

URGENT ACTION

END FOUR DEPORTEES' ARBITRARY DETENTION

On 4 July, Jose Manuel Rodriguez-Quinones, Kyaw Mya, Thongxay Nilakout, and Tuan Thanh Phan were deported from the US to Juba, South Sudan, transiting through a US military base in Djibouti, as part of the United States government's mass deportation campaign and have since been arbitrarily detained in an undisclosed location. No official information regarding the four men's exact current whereabouts has been shared with their lawyers. Amnesty International calls on the South Sudanese authorities to immediately disclose the whereabouts of Jose Manuel Rodriguez-Quinones, Kyaw Mya, Thongxay Nilakout, and Tuan Thanh Phan, grant them unmonitored and unfettered access to their legal representatives, including local counsel, and immediately clarify the legal grounds of their detention. If there is no breach of the principle of non-refoulement, we urge the states of the men's countries of origin to expedite their repatriation.

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

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Monday Semaya Kumba

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Dear Ambassador Monday Semaya Kumba,

I am writing to express deep concern for **Jose Manuel Rodriguez-Quinones, Kyaw Mya, Thongxay Nilakout,** and **Tuan Thanh Phan** who were deported as part of the United States government's mass deportation campaign and have since been arbitrarily detained in South Sudan.

On 4 July, **Jose Manuel Rodriguez-Quinones** (who originates from Cuba, entered the USA in 1995, and had his green card revoked upon criminal conviction), **Kyaw Mya** (who originates from Myanmar and entered the United States as a refugee in 2007), **Thongxay Nilakout** (who originates from Laos and entered the United States as a refugee in 1980), and **Tuan Thanh Phan** (who originates from Vietnam and entered the United States as a refugee in 1991) were deported from a United States to Juba, South Sudan's capital, transiting through a US military base in Djibouti. Together with four other deportees, the four men were subsequently detained by the South Sudanese authorities without legal justification or clarity regarding their legal status.

After weeks of not having had any access to their clients, all individuals' US-based legal representatives have only accessed their clients through monitored and limited phone calls. Their lawyer in Juba has not been able to access and communicate with them. The South Sudanese authorities have not provided any official communication on the exact whereabouts of the four men. However, Amnesty International has received credible reports that they are in the custody of the National Security Service (NSS) but has not independently verified the whereabouts of the men. The NSS's constitutional mandate does not include arrest and detention.

Detention without a basis in law is a violation under international human rights law. Detention with no or limited access to legal representation is also a human rights law violation and could provide a context in which torture and other ill-treatment may occur, increasing the concern for the men's health and wellbeing.

I urgently call on you to immediately disclose the whereabouts of Jose Manuel Rodriguez-Quinones, Kyaw Mya, Thongxay Nilakout, and Tuan Thanh Phan, grant them unmonitored and full access to their legal representatives, including local counsel, and immediately clarify the legal grounds of their detention. I further urge you to ensure that the men are not forcibly sent to their countries of origin or any other country if they are at real risk of persecution or serious human rights violations as this would be a breach of the principle of non-refoulement as laid out in international human rights law. If, following a full and fair assessment, there is no breach of the principle of non-refoulement, we urge the states of the men's countries of origin to expedite their repatriation.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Earlier this year, U.S. President Donald Trump advanced a mass deportation campaign targeting millions of immigrants and people seeking safety. As part of this, eight men – only one of whom was South Sudanese – were deported to South Sudan after a weeks-long legal battle. Two of the eight men have since been released from detention, with Jesus Munoz-Gutierrez repatriated to Mexico. The U.S. government is obligated under international law to ensure that its immigration policies do not commit or increase the risk of human rights violations. While the U.S. has the authority to regulate immigration, it must do so within the framework of its international human rights obligations.

In July 2025, Politico reported that the deportations from the United States to South Sudan are part of an attempt by the South Sudanese government to negotiate the lifting of sanctions imposed on First Vice President, Benjamin Bol Mel, to revoke visa restrictions on South Sudanese nationals, to reactivate a bank account at the New York Federal Reserve, and to support the state's prosecution of First Vice President and opposition leader, Riek Machar who is still under house arrest. In September, a news outlet reported that South Sudanese authorities denied the existence of any agreement with the U.S. to receive third-country nationals.

Civic space for engagement in public life continues to be under attack and engaging in legitimate civic activities has resulted in arbitrary arrests, prolonged detention, torture, and extra-judicial killings. South Sudan's security actors and authorities, especially the National Security Service (NSS), systematically harass and target civil society members and individuals critical of the government. On 3 July 2024, the country's Parliament passed the National Security Service Act 2014 (Amendment) Bill 2024 which seeks to increase NSS's abusive powers that include, among others, arresting people with or without a warrant. Article 159 of South Sudan's 2011 Transitional Constitution however, mandates the NSS to conduct classic intelligence activities and "focus on information gathering, analysis and advice to the relevant authorities".

Throughout the course of the conflict that broke out in South Sudan on 15 December 2013, the South Sudanese National Security Service (NSS) has become increasingly powerful, acting as a de facto police force to powerful elites. The NSS and Military Intelligence Directorate (MID) have detained hundreds of people, mostly men, in various detention facilities across the country. Amnesty International has documented cases of torture and other forms of ill-treatment in at least three of the main detention centers in the capital, Juba. Amnesty International has also documented cases of individuals being detained and threatened by the NSS for freely expressing their opinion that is critical of the government, or who have otherwise been perceived to act against the interests of powerful elites. Relatives of detainees can become persons of interests, increasing their risk of being surveilled and possibly detained if the NSS disapproves of their speech or behaviour.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 17 March 2026

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Jose Manuel Rodriguez-Quinones, Kyaw Mya, Thongxay Nilakout, and Tuan Thanh Phan (All he/him)