Madani, Port Sudan, and Nyala, where protests soon spread. Protests reached Khartoum two weeks later, on December 25, only after much of the country had already begun to mobilize. This was a novelty in Sudan in that previous mobilization efforts in 1964, 1985, and 2013 had all been initiated by elites from the capital.

Participation was further enhanced by local organizing in the prerevolutionary period, which established a decentralized, grassroots infrastructure for mobilization. Mubadarat and other local initiatives built strong community networks and fostered social trust, developing what amounted

to a muscle memory for mobilization. One community organizer from Khartoum explained how activists sought out prior networks to jump-start the December Revolution:

One of the first things was to find those people who previously worked together, for example in Nafeer, and where those strong ties and trust existed. It was about finding groups who worked together and trusted each other. The other tactic was using the snowball effect. You find two or three people in each neighborhood, and they then expand the group through inclusion of [a] few other people from their circle of trust. That further developed into groups networking across neighborhoods and across regions.

Neighborhood resistance committees spread quickly in the revolution's early days as activists adapted local mobilizing structures using existing NRC networks as models. Because they did, the grassroots mobilized far more quickly than politicians in Khartoum, who were pressured to unify around popular demands for regime change (ultimately resulting in the formation of the FFC coalition). As the same activist put it, "People came together before politicians came together and the public pressure was [evident] in the sit-in. They [did not move] until the people's government [was] negotiated."

The NRCs' local connections also enabled them to adapt nonviolent tactics suited to their communities. NRCs studied neighborhoods with large protests and sought to emulate them, innovating tactics to recruit participants beyond the activist core. To make participants feel safer, NRCs erected barriers to delay security forces, conducted reconnaissance on police deployments, and even situated protest locations near doctors' residences, which could serve as impromptu clinics. To recruit people who were still wary, activists orchestrated silent protests that people could join from their front doors, asked the elderly to prepare meals and provide shelter, conducted mural painting and other artistic activities, and even encouraged street cleaning during protests. Local mobilization sparked friendly competition between neighborhoods and towns over who could organize larger and more creative demonstrations.

Prior civil society development also helped the opposition rally several important demographics. First, women—motivated by earlier grassroots mobilization around gender equality—were a pillar of the resistance. Before 2018, women's organizations such as the Sudanese Organization for Research and Development and the Seema Center ran training sessions, and coalitions such as No to Women's Oppression advocated for gender equality.<sup>22</sup> Women's guilds, including a prominent association of tea sellers, played an important role as well, bringing this demographic together around shared hardships.<sup>23</sup> These groups were ready to mobilize when protests began. Sudan's Women, Political and Civil Groups, a coalition of female activists, politicians, and community organizers, was one of the original signatories of the Forces of Freedom and Change umbrella coalition and has since produced a draft female bill of rights to include in the new constitution.<sup>24</sup> According to a leader of one women's organization, women's activism "didn't come in one day, it is a process of years of sharing together, sitting in different forums, and having a dialogue at different levels [before] we came out with the woman agenda." Research suggests that women's participation is strongly associated with nonviolent campaign success, and in Sudan women proved to be among the most effective protest participants.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, the opposition earned support from religious leaders, normally considered state allies. In the prerevolutionary period, activists deliberately engaged with regime allies. Outreach to religious

leaders, which began after the failed 2013 protests, initially sparked fierce debates among activists, who blamed Sudan's theocratic state for their woes. Yet their efforts bore fruit. Some local sheikhs joined the mubadarat and demand groups that preceded the revolution. Other Sufi leaders embraced the movement in order to counter the "imported" Salafi Islam that Bashir promoted. Activists exploited this tension by lauding local tradition, thereby appealing to Sufis and dispelling propaganda about the opposition's spiritual corruption. Worshippers went so far as to boycott mosques where imams did not address revolutionary grievances. To avoid losing their constituencies, more imams began criticizing the regime and teaching that protesting for human rights is not against Islam.

