

The coup in Sudan and a dismal moment for press freedom across North Africa | Columbia Journalism Review

By Jon Allsop

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Yesterday—after two years of promising, fragile transition toward democracy—Sudan fell victim to a military coup. Military leaders seized power, arresting Abdalla Hamdok, the civilian prime minister in a transitional government; Hamdok's office [called on the Sudanese people to take to the streets, where soldiers met protesters with violence](#), fatally shooting at least seven people and injuring well over a hundred more. According to the information ministry, [soldiers also raided the state broadcaster and detained staffers there](#); the Sudan Journalists Network [reported that other journalists have been arrested](#), too. As the coup unfolded, [the internet went down across swathes of the country](#)—a tactic that recalled the [intense censorship tactics](#) of Omar al-Bashir, who held power in Sudan for thirty years prior to being toppled in 2019. The work of transitioning to press freedom in Sudan [was far from complete even prior to the coup](#), and its prospects now look bleak. “At a critical moment in the country’s history,” Justin Shilad, a Middle East and North Africa researcher at the Committee to Protect Journalists, [said](#), “journalists must be free to report the news and have full access to telecommunications services to do it.”

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