

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED NEWSPAPER EDITOR CHARGED

Alfred Taban, prominent journalist and chief editor of the daily English newspaper, Juba Monitor, was transferred from the National Security Service (NSS) headquarters on 22 July to police custody in Juba town. He has been charged with ‘publishing or communicating false statements prejudicial to Southern Sudan’ and ‘undermining the authority of or insulting the president’.

Alfred Taban was arrested at 4pm on 16 July by NSS agents after responding to summons to report to the NSS headquarters in Jebel neighbourhood. His arrest is linked to an article he wrote on 15 July as a response to the violent clashes that erupted in Juba on 7 July between government forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and forces loyal to Dr Riek Machar. Alfred Taban described the leaders’ unsuccessful implementation of the August 2015 peace agreement and argued that both leaders “have completely failed” and should not “remain in their seats”.

Alfred Taban was taken to the police station and then the Ministry of Justice on 21 July by the NSS, but both could not open a case against him since the NSS did not have any legal documents to show the reason for his arrest or when he was arrested. He was only transferred to police custody on 22 July after the NSS produced the proper documentation. He is currently sleeping in a ‘hot’ office at the police station. He was charged on 25 July under articles 75 and 76 of the South Sudan Penal Code with ‘publishing or communicating false statements prejudicial to Southern Sudan’ and ‘undermining the authority of or insulting the president’. These are non-bailable offences and attract a maximum 20 year prison sentence. Alfred Taban suffers from diabetes and is also recovering from a stroke. His health has been deteriorating and on 25 June he had to spend the night at Juba Teaching Hospital after being diagnosed with malaria, high blood sugar and high blood pressure. He has been going to the hospital regularly to receive injections since then.

Amnesty International believes that the charges against Alfred Taban and his continued detention are due solely to the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and thus considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

Please write immediately in English, Arabic or your own language:

- Calling on the South Sudanese authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Alfred Taban;
- Urging them to ensure that, pending his release, Alfred Taban is not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment and is allowed access to his family, a lawyer of his choosing and any medical care he may require;
- Calling on them to repeal or amend laws that criminalize the legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 8 SEPTEMBER 2016 TO:

Minister for Interior

Alfred Ladu Gore
Ministry of Interior
Ministries Road
Juba, South Sudan
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister for National Security in the office
of the President

Obote Mamur Mete
Ministry of National Security in the Office
of the President
Juba, South Sudan
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister for Information and
Broadcasting
Michael Makuei
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting,
Ministries Road
Juba, South Sudan
Email: makueimichael@yahoo.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

MR SABIT ABBE ALLEY, Embassy of The Republic Of South Sudan, Bentinck House, 3-8 Bolsover Street, London, W1W 6AB
Fax 020 7339 3001 Email info@embrss.org.uk Salutation His Excellency

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 170/16. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/4474/2016/en/>

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Journalists in South Sudan face extremely precarious working conditions, and have been subjected to regular intimidation, harassment, arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, torture and, at times, unlawful killings. The NSS has shutdown newspapers, and seized entire print runs of newspapers several times. These abusive practices have been on the rise since the beginning of the mid-December 2013 conflict and have greatly eroded the right to freedom of expression and curtailed civic space in the country.

South Sudan's NSS reportedly arrested Michael Christopher a journalist working for al-Watan Arabic daily newspaper on 23 July 2016 over a published report on deployment of regional troops in South Sudan. Journalist John Gatluak Manguet was apparently targeted and killed by armed men on 11 July 2016 in Juba amidst clashes between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and forces loyal to Dr. Riek Machar throughout Juba. Reporter Peter Julius Moi was shot dead in the capital, Juba, on 19 August 2015, days after President Salva Kiir made a statement threatening to kill reporters working against the country. The Ministry of Information and the Presidential spokesperson later said the statement was quoted out of context. George Livio a journalist with Radio Miraya, has been held by the NSS without charge or trial since August 2014 on accusations of collaborating with rebels. Amnesty International is running a campaign on him and 29 other men.

In October 2014, a National Security Service bill passed by the South Sudan National Legislative Assembly gave the NSS extensive powers of arrest, detention and seizure without adequate safeguards against abuse. The bill does not specify recognized detention sites or guarantee basic due process rights, such as the right to counsel or to be tried within a reasonable period of time as guaranteed by the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan (TCSS). In March 2015, the Justice Minister announced that the Bill, passed by the Legislative Assembly on October 8 2014, had become law. This is despite domestic and international opposition to its passage, the absence of the President's signature, and its unconstitutionality.

Amnesty International has repeatedly recommended that the NSS powers should be limited to intelligence gathering, as envisioned by the TCSS of 2011, which mandates the NSS to "focus on information gathering, analysis and to advise the relevant authorities." The powers to arrest, detain, conduct searches, seize property and use force should be explicitly excluded from the NSS's powers and exercised by an appropriate law enforcement agency.

Name: Alfred Taban

Gender m/f: m

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