



# DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

**UN Human Rights Council – 46<sup>th</sup> regular session**  
**Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the**  
**Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan**  
**Oral statement**

*Delivered by: James Bidal*

Madam President, dear members of the Commission,

We thank you for your report and presentation. The situation in South Sudan continues to call for the Human Rights Council's utmost attention. As you reported, staggering levels of violence continue and threaten to spiral out of control. We are particularly concerned over conflict at the local level, ongoing SGBV, and attacks against the civilian population. Some of the violations may amount to crimes against humanity.

We concur with your analysis of the situation of civil society. Human rights defenders, including civil society members and journalists, are subjected to pervasive surveillance, in particular by the National Security Service (NSS). We urge the government to cease its intimidation of independent actors and to fully uphold freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association, in line with its constitutional and international obligations.

We welcome the recent cabinet approval of a plan by the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs to start setting up accountability and transitional justice institutions as per Chapter V of the Revitalised Peace Agreement. Operationalisation of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan and other Chapter V institutions is key to building sustainable peace. The process must now be fast-tracked.

Commissioners:

In a joint letter released ahead of this session, 38 civil society organisations stressed that *“the mandate of the Commission should continue until such a point as demonstrable progress has been made against human rights benchmarks and based on an assessment of risk factors of further violations.”* What could such benchmarks and indicators be?

Thank you for your attention.