



South Sudan Civil Society Forum

South Sudan Civil Society Forum Condemns Intimidation of Leaders After High Cost of Living Protests in Bor

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Juba, South Sudan – July 1, 2024: The South Sudan Civil Society Forum expresses its deep outrage at the ongoing intimidation by security agents targeting civil society leaders and journalists in the aftermath of recent peaceful protests in Bor. Led by diverse groups including women, youth, and businesspeople, the demonstrations in Jonglei State on June 17th and 24th, 2024 highlighted critical issues such as skyrocketing commodity prices, unpaid salaries for government employees, insecurity and burdensome taxes on local businesses. These protests were a reflection of widespread and legitimate public discontent with the escalating cost of living, a challenge not only confined to Jonglei State but prevalent across the entire South Sudan. The Forum notes with deep concern that instead of addressing these critical issues, efforts have been made to intimidate and silence those advocating for change.

On the evening of June 24th, the Chairperson of the Jonglei Civil Society Network was summoned by the Jonglei State Legislative Assembly, alongside other local officials. During this session, he was interrogated regarding the protests, facing baseless accusations of subversion and destabilization of the government for his alleged involvement in the peaceful protests. This tactic of intimidation was further compounded today when National Security agents arbitrarily shut down a member organization of the Civil Society Forum by placing a "closed until further notice" sign on their office door.

We condemn these actions as a flagrant violation of the fundamental rights enshrined in both international law, specifically the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which guarantees freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly, and Article 25 of South Sudan's transitional constitution. These rights are not mere privileges, but the cornerstone of a healthy democracy. By singling out and intimidating civil society leaders after peaceful protests, the authorities are deliberately stifling legitimate public expression and discourses on critical issues like the rising cost of living. This chilling effect undermines the very foundation of democratic dialogue and constructive citizen engagement on vital public matters. Ultimately, it hinders the collective ability to work towards a more just, prosperous, and democratic South Sudan.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned by reports of the detention and torture of a journalist by security agents in Bor, allegedly due to his involvement in the Bor protests. We are dismayed by this development and urgently call for his immediate release and for those responsible for his torture to be held accountable.

The Civil Society Forum calls call on the authorities in Jonglei State and security agents to immediately cease any further harassment or threats against civil society leaders, activists, and journalists. We emphasize the importance of upholding the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly as cornerstones of a democratic society. The Forum stands in solidarity with those advocating for positive change through peaceful means and urges the government of South Sudan to prioritize dialogue and inclusive governance to address the legitimate grievances of its citizens.

The Civil Society Forum remains committed to advocating for justice, accountability, and the protection of civil and human rights in South Sudan. We urge the international community, regional bodies, and civil society partners to closely monitor the situation in Jonglei State and stand in solidarity with those who courageously continue to speak out against injustice and peacefully exercise their constitutional rights.

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ABOUT THE SSCSF

The SSCSF, a coalition comprising over 200 independent civic groups representing a wide spectrum of civil society organizations, women and youth groups, academia, community-based organizations, and faith-based institutions from across South Sudan, was established in December 2017. The SSCSF serves as a vital link between civil society organizations, citizens and peace processes by facilitating unified engagement and advocating for meaningful participation of the South Sudanese populations in shaping their country's future.

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