Activists even managed to make inroads with state agents. One civil society leader explained that working with local officials was a new approach for her organization:

In the past we tried to avoid all officials, on local and national level[s], because they are like enemies to us. . . . But [a recent] project [forced us] between the citizens and local administration. [Through this experience] we discovered the problems that the local authorities face. For example, a local official told us that they collect the taxes and then send everything to Khartoum. What stays at the locality is funds to finance the tax collection office only. They have no technical, no financial authority over the money, and nothing goes for local budget.

Local officials' inability to provide for their communities was a great source of frustration, but activists managed to transform that frustration into support for reforms.

Last, the opposition sought to bridge divides with the repressive apparatus. Activists fraternized with security forces despite ongoing repression. For instance, in a widely shared video, demonstrators tried to help an officer whose truck broke down near a protest, chanting, "We are your brothers, you fool." As participation expanded, members of the security forces began to reassess the situation. One NRC leader recalled his conversation with local police officers who came to him to profess their support, saying, "Okay, we are with you, because those who go out to the streets are our families and friends." Outreach to the military also occurred at the elite level as movement leadership was communicating with contacts within the army as early as December. One interviewee detailed how they began talking to the military: "We sent many messages, we met some of them. It was not clear that the military would stand with the revolution, but some members told us that 'Yes, we have a problem in the military. The high ranks are completely with the regime and with al-Bashir himself, but the low ranks and the soldiers completely support the revolution and will protect it.'"

## UNITY AND LEADERSHIP

A closely related aspect of nonviolent campaigns is opposition unity and corresponding movement leadership. Unity of purpose and movement cohesion are important to keep campaigns together despite regime efforts to disrupt or fragment the opposition. Capable leadership can inspire participation around a common purpose, guide movement strategy, and enforce nonviolent discipline.<sup>26</sup> In Sudan, campaign leadership came from the SPA, which played a critical role in both rallying initial resistance to Bashir, and later sustaining pressure against the Transitional Military Council, which ultimately produced the draft constitutional charter and established the 39-month democratic transition period.

The start of the December Revolution . . . was marked by a vacuum of leadership at the elite level. Into this gap stepped the previously apolitical SPA, which on December 25 called for nationwide protests to depose Bashir.

Before the December Revolution, the Sudanese opposition had struggled to unify. Opposition elites agreed on the need to depose Bashir and had tried to coalesce through alliances such as the New Dawn Charter, Sudan Call, and the National Consensus Forces, among others. Yet these coalitions were fraught with political differences, clashes between strong personalities, and individual

interests, and did not inspire faith among the masses.<sup>27</sup> Civil society was historically divided, featuring strong cleavages along tribal, ethnic, religious, ideological, and regional divides that complicated efforts to mobilize a nationwide campaign.<sup>28</sup>

The start of the December Revolution, then, was marked by a vacuum of leadership at the elite level. Into this gap stepped the previously apolitical SPA, which on December 25 called for nationwide protests to depose Bashir. As one activist put it, “What constituted unity was that the majority of people accepted SPA’s leadership.” The SPA was independent of a political party and, aside from the 2018 minimum wage proposal, relatively unknown to Sudanese politics, and thus unaffiliated with past political squabbles. The doctors and teachers it represented worked directly in their communities; and the SPA’s labor activism was closely connected to routine grievances shared by many Sudanese. As a result, the SPA enjoyed popular legitimacy. Another activist recalled that “when the SPA showed up, we didn’t know what it was. But [we learned that] it was someone who wanted [the same things as] we want. . . . So we responded.”

