



DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 52nd regular session

Item 10: Interactive dialogue on the High Commissioner's report on technical assistance and capacity-building for South Sudan

Oral statement

Delivered by: Nicolas Agostini

Mr. President, High Commissioner,

In a [letter](#), 95 civil society organisations called for the renewal of the mandate of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan (CHRSS). We highlighted that “[a]ny technical assistance or capacity building requested by South Sudan can be, and already is, offered as part of the annual resolution extending the CHRSS’s mandate.” We also highlighted that “a purely technical assistance and capacity-building focus [...] would be unsuitable to tackle South Sudan’s [...] serious human rights challenges and would risk further emboldening those who perpetrate the most serious crimes.”

While we welcome the provision of advisory services to states as a tool to improve human rights compliance, we stress the following:

- The factors that prompted the Council to establish the CHRSS, in 2016, have not significantly changed to warrant less scrutiny.
- South Sudan’s ratification of key international and African human rights instruments is welcome but must be followed by implementation.
- As this Council meets, political tensions are rising, pointing to a risk of relapse into full-scale conflict. Elections are due to take place in late 2024, but nothing is ready. There is no permanent Constitution, no electoral law, no electoral commission, and no census. Violence in Upper Nile can be considered pre-election violence.
- Civic space is under extreme pressure. We remain deeply worried about reprisals against independent actors, censorship, arbitrary arrests, disappearances, torture, extrajudicial killings, and widespread sexual violence.

Mr. President,

The Deputy Mayor of Juba threatened to use live ammunition against anyone protesting inflation. We ask: is addressing this, and the many threats authorities use to instil fear and prevent South Sudanese citizens from exercising their rights, a matter of *technical assistance*? Or is it a matter of *political will*?

Reversing these trends will start not with the provision of more technical assistance but with signals from the highest political level, making clear that such behaviour is unjustifiable and that perpetrators will be punished. We have not seen any of these signals.

Thank you.