



Key questions; flight MH17 remembered

## Families hide as US launches immigration raids

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KHARTOUM: Sudanese protesters take part in a demonstration in the capital Khartoum's northern district of Bahri, to mourn dozens of demonstrators killed last month in a brutal raid on a Khartoum sit-in. — AFP

# Videos of brutal Sudan raid go viral

## Shock and anger as dozens killed by men in military fatigues

**KHARTOUM:** Days after a blackout on mobile internet services ended, Sudanese are shocked by the content of online videos and photographs that appear to document last month's deadly raid on demonstrators. Crowds of protesters were violently dispersed—and dozens killed—by men in military fatigues during a pre-dawn raid on a weeks-long sit-in outside army headquarters in Khartoum on June 3.

"The brutal scenes of killings and beatings left me very angry," said Hussein Hashim, a 19-year-old university student from the capital's El-Deem neighborhood. "The perpetrators have no mercy, religion or humanity." Demonstrators who had camped at the site demanding civilian rule were shot and beaten as armed men rampaged through the area, triggering international outrage. But the carnage went largely unseen inside Sudan as the country's military rulers imposed a nationwide blackout on mobile internet services.

The authorities restored mobile internet only last week, paving the way for photographs and videos going viral on social media networks. Services were ordered to be restored after Khartoum based lawyer Abdelaziz Hassan won a case against 3G and 4G service providers. "The aim of blocking the internet was to hide information and evidence of what happened in the massacre," Hassan told AFP.

"It is the right of every citizen to know the real information so that he can form his own views." One photograph, which could not be verified, has stirred particular anger. It shows men in military trousers and boots putting their feet on the face of a purported protester lying on the ground.

Dozens of videos are circulating, including one that shows a group of men—also in military uniform—surrounding a teenage girl as she yells at a man who holds her neck in a tight grip.

### Intimidation tactic?

Several videos show gunmen beating protesters with sticks as thick smoke billows from the protest site amid the sound of continuous gunfire. AFP could not independently verify the origins of many of the photographs and videos, as most were posted on accounts that used pseudonyms. Prior to the violent dispersal of the protest site, demonstrators had camped there since April 6, initially to seek the army's help in ousting longtime ruler Omar Al-Bashir. The army deposed Bashir on April 11, but protesters continued with the sit-in after a military council seized power.

Since the internet was restored, groups of people have been seen watching and circulating videos and photographs in shops, cafes and hotels. Some have created a Facebook page to document all the images of the "massacre". "We have to hold the perpetrators of this crime accountable," wrote one user on the page. Another warned "without accountability, punishment and revenge, this spectacular revolution will not succeed."

Protesters and rights groups have accused members of the feared paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of carrying out the raid. While outraged activists and protesters have themselves shared and spread the videos, some believe

the RSF have also had a hand in sending the images viral, in a bid to intimidate protesters. "These videos are meant to scare us," said Samuol, who did not give his full name. "But the horrific scenes will give us a bigger motive to fight for the rights of the martyrs," he added.

### 'Fabricated' content

RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, who is also the deputy chief of the country's ruling military council, has dismissed the accusation that his forces were involved in the raid. "These photos are fabricated," he said at a recent rally, accusing foreign intelligence agents of filming and circulating the videos. "There are some people who have filmed 59 videos in one day ... how is that possible? For sure they have an agenda," he contended.

Many on the streets do not believe Dagalo's assertions. Some footage shows men wielding sticks against protesters and wearing uniforms usually worn by the RSF. The protest movement says the raid killed more than 100 and wounded hundreds in just one day. "These videos are not fabricated, they have been filmed by gunmen themselves," said a driver, showing an AFP correspondent a video in which groups of men in military fatigues are seen beating the protesters.

"After watching these videos I feel like taking revenge for the victims," he said, without revealing his name for security reasons. Women are also angry. "I was happy when the internet was restored but now I feel angry and humiliated," said a Khartoum resident, after watching the online videos.

"They want to intimidate women, but we will not be afraid and will continue to participate in protests," she said without revealing her identity. — AFP



AL RIMELA: Khadom, the mother of Al-Moez visits the tomb of her son, killed when a bullet pierced the window of his workplace and lodged itself in his heart during an anti-government demonstration in the Sudanese capital Khartoum. — AFP

## Top Hamas official urges Palestinians to kill Jews

**RAMALLAH:** A senior member of Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas has encouraged Palestinians across the globe to kill Jews, drawing outrage from both Israeli and Palestinian officials as well as a UN envoy. In video from a speech to participants of weekly protests on Friday, Fathi Hamad, a member of the movement's top political body, can be seen calling on Palestinians across the globe to carry out attacks.