The SPA’s leadership proved invaluable. The SPA first negotiated with the National Consensus Forces, Sudan Call, and other civic groups to forge the umbrella FFC coalition. In the months that followed, the SPA loosely but ably coordinated a growing nationwide movement, developing a weekly “resistance” schedule and communicating extensively with local activists, especially through social media. The SPA was responsive to community engagement, and often solicited recommendations on social media. For example, its strategy to organize neighborhood protests during weekdays and large central protests on weekends was a suggestion by community members. The SPA also coordinated extensively with NRCs, which provided a link between middle-class professionals and the more impoverished grassroots.<sup>29</sup> The SPA held daily debriefs with NRCs to discuss what worked and to plan future events. In these efforts, the SPA encouraged NRCs to innovate on tactics autonomously: it sought to support local nonviolent activists, not control them. Tactics were adapted in real time to respond to security threats, to address fear, and to motivate all sectors of the society to participate.

Two pivotal moments illuminate the importance of the SPA’s leadership. First, the April 6 march on Khartoum and the sit-in at the military headquarters, launched by the SPA and FFC, was the blow that precipitated Bashir’s downfall. The sit-in was planned and well run, and committees were quickly organized to provide security, food and Ramadan offerings, and evening movies.<sup>30</sup> Locating the sit-in site at the military headquarters proved especially effective because it drove a wedge between the military and Bashir and enabled sympathetic soldiers to witness the demonstrations without leaving their barracks. And after the military removed Bashir and attempted to disperse the sit-in, the SPA helped organize continued resistance, rallying Sudanese to remain at the sit-in until the TMC gave way to civilian rule.

Second, the SPA stood firm after the June 3 attack at the sit-in site. In response to the sit-in's violent demise, the SPA capitalized on popular outrage to organize a massive general strike that closed businesses throughout Sudan, including corner stores, banks, and even the Khartoum international airport. The SPA also called for another "march of millions" and, after weeks of organizing, nationwide protests on June 30 exceeded the size of the April protests immediately preceding Bashir's fall.<sup>31</sup> The strike and protests prompted the TMC to accept calls for renewed negotiations mediated by the Ethiopian prime minister, which the FFC accepted. Although the FFC coalition was composed of competing political interests, the relatively apolitical SPA was able to serve as a trusted voice of the revolution at negotiations with the TMC, which ultimately produced the 39-month transition agreement that August.

## NONVIOLENT DISCIPLINE

A final key element of successful nonviolent movements is a commitment to nonviolent discipline. Movements that abandon nonviolence in favor of armed escalation are more likely to fail.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, nonviolent discipline can be difficult to maintain and Sudan had a complicated history of armed rebellion. Armed resistance ultimately won independence for Sudan's southern provinces in 2011, and rebels in the Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile, and Darfur managed to secure pockets of territory beyond Khartoum's control. Given these perceived successes and concerns about nonviolent action in the face of extreme government violence, advocates of nonviolent resistance had historically faced skepticism.<sup>33</sup>

Yet, unlike previous episodes of resistance in Sudan, the December Revolution was characterized by remarkable nonviolent discipline in the face of repression, thanks again to years of earlier civil society development. To start, movement leadership was strongly committed to nonviolence. SPA and FFC statements routinely and uniformly emphasized that civil disobedience and nonviolent discipline, not violent rebellion, were necessary to removing Bashir and confronting the TMC. Many of the events they organized, including the sit-in at the military headquarters, featured checkpoints and local enforcement to prevent demonstrators from aggressively confronting the police. Their insistence on nonviolence helped steer the movement away from inadvertent escalation into riots or other violent tactics, which would have likely justified harsh security crackdowns.<sup>34</sup> Instead, regime repression of unarmed protesters fueled backlash, driving observers into the streets. As one activist put it, "The repression against [citizens] cemented this perception that the protests were just and the regime's reaction was out of proportion, unjust, and outrageous, further eroding whatever was left of respect for Bashir."

