



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Abusive surveillance and violations of international humanitarian law in South Sudan must end

Speaking at the UN Human Rights Council today, Amnesty International said that it remains deeply concerned by the grave human rights situation in South Sudan. As the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan (CoHRSS) has detailed, South Sudan has “witnessed a massive escalation in violence perpetrated by organized tribal militias”¹ over the past year, fuelled by failure of the signatories to implement the 2018 peace agreement.

It said that 2020 was the most violent year South Sudan has seen since 2017. Amnesty International documented a series of extrajudicial executions, forced displacement, torture, and destruction of civilian property by government and former opposition forces between April and June in Central Equatoria State, southwest of the capital Juba.²

Amnesty International also said it remains concerned about continued shrinking of civic space, including violations of the right to freedom of expression. A recent Amnesty International investigation revealed that the government, primarily through the National Security Service (NSS), conducts abusive surveillance, using communications interception technology bought from an Israeli company called *Verint Systems*; and a national and cross-border network of informants and agents to monitor all levels of society and daily life, including print and social media.³

This surveillance is being conducted without legal safeguards, in breach of the right to privacy, and is being used to arbitrarily arrest and illegally detain individuals and infringe on press freedoms and the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and the freedom of assembly.⁴

¹ UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan (CoHRSS), Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, A/HRC/46/53, 4 February 2021.

² Amnesty International, South Sudan: UN arms embargo must be maintained after surge in violence against civilians in 2020 ([Press release](#), 30 November 2020).

³ Amnesty International, “These Walls Have Ears” The Chilling Effect of Surveillance in South Sudan (Index: AFR 65/3577/2021).

⁴ Amnesty International, “These Walls Have Ears” The Chilling Effect of Surveillance in South Sudan (Index: AFR 65/3577/2021).

Together with 38 NGOs, Amnesty International urged the UN Human Rights Council to renew, in full, the CoHRSS's mandate until the Hybrid Court for South Sudan is fully functional and operational.

It concluded its statement by asking the Commissioners to detail all major outstanding obstacles to the enjoyment of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and the freedom of assembly in South Sudan.

Background

This public statement is based on an oral statement Amnesty International delivered to the Human Rights Council on 12 March 2021, during the interactive dialogue with the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan.

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