

URGENT ACTION

NEWSPAPER EDITOR DETAINED WITHOUT CHARGE

On 15 July 2019, Michael Rial Christopher, a 40-year-old South Sudanese newspaper editor was taken off a flight to Kenya by National Security Service (NSS) agents and arbitrarily arrested in Juba. He remains in detention at the NSS headquarters in Juba, also known as 'Blue house'.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*President of the Republic of South Sudan
Salva Kiir Mayardit
Juba, South Sudan
Twitter: @RepSouthSudan and @PresSalva*

Your Excellency President Salva Kiir,

*I am writing to bring to your attention the case of **Michael Rial Christopher**, a South Sudanese and editor-in-chief of the Al Watan daily newspaper.*

On 15 July 2019, Michael was arbitrarily arrested by the National Security Service (NSS) in Juba just after he had boarded a plane to Nairobi, Kenya. He is currently detained at the NSS headquarters, known as 'Blue House', without access to a lawyer. According to one of his relatives, Michael has not been informed of any charges against him.

In January 2019, after Michael published an opinion article supporting the protests in Sudan, the Media Authority and the NSS warned Al Watan not to report about the anti-government protests. Michael temporarily fled South Sudan in January 2019 due to death threats from persons he believes were NSS agents, and returned to the country in February. In March 2019, the authorities suspended Al Watan for operating without a license, an allegation that Michael denies.

I urge you to:

- ***Ensure that Michael Rial Christopher, is handed over to the police, brought to court and charged with a recognizable criminal offence in accordance with international law and standards, or released;***
- ***Ensure that Michael Rial Christopher is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment while in detention;***
- ***Ensure that Michael Rial Christopher is granted regular access to his family, any healthcare he may require from a qualified medical practitioner, and a lawyer of his choice.***

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the start of South Sudan's internal armed conflict in December 2013, hundreds of people, mostly men, have been detained under the authority of the National Security Service (NSS) and Military Intelligence Directorate in various detention facilities across the capital city, Juba.

Amnesty International has documented numerous arbitrary detentions by the NSS in multiple facilities, where detainees are often subjected to torture and other ill-treatment – some held incommunicado without access to a lawyer, or family members. Others have been forcibly disappeared.

In the NSS prison headquarters in the Jebel Neighbourhood ('Blue House'), detainees are severely beaten, especially during interrogation, or as a form of punishment. Due to the poor conditions of the prisons, as well as inadequate access to medical care, the health of those detained often deteriorates.

Arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and torture and other ill-treatment have all been frequently employed by the authorities in South Sudan since the initial outbreak of the conflict in December 2013.

South Sudan's political environment has remained intolerant of criticism of government actions and policies, leading to intimidation, harassment and detention of civil society activists, human rights defenders and independent journalists. This has led to an environment of self-censorship for media and human rights activists where, with the pervasive state surveillance, people no longer feel safe to speak freely and openly about the conflict and human rights situation.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 5 September 2019.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Michael Rial Christopher (he/his/him)