More broadly, a commitment to nonviolence had diffused throughout Sudanese society as workshops and local initiatives encouraged participants to believe in peaceful change. Many Sudanese note the importance of collective training and practice with nonviolent action, which convinced them of the need to break with past mistakes. One young activist explained that it had previously felt normal to target everything related to the government. After learning about nonviolence, though, he realized that government property belonged to the people and that destroying what was theirs was pointless. A senior politician spoke of how his former trainees stopped fellow protesters who wanted to retaliate against the police, insisting that the police and protesters should be working together. Many others confirmed this account, including one

youth activist from Khartoum: “We faced security in a very smooth and not tough way. . . . We used our groups, our network, to pass the message to people not to be aggressive. Comparing this with 2013, we minimized the number of dead a lot through our work, our networks, the lessons we learned, and what we learned about nonviolence.” Indeed, youth commitment to nonviolence surprised older members of the Sudanese opposition, as one recalled:

Young men and women had an incredible amount of awareness. It left me amazed about how aware they were, even in the worst of times, holding [onto] the idea of keeping the protests peaceful. . . . This generation was born in the 2000s and the 1990s and they are all more aware and wiser thanks to the training they had. . . . They kept the peaceful protests in the worst situations possible.

## Sudan’s Ongoing Transition

This report illustrates that prior capacity building is an important element of nonviolent action campaigns. Sudanese activists capitalized on years of civil society development to generate a movement featuring widespread and diverse participation, unified leadership, and nonviolent discipline in the face of violent repression. These qualities, and the movement’s initial success, reflect the dogged persistence of reformers working to carve out civic spaces for collaboration and community building under Bashir’s rule.

As evidenced by the Sudanese example, capacity building takes time and persistence. Protests that seem to achieve success quickly are often based on years of earlier organizing, as was the case in Egypt, whose 2011 revolution was preceded by the Kefaya movement and related activism throughout the 2000s. Similarly, successful transitions depend on continued civic engagement throughout the transition period, as in Tunisia, where the National Dialogue Quartet helped steady the political process during the 2013 constitutional crisis.

Following the August 2019 constitutional declaration, Sudan’s transitional government brokered the October 2020 Juba agreement to end conflicts in Blue Nile, Darfur, and South Kordofan; enacted reforms to protect women and religious minorities; and secured comprehensive debt relief from the International Monetary Fund.<sup>35</sup> However, the transition’s momentum has since stalled over issues of transitional justice and accountability, deep economic malaise, and security-sector reform, resulting in declining public trust.<sup>36</sup>

Bashir-era military generals, hoping to preserve their economic interests and avoid potential prosecution for past abuses, exploited these circumstances. On October 25, 2021, generals led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan deposed Prime Minister Hamdok, dissolved the civilian government, and declared a state of emergency. The coup was soon partially reversed, with Hamdok reinstated following a deal with Burhan. The situation remained fragile, however, and in early January 2022 Hamdok resigned in acknowledgment of widespread popular opposition to the military’s repeated intrusion into Sudanese governance and violent repression of peaceful demonstrators.<sup>37</sup>

On the one hand, effective popular resistance to the coup reflects the value of prior opposition networking and capacity building. Confronted with a military takeover, neighborhood

resistance committees remobilized instantly, driving widespread popular backlash.<sup>38</sup> Alongside international condemnation, this rapid and organized remobilization, despite popular frustrations with the transition, compelled the military to renegotiate power sharing and is the primary reason the coup did not immediately succeed.

On the other hand, some civic spaces have weakened, and the Sudanese opposition has lost some of its essential unity and authoritative leadership. The Forces of Freedom and Change has fragmented as long-standing tensions, temporarily buried during the revolution, reemerged during the transition period. Perhaps most critically, reformers disagree on how to deal with the military. These tensions fractured the Sudanese Professionals Association, leading it to split from the FFC in 2020 and divide into further internal factions.<sup>39</sup> And after the October coup attempt, many Sudanese are now deeply skeptical of continued power-sharing deals and demand the unconditional expulsion of military influence from Sudanese government (according to the three noes of “no negotiation, no partnership, no legitimacy”).<sup>40</sup> At the same time, some armed opposition groups and signatories to the Juba agreement continued to participate in the government. This popular disillusionment with a negotiated transition eroded confidence in Hamdok’s government and UN mediation efforts and has discredited any revolutionary leadership from the FFC that entertained these efforts.

