



رابطة المحامين والقانونيين السودانيين في بريطانيا
Association of Sudanese Lawyers
And Legal Practitioners in the UK

Press Release

5 November 2021

The authorities in Sudan must immediately restore full access to cellular and mobile data services

The **Association of Sudanese Lawyers and Legal Practitioners in the UK (ASLLP)** with the help and support of **Mr Jonathan Price of Doughty Street Chambers** has today (5 November 2021) filed complaints with the United Nations Special Rapporteurs for freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly, calling for action to be taken in relation to Sudan's repeated use of shutdowns – in violation of international law – of its cellular and mobile internet networks during times of political upheaval.

On Monday 25 October 2021 Prime Minister Hamdok and his cabinet were arrested in a military coup led by General Abdel Fattah Burhan, the civilian government was dissolved, and a state of emergency declared. In response, thousands of Sudanese civilians joined pro-democracy protests in Khartoum. The military retaliated, killing at least several people at the main protest in Khartoum alone, with allegations that live rounds and tear gas were used.

To coincide with the coup the Sudanese military authorities shut down mobile telecoms (cellular and mobile internet) completely for a period of 48 hours, and mobile internet remains inaccessible today, 12 days later.

This has severely hampered the flow of information from Sudan, in particular from more remote areas, making it impossible to know what the military has done to suppress legitimate protest. There is real concern that serious human rights violations are being committed with impunity under cover of this blackout. This is not the first time such measures have been taken in Sudan. The country has a history of using internet shutdowns for political purposes.

Mobile internet and cellular shutdowns are particularly disruptive in Sudan, where fixed line internet provision is expensive and civilians and small businesses rely almost entirely on mobile access. The ability of people to organise civil action and access information is considerably impeded in the absence of mobile data and cellular services. Journalists and media workers cannot contact sources, gather information, or file stories without mobile communication tools.

Mr Abobaker Adam, director of ASLLP, said:

“For two days we were unable to contact anyone in any way, and even now that cellular services have been restored, the lack of mobile internet makes daily life and information exchange all but impossible. News of the military coup has come almost exclusively through official or foreign channels. Organising political support for pro-democracy activists has been so, so difficult. We are not playing on a level playing field. Journalism has virtually stopped altogether in Sudan during this time, and I have no doubt that human rights violations are being committed now, as we speak, which



رابطة المحامين والقانونيين السودانيين في بريطانيا
Association of Sudanese Lawyers
And Legal Practitioners in the UK

dsc doughty street
chambers

may not come to light for a long time, or possibly ever, due to the blackout. ASLLP demands that the Sudanese authorities restore full communications immediately.”

Mr Jonathan Price of Doughty Street Chambers, ASLLP’s lawyer, said:

“These shutdowns are in flagrant breach a number of Sudan’s clear international legal obligations, obligations to which Sudan has signed up. There can be no justification for such widespread and arbitrary denial of the means to organise, protest and report at such a critical juncture in the history of Sudan. The Sudanese authorities should cease these unlawful practices immediately. We are calling on the United Nations and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights to hold Sudan to its duties to protect its own citizens from human rights violations.”

The ASLLP was established by a group of Sudanese lawyers based in the UK in order to bring legal action around the world on behalf of Sudanese people and organisations for the benefit of justice and equality in Sudan.

A copy of the complaint is available upon request.

Media contact:

Abobaker Adam - abubaker.adam@asllp.org.uk - 07964112784

Osman Mekki – osman@newmanlaw.co.uk - 07783713391