

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED YOUTH ACTIVIST DENIED FAMILY VISITS

Michael Wetnhialic, a South Sudanese youth activist in his 30s, is arbitrarily detained at the National Security Service (NSS) headquarters, known as 'Blue House', without access to his family and lawyer. He was arbitrarily arrested by the NSS in Juba on 18 May.

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 your attention to the case of **Michael Wetnhialic**, a South Sudanese youth activist.*

Michael Wetnhialic was arbitrarily arrested by the National Security Service (NSS) in Juba on 18 May. He is currently detained at the NSS headquarters, known as 'Blue House', without access to his family and lawyer. According to a relative, Michael has not been informed of any charges against him.

This is the third time the youth activist has been arrested. According to his relative, Michael Wetnhialic was first arbitrarily arrested by the NSS in August 2017 and detained in 'Blue House' for approximately six months on suspicion of using Facebook to criticise the NSS and senior NSS officials. Michael was arrested again in 2018 when, according to his relative, the NSS suspected him of using a fake name on Facebook to continue criticising the NSS and its senior officials.

I urge you to:

- *Ensure that Michael Wetnhialic, is handed over to the police, brought to court and charged with a recognizable criminal offence in accordance with international law and standards, or that he is released immediately;*
- *Ensure that Michael Wetnhialic is not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment while in detention;*
- *Ensure that Michael Wetnhialic 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 badly 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.

Prolonged and 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 workers 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: 21 August 2019

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

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

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: N/A