In turn, the center of opposition mobilization has shifted from the SPA and the FFC toward the NRCs, which organize continued protests and civic engagement despite the military’s repressive efforts.<sup>41</sup> The NRCs’ activities are vital because they work to sustain the revolution’s energies and combat political apathy, engage young Sudanese, and establish a set of minimum acceptable opposition demands around a renewed transitional roadmap. However, the decentralized NRCs are not currently equipped for national-level political negotiations, and cannot themselves coordinate or implement a transitional roadmap. In other words, mass mobilization against the coup is necessary but insufficient in the absence of unified leadership with clear political demands.

If Sudan is to get its democratic transition back on track, the opposition will need to bolster continued local mobilization with a more unified approach to the military and ongoing mediation efforts. Even a united opposition could prove too weak to fully force the military out of politics, a political roadmap involving the military may prove necessary. Regardless, disunity and a lack of authoritative national leadership only worsens the opposition’s odds of success. This vacuum in opposition leadership could be filled by an evolution of the NRCs, which could try to form a unified leadership body for negotiations. After all, the SPA set a clear precedent in Sudan for credible leadership outside traditional political spaces.

At the same time, international partners should recognize that the Sudanese masses strongly oppose and distrust the military, do not see power sharing as a viable path forward, and will reject mediation efforts that presume the military deserves an equal seat at the table.<sup>42</sup> In general, it is important for international actors to both nurture and respect the organic development and voice of Sudan’s vibrant civil society, lending their weight to Sudanese citizens’ desired path forward rather than attempting to impose a top-down solution that lacks popular buy-in.

Ultimately, the Sudanese opposition is in a trying position—it is difficult to confront militaries with entrenched institutional interests, and how best to restore opposition unity has no simple answer. Sudan’s democratic story is not over, however. With a determined effort to restore opposition unity, Sudan’s opposition may yet succeed.



# Notes

The authors wish to thank Matthew Cebul, research officer for the Nonviolent Action Program at the United States Institute of Peace, whose exemplary collaborative editing greatly improved the quality of this report. The authors also express their gratitude to the Gisa Group for logistical support in Sudan during fieldwork for the report.

