

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST ARBITRARILY DETAINED FOR ALMOST 6 MONTHS

Peter Biar Ajak, a prominent South Sudanese academic and activist, has been arbitrarily detained by the National Security Service (NSS) for almost six months. The activist has yet to be brought before a court and charged. He has also been denied access to his lawyers since 7 October 2018. He has only been allowed sporadic family visits while in detention. Peter Biar was arrested on 28 July 2018 by the NSS. He has been a vocal critic of the South Sudan government.

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

*President of the Republic of South Sudan
 Salva Kiir Mayardit
 Office of the President
 Presidential palace
 Juba- South Sudan
 Twitter: @RepSouthSudan @PressSalva
 Salutation: Your Excellency*

Your Excellency President Salva Kiir Mayardit,

Peter Biar Ajak is a South Sudanese academic, activist and chairperson of the South Sudan Young Leaders Forum. He has been arbitrarily detained at the NSS headquarters in Juba since 28 July 2018 when he was arrested by NSS agents at Juba International Airport. He was arrested as he was preparing to travel to Aweil to hold a youth forum.

The reasons behind Peter Biar's arrest and detention are unknown. However, it is believed that his arrest could be linked to the youth forum that he intended to hold in Aweil and the fact that Peter Biar has been a vocal critic of the South Sudan government. To date, about six months after he was detained, Peter Biar has yet to be brought before a court or charged with a recognisable criminal offence in accordance with international law and standards. He has also been denied access to his lawyers since detainees revolted in the detention centre on 7 October 2018 demanding due process and an improvement in detention conditions.

Even though his family has been allowed to visit him at the NSS headquarters in Juba, this access has not been regular. His family has told Amnesty International that Peter Biar has lost significant weight since his detention.

We call on you to:

- Ensure Peter Biar Ajak is released immediately or charged with a recognizable criminal offence in accordance with international law and standards;
- Ensure that Peter Biar Ajak is not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment while in detention;
- Ensure Peter Biar Ajak is granted regular access to his family, his lawyers and any healthcare he may require.

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 the Military Intelligence Directorate in various detention facilities across the capital city, Juba. Many of those who have been detained have been held under the category of "political detainees" on allegations that they have communicated with or supported the political opposition.

Amnesty International has documented numerous arbitrary detentions by the NSS in multiple facilities where detainees are often subjected to torture and other ill-treatment and some are held incommunicado without access to a lawyer, or family members. Others have been forcibly disappeared. In the NSS prison headquarters in the Jebel Neighbourhood, most detainees sleep on the floor. Some have been 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.

There appears to have been an increase in the targeting of those seen to be aligned with the political opposition as part of the government's increasingly brutal counter-insurgency campaign against real and perceived opponents following the clashes between government and opposition forces in Juba in July 2016.

South Sudan's political environment has become increasingly intolerant of any form 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 country's ongoing conflict.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Arabic

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 08 03 2019.

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Peter Biar Ajak (He/His/Him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/8853/2018/en/>