



DEFENDDEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 48th regular session

Item 4: Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the oral update by the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan

Oral statement

Delivered by: Omara Joseph Logborong Wani

Madam President, members of the Commission,

Ten years after its independence, South Sudan still **needs** the UN's utmost attention. The mandate of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan remains **vital**. In March 2022, the Human Rights Council should extend it further.

We remain concerned over conflict at the local level, ongoing sexual and gender-based violence, extrajudicial executions, and attacks against civilians. As the Commission emphasised, South Sudanese citizens are **longing** for sustainable peace, national cohesion, and accountability.

DefendDefenders and the South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network are deeply concerned over the pressure faced by independent human rights, civil society and peacebuilding actors in the country. Human rights defenders working to advance justice, accountability and democratic governance are subjected to pervasive surveillance by the National Security Service.

Despite continuous efforts from the Network and the South Sudan Human Rights Commission to facilitate dialogue between civil society organisations and government officials, violations continue. They are facilitated by a culture of intimidation, abuse of power, and impunity.

We highlight the following cases:

1. On 30 March 2021, the joint security agents tortured peaceful protestors who were demanding justice for an artist who died due to negligence and the poor state of health services in the country.
2. On 16 July 2021, the NSS stormed and shut down a vital civil society public discussion meant to popularise the nation's Constitution amidst ongoing amendments.
3. Rampant arrests of civil society members, across the country, on 30 August 2021. In Yei, three of those arrested are still incarcerated, Internet was shut down, and in Jonglei State, a community radio station was closed.

We call on the government to: (i) cease the harassment of HRDs, journalists, and civil society actors; (ii) release all those being detained for engaging in peaceful activities relating to human rights; and (iii) ensure independent and effective investigations into attacks against HRDs.

Thank you.