1. Michael J. Abramowitz, “Freedom in the World, 2018: Democracy in Retreat,” Freedom House, 2019, [www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/FH\\_FIW\\_Report\\_2018\\_Final.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/FH_FIW_Report_2018_Final.pdf).
2. Stephen Zunes, “Sudan’s 2019 Revolution: The Power of Civil Resistance,” ICNC Special Report Series no. 5, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, April 2021, [www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Zunes-Sudans-2019-Revolution.pdf](http://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Zunes-Sudans-2019-Revolution.pdf).
3. Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); and Jonathan Pinckney, *From Dissent to Democracy: The Promise and Peril of Civil Resistance Transitions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).
4. Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*; Jonathan Pinckney, “Making or Breaking Nonviolent Discipline in Civil Resistance Movements” (Washington, DC: International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2016); Kurt Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); and Valerie J. Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
5. Timur Kuran, “Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989,” *World Politics* 44, no. 1 (1991): 7–48.
6. Jonathan Sutton, Charles R. Butcher, and Isak Svensson, “Explaining Political Jiu-Jitsu: Institution-Building and the Outcomes of Regime Violence Against Unarmed Protests,” *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 5 (2015): 559–73.
7. Nadine Bloch, “Education and Training in Nonviolent Resistance,” Special Report no. 394, United States Institute of Peace, October 2016, [www.usip.org/publications/2016/10/education-and-training-nonviolent-resistance](http://www.usip.org/publications/2016/10/education-and-training-nonviolent-resistance).
8. Jeffrey D. Pugh, “A Catalyst for Action: Training and Education as Networking Platforms for Peace Projects,” *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 15, no. 1 (2020): 127–32.
9. Peter Ackerman, “Skills or Conditions: What Key Factors Shape the Success or Failure of Civil Resistance?” (presentation, Conference on Civil Resistance and Power Politics, St. Antony’s College, Oxford University, March 2007, [www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/skills.pdf](http://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/skills.pdf)).
10. Mai Hassan and Ahmed Kodouda, “Sudan’s Uprising: The Fall of a Dictator,” *Journal of Democracy* 30, no. 4 (2019): 89–103.
11. Isma’il Kushkush, “As Floods Ravage Sudan, Young Volunteers Revive a Tradition of Aid,” *New York Times*, August 30, 2013, [www.nytimes.com/2013/08/30/world/africa/as-floods-ravage-sudan-young-volunteers-revive-a-tradition-of-aid.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/30/world/africa/as-floods-ravage-sudan-young-volunteers-revive-a-tradition-of-aid.html); and Hannah McNeish, “Crowdfunding Medicine via Facebook is a Lifesaver for Sick Children in Sudan,” *The Guardian*, December 12, 2016, [www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/dec/12/crowdfunding-medicine-via-facebook-is-a-lifesaver-for-sick-children-in-sudan](http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/dec/12/crowdfunding-medicine-via-facebook-is-a-lifesaver-for-sick-children-in-sudan).
12. Hassan and Kodouda, “Sudan’s Uprising.”
13. “USIP Helping Develop Civil Society with Unique Sudanese Partnership,” United States Institute of Peace, May 31, 2012, [www.usip.org/publications/2012/05/usip-helping-develop-civil-society-unique-sudanese-partnership](http://www.usip.org/publications/2012/05/usip-helping-develop-civil-society-unique-sudanese-partnership).
14. On this point, see Zunes, “Sudan’s 2019 Revolution,” 12–13.
15. These organizations are anonymized for security purposes.
16. Several activists also explained that expanding internet access helped to expose Sudanese citizens to global human rights discourse, but a fuller discussion of the relationship between the internet and mass protest is beyond the scope of this report.
17. See “Momentous Change in Sudan offers Great Opportunities for Continued and Reengagement,” al-Khatim Adlan Center for Enlightenment, May 2019, [www.kacesudan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Momentous-Change-in-Sudan.pdf](http://www.kacesudan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Momentous-Change-in-Sudan.pdf).
18. LaVerle Berry, ed., *Sudan: A Country Study*, 5th ed. (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 2015).
19. AFP, “Sudan Doctors Announce Nationwide Strike,” Ahram Online, October 5, 2016, <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/245278/World/Region/Sudan-doctors-announce-nationwide-strike.aspx>.
20. Reem Abbas, “How an Illegal Sudanese Union Became the Biggest Threat to Omar Al Bashir’s 29-Year Reign,” *The National*, January 28, 2019, [www.thenationalnews.com/world/africa/how-an-illegal-sudanese-union-became-the-biggest-threat-to-omar-al-bashir-s-29-year-reign-1.819159](http://www.thenationalnews.com/world/africa/how-an-illegal-sudanese-union-became-the-biggest-threat-to-omar-al-bashir-s-29-year-reign-1.819159).
21. Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*.
22. See Radio Dabanga, “Interview: No to Women’s Oppression Initiative,” December 2, 2020, [www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/interview-with-no-to-women-s-oppression-initiative](http://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/interview-with-no-to-women-s-oppression-initiative).

