

# What's next, Taqaddum?

Positive steps, difficult challenges.

The Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, witnessed the founding conference of the Coordination of Civil Democratic Forces (Taqaddum) in the last week of May, which is the second major activity of the Coordination, which emerged as a broad civilian coalition against the war, whose nucleus began in the early days of the war as an initiative of the resistance committees, and then evolved to witness the preparatory conference that was also held in Addis Ababa in January of this year. Before and between the two meetings, a number of preparatory meetings and workshops were held that culminated in the founding conference. The conference was attended by more than 600 participants from inside and outside Sudan, representing 18 states and 24 migration and asylum centers outside Sudan, from Arab and African countries, America and Europe, according to conference documents.

Participants included representatives of the main political forces, civil society organizations, trade unions, professionals, resistance committees, women and youth, farmers, pastoralists, IDPs, refugees, businessmen, intellectuals, and others. The lists of invitees included a diverse and rich representation of all these groups and from all states of Sudan, although some could not arrive from inside Sudan due to arrest, detention, travel bans, and confiscation of passports, which are expected obstacles. The most important part of this is that the large blocks representing states and cities of asylum and migration around the world were chosen at the grassroots, while some groups were chosen centrally by consensus of the participants in the preparatory committee.

The conference discussed many issues and adopted recommendations and proposals on many of them, and

postponed some of them for further consultation and expert opinion, especially on some papers that were characterized by weakness and lack of clarity. The conference approved the political vision paper, which dealt with the current political situation and the position of the Coordination and the efforts to stop the war.

It also approved the statutes of the Coordination, which consists of a leadership body of 140 members and a general secretariat of 25 members, and the body elected former Prime Minister Dr. Abdullah Hamdok as chairman of the Coordination, Siddiq al-Sadiq al-Mahdi as Secretary General, and two vice presidents, Dr. Al-Hadi Idris and Ms. Hiyam Bushra. The conference attracted great interest from political blocs, parties to the conflict, the media, and observers from regional and international countries and organizations.

The opening and closing sessions were attended by representatives of the European Union, the United States, some African countries, and international and regional organizations. The reason for the interest is due to the magnitude of the event and the effects it could have on the situation in the Sudanese arena. The interest is equal between those who support and oppose Taqaddum's line, including blocs, organizations and individuals, and this was evident in the war that took place on the pages of

social media sites between activists on both sides.

Despite the multiplicity of political coalitions centers in Sudan, and the varying positions of these blocs, as well as their size and abilities to make positions and shape the political scene in the country, it is clear that "Taqaddum" is the leader in movement and action, to a degree that cannot be compared to any of the other bodies. Regardless of judging its positions and whether they are correct or not, it has been proven since the emergence of the first bodies constituting Taqaddum, that it is the one who creates the action and leaves others to react. Other reactions could be criticism of the coalition, attacks on it, imitation of its movements by adopting similar organizational forms, or taking opposite positions.

This was the position of the groups that went to Cairo to announce the "Cairo Declaration" a few weeks ago, which was signed by the Democratic Bloc and other small groups, as well as the position of the Radical Forces of Change group, which includes the Communist Party and some smaller organizations that are content to issue statements criticizing Taqaddum and opposing everything it does. The last period did not record any distinctive concept or step of the other coalitions that was done without reference to any action, concept or proposal of Taqaddum.

This places a great responsibility on Taqaddum's leadership. It needs to constantly review its readings of the reality and its developments and redraw its positions accordingly, as rigid positions in a confusing and fluctuating situation, such as the situation in Sudan, will not help and may take the coordination out of the circle of action. It must also be open to critical readings and positions that differ from Taqaddum's line, as there will necessarily be useful and correct points that the Coordination leadership has overlooked or has not paid enough attention to.

### **Positive aspects of the conference**

Perhaps the most important success of the conference is the expansion of the scale of contribution and participation, both geographically and qualitatively. This is the largest number participating in a political mobilization of this kind, and it includes the representation of many groups representing vital sectors of Sudanese society, and the geographical area it represents is the largest of its kind, both inside and outside Sudan.

What also distinguishes this conference, is that it used a grassroots selection system for representatives of many groups to participate in the conference, and then gave these representatives the right to elect their representatives in the leadership body, and according to available information, there was a kind of

satisfaction with the selection process of representatives, except for a few groups. Another positive aspect was the focus on the issue of stopping the war as the central issue for the Coordination of Civilian Forces and its membership, and thus the focus of its work in the coming phase, in addition to the issue of humanitarian access to those in need, namely millions of Sudanese.

Finally, the coordination is to be commended for its constant assurances that it is willing to enter into a larger coalition and coordinate with all forces that reject the war, and that it may even change its name in the phase of major alliances, which elevates the common goal over bodies, structures, and names. This declaration confirms that the Taqaddum Coordination, although it is the largest and most organized body, is not the only representative of those seeking to stop the war, achieve peace, and build a civil and democratic state. It has an ongoing responsibility to dialogue with other parties and organizations that raise the same goals, and to have the flexibility to interact positively with all similar initiatives, including the possibility of joining a broader coalition and changing its name, structures, and method of work if necessary.

### **Challenges and difficulties**

The biggest challenge facing the Coordination of Civil Democratic Forces (Taqaddum) is the appropriate

mechanisms of action to achieve its goals, foremost of which is stopping the war. Declaring positions is not enough, and field work on the internal front must go hand in hand with efforts to communicate with the regional and international community.

It is not clear enough about the direction and nature of the upcoming negotiation process, if it happens, whether it will be between the two military forces only, or whether civilian forces will be part of it, so Taqaddum needs to develop different scenarios to deal with the negotiation process and determine its main options from now.

The coordination needs more effort to clarify its position on the RSF, as one of the parties to the war, and to answer many questions and observations in this regard. This does not mean that it should engage in quarrels about being the political wing of the RSF and others, but addressing the issue of condemning the RSF's violations and reviewing the language of condemnation and statements that some observers say are diluted and do not fit the scale of the violations and massacres committed by the RSF.

When the African Union proposes the participation of everyone in the negotiating platform, without exception, some international powers may be more inclined to the viewpoint of Taqaddum and the rest of the civilian bloc that

rejects the war, such as the Communist Party and the Baath Party, by excluding the National Congress and its fronts. But this may not last long. The Coordination needs to renew its options, and if the position on the participation of the NCP and its organizations is still in the rejection stage, it needs to prepare strong justifications and build a network of local, regional, and international supporters to support this position.

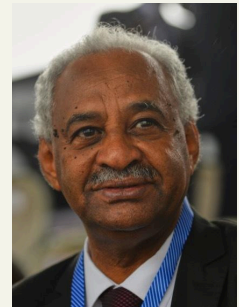
The Coordination is made up of parties, organizations, and bodies that suffer from chronic organizational issues and are burdened with a long history of stumbling and even failure and lack of institutionalization. It has to bear all these issues and proceed on a long and difficult but necessary path to save Sudan from war, humanitarian disaster, displacement, and refugees, while at the same time being able to work to address the intellectual, political, and organizational issues.

The biggest challenge now is the schism that has reached a major stage in the Umma Party, the largest and most influential of the coordination parties, as some influential leaders have moved away and formed a wing rejecting the party's membership in Taqaddum. Although the issue of whether or not the party joins the coordination is not the main issue, it will affect the party's existence and effectiveness, so the coordination needs to find solutions to such situations and issues.

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