AFRICA 06.08.2019 | Philipp Jahn

'A peaceful transition has been initiated'

Sudan's military leadership and opposition agreed on a constitution for the country's transitional period. Philipp Jahn reports

At the weekend, the military leadership and opposition in Sudan agreed on a constitution for the country's transitional period, which should also regulate the distribution of power. What does the agreement look like?

In my view, the three most important results are as follows: Firstly, the change from a presidential to a parliamentary system of government, with 67 per cent of seats in parliament occupied by the civil society opposition during the transitional period. This puts the interests and attitudes of Sudanese citizens at the centre of politics. This is important because the Sudanese revolution has always been an uprising for more social justice. Secondly, the linkage of state power to the law. In the future, an independent judiciary will monitor government action and combat widespread corruption. This is an important cornerstone for urgently needed economic growth. Thirdly, by involving the armed opposition in the transition period, there's a chance of ending decades of conflict. It's important that all parts of the country – including Darfur – have the opportunity to develop economically and socially.

Does this mark the beginning of a peaceful transition to a democratic Sudan?

A peaceful transition has been initiated. The decisive factor for success, however, will be that the lives of the Sudanese population improve. More than seven million people in Sudan are currently dependent on humanitarian aid. Even in Khartoum, fewer and fewer people can make a living from their work. The purchasing power of state employees has fallen by two thirds since last year. If living conditions do not improve, there will be no peaceful transition. Sudan will then remain extremely fragile. The international community is

now called upon to support the development of Sudan through financial and technical cooperation.

According to the agreement, the transitional government will organise elections in Sudan after 3 years and 3 months. Why take so much time?

3 years and 3 months is a compromise. The opposition wanted a transition period of 4 years. The military leadership a transition period of 2 years. When elections are to take place always results from a balancing act between legitimacy and stability. How long is a government of technocrats, appointed at the negotiating table, considered legitimate by the population? How long does such a government take to implement fundamental reforms? When do these reforms improve people's lives? I think this has been carefully considered.

According to reports, there have been bitter discussions about the role of the militia Rapid Support Force (RSF), blamed by the opposition for the 3 June massacre. What kind of solution has been found?

The RSF will be integrated into the military. An independent committee is set to investigate the 3 June massacre. However, the leader of the RSF, General Mohammed Hamdan Daglu, also called Hemedti, remains the new strong man in Sudan. He signed the transitional constitution on behalf of the military leadership. He controls the main gold mines in Sudan. His RSF are fighting in Yemen and Libya, which makes him a regional player. The Emirates and Saudi Arabia are his supporters. What role Hemedti will play in the future is completely open. But he will play an important role.

The African Union (AU) and Ethiopia mediated between the military and the opposition. Is this a future model for intra-African conflict resolution?

The African Union has certainly gained in reputation with this result. The decision to suspend Sudan's membership after the 3 June massacre was courageous and not easy for the AU. There was great pressure from individual member states not to suspend Sudan. As a result, the AU will be more trusted in resolving intra-African conflicts in the future. Sudan is also part of the Red Sea region. Actors such as Saudi Arabia and the Emirates play an important role here. The international community must therefore continue to support the AU's efforts in Sudan and define its own political interests.

This interview was conducted by Daniel Kopp.



Philipp Jahn

Khartoum

Philipp Jahn manages the country office of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Khartoum, Sudan. Previously, he worked for GIZ in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Azerbaijan and Germany. He worked for three years as a consultant for anti-corruption and integrity for the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). He studied law in Berlin, Madrid and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London.