

**Sudan: Breaking the barrier of fear**  
**By Aljazeera**  
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As the Sudanese government intensifies its crackdown on anti-government protests that have been going on for almost two weeks, activists have called for a massive demonstration against the government's austerity measures.

"We are not really witnessing anything near to what we have seen in the Arab Spring in Egypt, in Tunisia, Syria and Yemen for example .... Up to this moment I don't think the demonstrations pose a threat to the government."

The protesters defiantly dubbed their anti-government rallies "licking elbows" after officials issued a statement telling people who are dissatisfied with the government to do just that.

The protests that were sparked by austerity measures have spread from the capital Khartoum to other areas of the country, with people now openly calling for an end to the 23-year-old rule of Omar al-Bashir, Sudan's president.

Sudan has faced soaring food prices and a weakening currency since South Sudan became independent last year - taking with it about three-quarters of Sudan's economically-vital oil output.

Oil revenues also shrank by a further 20 per cent after the main Heglig oil field was damaged and shut down in fighting with South Sudanese troops in April. This has led to a \$2.4bn budget deficit this year.

"The fact that demonstrations have been going on for some time persistently is in itself a landmark in terms of expression of the people, the students who have always been the spark that starts revolutions or uprisings in a society, especially in Sudan."

In order to plug that deficit the president unveiled tough austerity measures that include scrapping fuel subsidies, a move that has led to a 60 per cent rise in fuel prices. He also decided to raise taxes on consumer goods, banks and imports, which in turn doubled the price of basic goods.

So, has the so called Arab Spring finally caught up with Sudan? Is the protest movement beginning to lose momentum in Khartoum or is it still posing a threat to the government?

To answer this question, Inside Story, with presenter Ghida Fakhry, is joined by guests: Safwat Fanos, a political analyst and head of the Political Science Department at the University of Khartoum; Isam Abu Hasabu, a senior member of the Democratic Unionist Party; and David Anderson, a British political scientist and a professor in African Politics and fellow of St Cross College, University of Oxford.

"The government has a problem. It looks to me that this is going beyond the student cohort that was leading it and out into the wider public. The story of Sudan in the last 15-20 months has been one of savage and rapid economic decline. The government has lost control of its economy as a consequence of the split with the South and the war that is still raging with the South. The government has lost its ability to manage its economy effectively and they are in free fall."

FACTS: OMAR AL-BASHIR's RULE:

- General Omar Hassan al-Bashir has been in power in Sudan for nearly 23 years

- In a bloodless coup Bashir seized power in 1989
- He suspended political parties and enforced Islamic law in much of the country
- He appointed himself president in 1993, returned Sudan to civilian rule, and won a presidential election in 1996 - as the only candidate
- He was re-elected in 2000
- In 2008, the International Criminal Court called for his arrest for alleged genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur
- It was the first ever arrest warrant issued for a sitting head of state; Sudan rejected the indictment
- In 2010, al-Bashir won a new term in the first contested presidential polls since 1986
- In July 2011, South Sudan became independent after a referendum
- Sudan faces a soaring inflation since its split from South Sudan

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