23. Hamza Hendawi, "Sudan's Tea Ladies Hope for Better Life in post-Bashir Khartoum," *National News*, September 4, 2019, [www.thenationalnews.com/world/africa/sudan-s-tea-ladies-hope-for-better-life-in-post-bashir-khartoum-1.906225](http://www.thenationalnews.com/world/africa/sudan-s-tea-ladies-hope-for-better-life-in-post-bashir-khartoum-1.906225).
24. For more on Sudan's Women, Political and Civil Groups, see Samia al-Nagar and Liv Tønnessen, "'I'm Against All of the Laws of This Regime': What Sudan's Women Want," *African Arguments*, July 2, 2019, [www.africanarguments.org/2019/07/against-laws-regime-sudan-women-protesters-want](http://www.africanarguments.org/2019/07/against-laws-regime-sudan-women-protesters-want).
25. On women in nonviolent campaigns, see Marie A. Principe, "Women in Nonviolent Movements," Special Report no. 399, United States Institute of Peace, January 2017, 16, [www.usip.org/publications/2016/12/women-nonviolent-movements](http://www.usip.org/publications/2016/12/women-nonviolent-movements).
26. Sharon Erickson Nepstad and Clifford Bob, "When Do Leaders Matter? Hypotheses on Leadership Dynamics in Social Movements," *Mobilization* 11, no. 1 (2006): 1–22; and Wendy Pearlman, *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For contrasting evidence that centralized leadership does not engender nonviolent discipline, see Pinckney, "Making or Breaking Nonviolent Discipline."
27. Hassan and Kodouda, "Sudan's Uprising," 99. Many respondents implicitly contrasted the revolutionary unity with the historic fragmentation and disunity that has characterized the Sudanese opposition.
28. For more on these divisions, see International Crisis Group, "Safeguarding Sudan's Revolution," Africa Report no. 281, October 21, 2019, [www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/281-safeguarding-sudans-revolution](http://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/281-safeguarding-sudans-revolution).
29. Zunes, "Sudan's 2019 Revolution."
30. On the sit-in, see Amira Osman, "Sudan Sit-in: How Protesters Picked a Spot and Made It Theirs," *African Arguments*, April 29, 2019, [www.africanarguments.org/2019/04/sudan-sit-in-how-protesters-picked-a-spot-and-made-it-theirs](http://www.africanarguments.org/2019/04/sudan-sit-in-how-protesters-picked-a-spot-and-made-it-theirs).
31. Hassan and Kodouda, "Sudan's Uprising," 101.
32. Pinckney, "Making or Breaking Nonviolent Discipline."
33. The ongoing history of armed groups and violent resistance in Sudan is an expansive topic that, while important to current political dynamics in Sudan, goes beyond the scope of this report. Instead, this report focuses on the 2018 revolution, which was overwhelmingly nonviolent.
34. Zunes, "Sudan's 2019 Revolution."
35. Khalid Abdelaziz and Mahmoud Mourad, "Sudan to cut government spending, increase social spending," Reuters, June 26, 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/africa/sudan-cut-government-spending-increase-social-spending-2021-06-26](http://www.reuters.com/world/africa/sudan-cut-government-spending-increase-social-spending-2021-06-26).
36. United Nations, "Sudan Faces Staggering Challenges to Democracy Despite Significant Advances on Political Transition, Special Representative Tells Security Council," press release SC/14460, March 9, 2021, [www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14460.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14460.doc.htm); and Samuel Ramani, "Sudan's Imperiled Political Transition," Carnegie Middle East Center, March 2021, [www.carnegie-mec.org/2021/03/17/sudan-s-imperiled-political-transition-pub-84077](http://www.carnegie-mec.org/2021/03/17/sudan-s-imperiled-political-transition-pub-84077).
37. On military violence against civilians following the coup, see Sudanese Archive, "Shot in the Streets, Violence Against Protesters in Sudan on October 30, 2021," November 30, 2021, [www.sudanearchive.org/investigations/oct30](http://www.sudanearchive.org/investigations/oct30).
38. For data on these ongoing protest events, see the Sudanese Archive's *Sudanese Protest Monitor* at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d97c91b96b6646c5b312f5f5db73e114>.
39. Jonas Horner, "After the Coup, Restoring Sudan's Transition," International Crisis Group, November 5, 2021, [www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/after-coup-restoring-sudans-transition](http://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/after-coup-restoring-sudans-transition).
40. Marc Espanol, "Sudanese Public Widely Rejects New UN Initiative," *Al-Monitor*, January 26, 2022, [www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/01/sudanese-public-widely-rejects-new-un-initiative](http://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/01/sudanese-public-widely-rejects-new-un-initiative).
41. Abdi Latif Dahir, "'Democracy is Life': The Grass-Roots Movement Taking on Sudan's Generals," *New York Times*, February 7, 2022, [www.nytimes.com/2022/02/07/world/africa/sudan-protest-movement.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/07/world/africa/sudan-protest-movement.html).
42. Michelle Gavin, "America's Failure of Imagination in Sudan," *Foreign Affairs*, February 4, 2022, [www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/sudan/2022-02-04/americas-failure-imagination-sudan](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/sudan/2022-02-04/americas-failure-imagination-sudan).

## ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

---



The United States Institute of Peace is a national, nonpartisan, independent institute, founded by Congress and dedicated to the proposition that a world without violent conflict is possible, practical, and essential for US and global security. In conflict zones abroad, the Institute works with local partners to prevent, mitigate, and resolve violent conflict. To reduce future crises and the need for costly interventions, USIP works with governments and civil societies to help their countries solve their own problems peacefully. The Institute provides expertise, training, analysis, and support to those who are working to build a more peaceful, inclusive world.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

---

George E. Moose (Chair), Adjunct Professor of Practice, The George Washington University, Washington, DC • Judy Ansley (Vice Chair), Former Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor under George W. Bush, Washington, DC • Eric Edelman, Roger Hertog Practitioner in Residence, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, DC • Joseph Eldridge, Distinguished Practitioner, School of International Service, American University, Washington, DC • Stephen J. Hadley, Principal, Rice, Hadley, Gates & Manuel LLC, Washington, DC • Kerry Kennedy, President, Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, Washington, DC • Ikram U. Khan, President, Quality Care Consultants, LLC, Las Vegas, NV • Stephen D. Krasner, Graham H. Stuart Professor of International Relations, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA • John A. Lancaster, Former Executive Director, National Council on Independent Living, Potsdam, NY • Jeremy A. Rabkin, Professor of Law, Antonin Scalia Law School, George Mason University, Arlington, VA • J. Robinson West, Former Chairman, PFC Energy, Washington, DC • Nancy Zirkin, Executive Vice President, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, Washington, DC

### Members Ex Officio

Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State • Lloyd J. Austin III, Secretary of Defense • Michael T. Plehn, Lieutenant General, US Air Force; President, National Defense University • Lise Grande, President and CEO, United States Institute of Peace (nonvoting)

## THE UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE PRESS

---

Since 1991, the United States Institute of Peace Press has published hundreds of influential books, reports, and briefs on the prevention, management, and peaceful resolution of international conflicts. The Press is committed to advancing peace by publishing significant and useful works for policymakers, practitioners, scholars, diplomats, and students. In keeping with the best traditions of scholarly publishing, each work undergoes thorough peer review by external subject experts to ensure that the research, perspectives, and conclusions are balanced, relevant, and sound.

## OTHER USIP PUBLICATIONS

---

- *Darfur after Bashir: Implications for Sudan's Transition and for the Region* by Jérôme Tubiana (Special Report, April 2022)
- *Dissent and Dialogue: The Role of Mediation in Nonviolent Uprisings* by Isak Svensson and Daan van de Rijzen (Special Report, April 2022)
- *Afghan Taliban Views on Legitimate Islamic Governance: Certainties, Ambiguities, and Areas for Compromise* by Clark B. Lombardi and Andrew F. March (Peaceworks, February 2022)
- *Nonviolent Action in the Era of Digital Authoritarianism: Hardships and Innovations* by Matthew Cebul and Jonathan Pinckney (Special Report, February 2022)
- *China's Security Force Posture in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia* by John Bradford (Special Report, December 2021)



UNITED STATES  
INSTITUTE OF PEACE PRESS

2301 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
(202) 457-1700  
[www.USIP.org](http://www.USIP.org)