

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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South Sudan: Investigate shooting of civil society leader

We, the undersigned South Sudanese and international human rights organizations, condemn last week's shooting of Deng Athuai Mawiir, head of South Sudan's Civil Society Alliance. We call on the Government of South Sudan to conduct prompt, effective, transparent and impartial investigations into the attack with a view to identifying those suspected to be responsible and bringing them to justice in fair trials.

Deng Athuai Mawiir was shot in the thigh by an unknown armed gunman in Juba on the evening of 1 August 2014. He was immediately taken to Juba Teaching Hospital, where he is currently recovering. The perpetrator of the attack has not yet been identified, nor has a motive been established.

Deng Athuai Mawiir is a member of the civil society delegation to the peace negotiations in Addis Ababa being brokered by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The talks recommenced on 4 August, after over one month of adjournment.

This shooting further adds to a growing climate of fear among civil society activists, journalists and human rights defenders. It leaves them feeling as though their lives are at risk and has a chilling effect on the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. It is critical that those responsible are identified as without doing so, civil society actors will continue to be uncertain about their safety.

We urge the government to send a signal of its readiness to protect citizens and ensure the safety of members of the civil society, including journalists and human rights defenders by immediately carrying out an impartial and comprehensive investigation into the shooting. We also call on the government to ensure that any such investigation is transparent, including by providing regular public updates on progress towards the identification and prosecution of the perpetrators of this shooting.

Nearly eight months of internal armed conflict in South Sudan have cost thousands of lives, resulted in the destruction of entire towns, and caused over 1.5 million people to flee their homes. Civil society organizations and human rights defenders have a critical role to play in analyzing the causes and nature of the violence, documenting human rights violations and abuses, promoting access to effective remedies for victims, and proposing solutions to help move the country forward. The Government of South Sudan must ensure that they can carry out their media, human rights and other work freely and without fear of intimidation, harassment or retribution, and that independent voices are not stifled at such a decisive point in South Sudan's history. To demonstrate this, the government needs to investigate and prosecute the shooting of Deng Athuai Mawiir.

Signed,

Amnesty International
Community Empowerment for Progress Organization
East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project
Equatoria Rehabilitation and Development Association
Generations for Peace
Juba Civic Engagement Center
Institute for Promotion of Civil Society
Rally for Peace and Democracy
ROOTS Project
South Sudan Action Network on Small Arms
South Sudan Human Rights Society for Advocacy
South Sudan Law Society
South Sudanese Network for Democracy and Elections
South Sudan Youth Peace and Development Organization
Standard Action Liaison Focus