

URGENT ACTION

NEWSPAPER EDITOR OUT ON BAIL, AWAITING TRIAL

Alfred Taban, prominent journalist and chief editor of the daily English newspaper, Juba Monitor, was released on bail on 29 July and was immediately admitted at Juba Teaching Hospital. He was discharged on 30 July and has since returned home. No court date has been set for his trial.

Alfred Taban was released on bail from police custody in Juba town on 29 July. He had been detained since 22 July. Immediately after his release, Alfred Taban was admitted at Juba Teaching Hospital as his health has been deteriorating since he was detained. He was discharged from the hospital on 30 July and has since returned home.

Alfred Taban 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'. No court date has been set for his trial on these charges.

Amnesty International believes that the charges against Alfred Taban are due solely to the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression.

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

- Calling on the South Sudanese authorities to drop all charges against Alfred Taban;
- Calling on them to repeal or amend laws that criminalize the legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 SEPTEMBER 2016 TO:

Minister for Interior

Michael Tiangjiek Mut

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:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 170/16. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/4550/2016/en/>

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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 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.

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

Further information on UA: 170/16 Index: AFR 65/4608/2016 Issue Date: 8 August 2016