SOUTH SUDAN: GOVERNMENT SHOULD COME CLEAN ON ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE OF JUBA’S EX-MAYOR

Amnesty International calls on South Sudanese authorities to disclose the fate and whereabouts of Juba’s ex-mayor, Kalisto Lado. They should also make public the reasons for his detention, if he is in custody, and release him without delay, unless a lawful basis for his detention can be demonstrated.

Kalisto Lado was arbitrarily arrested on the night of 30 March 2024 at his home in Juba by officers believed to be from the National Security Service (NSS). An eyewitness told Amnesty International that he was beaten and thrown in a Toyota land cruiser, as he was arrested by 10 uniformed officers and three others in plain clothes. The officers reportedly drove off with his car. In a statement to the media, the police denied involvement in his arrest and detention.

Amnesty International has received credible information that before his arrest, Kalisto Lado had been trailed by uniformed officers at least twice within four days. On 26 March 2024, he was forced to spend the night outside his home after someone called and warned him “not to sleep at home because people from the NSS were looking for him.” The same day, officers camped outside his gate from 10:40 pm and left at around 4 am. On 28 March, while Kalisto Lado was visiting a relative in Juba, he was again trailed by uniformed officers. He escaped from them through the backdoor of the relative’s house.

Since his arrest, Kalisto Lado’s family has neither heard from him nor seen him. They do not have information on his fate, where he is being held and who is holding him.

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about his health and risks of torture and other ill-treatment or death in custody. We urge the South Sudan government to immediately release Kalisto Lado or promptly charge him with a recognizable offence, in accordance with international law and standards.

Background

Since the NSS Act in 2014, the NSS has accumulated unchecked powers, becoming one of the main perpetrators of human rights violations and the most powerful security actor in South Sudan. The Act allows the agency to commit serious violations, including crimes under international law with impunity, while creating and sustaining a climate of repression and fear. The NSS Amendment Bill which was aimed at bringing the 2014 NSS Act in line with the Constitution has been pending in the Transitional National Legislative Assembly since 8 May 2023.

Amnesty International, the UN Panel of Experts, UN Commission on Human Rights and other human rights organizations have documented numerous arbitrary detentions by the National Security Service (NSS) in multiple facilities where detainees are often subjected to torture and other ill-treatment and some held incommunicado without access to a lawyer, or family members.

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