"If this siege is not undone, we will explode in the face of our enemies, with God's permission. The explosion is not only going to be in Gaza but also in the West Bank and abroad, God willing," Hamad said. "But our brothers outside are preparing, trying to prepare, warming up." He continued: "Seven million Palestinians outside, enough warming up, you have Jews with you in every place. You should attack every Jew possible in all the world and kill them."

Since March 2018 Palestinians have been taking part in Hamas-backed protests and clashes along the Gaza-Israel border in part against the Jewish state's crippling blockade of Gaza. At least 295 Palestinians and seven Israelis have been killed in Gaza-related violence since. The Israeli toll recently rose to seven after an 89-year-old woman who fell while running for

a bomb shelter during a severe flare-up of violence in May died from her wounds, according to Israel's foreign ministry.

Hamas is considered a terrorist organization by the United States, European Union and others. Ofir Gendelman, a spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said the comments showed "what Hamas is about." "Hamas is behind the riots on the Gaza border. Hamas built factories for explosive vests to be used by Gazan boys & girls. Hamas wants to murder Jews worldwide," Gendelman said on Twitter.

"Now you know why we protect the border with Gaza from Hamas," Saeb Erekat, secretary general of the West Bank-based Palestine Liberation Organization, which unlike Hamas has recognized Israel, condemned Hamad's comments. "The just values of the Palestinian cause include love for freedom, justice and equality. The repugnant statement of Hamas leader Mr Fathi Hamad about Jews doesn't represent any of them," he tweeted.

United Nations envoy Nickolay Mladenov also condemned the comments, labeling them a "dangerous, repugnant and inciteful statement! It must be clearly condemned by ALL." Hamas seized control of Gaza from the Palestinian Authority in a 2007 near civil war. Israel and Hamas have fought three wars in Gaza since 2008. Israel says the blockade is necessary to isolate Hamas and keep it from obtaining weapons or material to make them. Critics say it amounts to collective punishment of Gaza's two million residents and creates poverty that can feed extremism. — AFP

## IS 'caliphate' in Syria, Iraq

**BAGHDAD:** The Islamic State group's Iraq and Syria "caliphate" was eradicated in March 2019, five years after it was proclaimed, largely reducing the jihadist militants to scattered sleeper cells. Here is a recap.

### 'Caliphate' declared

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) declared in June 2014 that they had set up a caliphate, under their elusive leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, in territory seized in Syria and Iraq. Since January that year they had been in control of Syria's northern city of Raqa. They also seized part of the eastern province of Deir Ezzor, on the Iraqi border, as well as positions in the northern province of Aleppo. In Iraq, they took Mosul and Sunni Arab areas bordering the autonomous Kurdistan region in the country's north in June. Raqa and Mosul became the two de-facto IS capitals.

### Atrocities

Rebranded the Islamic State, they carried out beheadings, mass executions, rapes, abductions and ethnic cleansing in Raqa. Some of the atrocities were broadcast on video, used as a propaganda tool. In Iraq, IS seized the historic home of the Yazidi minority in Sinjar region in 2014, forcing children to become soldiers and using thousands of women as sex slaves.

### Anti-jihadist coalition

In August 2014, US warplanes struck IS positions in northern Iraq. Washington formed a coalition of more than 70 countries to fight the group in both Iraq and Syria, deploying 5,000 soldiers.

### Defeats in Iraq

In March 2015, Iraq announced the "liberation" of Tikrit, north of Baghdad. In November, coalition-backed Kurdish forces retook Sinjar. In 2016, Anbar provincial capital Ramadi was retaken, as was the city of Fallujah. In July 2017, then Iraqi prime minister Haider al-Abadi declared the jihadists' defeat in Mosul. In August, the last major IS urban stronghold in northern Iraq, Tal Afar, was also freed. In December, Abadi announced a final victory against the IS.

### Defeats in Syria

Kurdish forces drove jihadists out of the city of Kobane, on the Turkish border, in January 2015. In August 2016, the US-backed Kurdish-Arab alliance known as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) recaptured Manbij in Aleppo province. Backed by Turkish forces, rebels retook Jarabulus, and then, in February 2017, Al-Bab, the last IS bastion in Aleppo province. In March 2017, Syrian troops backed by Russian jets took back the ancient town of Palmyra. In October 2017, the SDF announced the full recapture of Raqa. In March 2019, the Kurdish-led SDF proclaimed the defeat of the "caliphate" after seizing Baghouz, the IS's final bastion in eastern Syria. — AFP