



DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 57th regular session

**Item 10: Interactive dialogue on the oral update of OHCHR on technical assistance
and capacity-building for South Sudan**

Oral statement

Delivered by: Nicolas Agostini

Mr. President, Mr. High Commissioner,

Six months ago, the Human Rights Council **did** the right thing by refusing to discontinue the mandate of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan (CHRSS). One of the arguments the South Sudanese government and allies used was that the country only needed “technical assistance” to overcome its challenges.

Today, with a majority of the Council, we repeat civil society’s **message** that an investigative and accountability mechanism remains vital. Scrutiny remains vital, including over the conduct of the National Security Service (NSS), which creates a climate of fear for citizens, civil society, and the media.

Two years ago, we were promised that a two-year extension of the transitional period was the “last” and that elections would take place in December 2024. And here we are, facing another extension. While lack of preparedness for elections this year was entirely predictable, and their postponement to December 2026 could offer an opportunity to conduct a census and operationalise key institutions and dispute resolution mechanisms, we fear that the additional time will not be used to reduce risks and uncertainty over the constitution-making and electoral process, but rather to buy time and further delay the implementation of the Revitalised Peace Agreement and its transitional justice components. Yet accountability is essential for long-term peace.

Today, we repeat what we said in **2021**, **2022** and **2023**: What South Sudan needs, first and foremost, is political will. Without political will to bring violations to an end and ensure accountability for grave crimes, all the technical assistance in the world will be ineffective.

Thank you for your attention.