

URGENT ACTION

END FOUR DEPORTEES' ARBITRARY DETENTION

Jose Manuel Rodriguez-Quinones, Thongxay Nilakout, Kyaw Mya and Tuan Thanh Phan were deported from the US as part of the United States government's mass deportation campaign in May 2025. They were initially held in a US military base in Djibouti before arriving in Juba, South Sudan's capital, on 4 July 2025. For ten months they have been arbitrarily detained in an undisclosed location. Amnesty International calls on the South Sudanese authorities to immediately disclose the whereabouts of the four men, grant them unmonitored and unfettered access to their legal representatives, including local counsel, and immediately clarify the legal grounds of their detention. The South Sudanese authorities must also ensure that individuals' wishes for a durable solution are facilitated including through access to UNHCR, IOM and the national human rights commission and other relevant bodies. If a fair and efficient assessment of protection needs has taken place and the principle of non-refoulement is not breached, the states of the men's countries of origin must expedite their repatriation.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Ambassador James Pitia Morgan

Email: info@mofaic.gov.ss

X: @MoFA_SouthSudan / @mofaicss

Dear Ambassador James Pitia Morgan,

I am writing to express deep concern for **Jose Manuel Rodriguez-Quinones, Kyaw Mya, Thongxay Nilakout,** and **Tuan Thanh Phan** who were deported as part of the United States government's mass deportation campaign in May 2025, transiting through a US military base in Djibouti, and have been arbitrarily detained in South Sudan since their arrival on 4 July 2025.

Jose Manuel Rodriguez-Quinones originates from Cuba, entered the USA in 1995 and had his green card revoked upon criminal conviction. Kyaw Mya originates from Myanmar and entered the United States as a refugee in 2007. Thongxay Nilakout originates from Laos and entered the United States as a refugee in 1980. Tuan Thanh Phan originates from Vietnam and entered the United States as a refugee in 1991. The four men were deported together with four other deportees and are being arbitrarily detained by the South Sudanese authorities without legal justification or clarity regarding their legal status, in violation of international human rights law. All individuals' US-based legal representatives have only accessed their clients through monitored and limited phone calls. Their lawyer in Juba, South Sudan's capital, has not been able to access or communicate with them at all.

Ten months on and the South Sudanese authorities have yet to provide any official communication on the exact whereabouts of the four men. Arbitrary detention with limited access to their lawyers is a violation under international law and could provide a context in which torture and other ill-treatment may occur, increasing the concern for the four men's health and well-being.

I urgently call on you to immediately disclose the whereabouts of the four men, grant them unmonitored and full access to their legal representatives, including local counsel, and immediately clarify the legal grounds of their detention. I further urge you to ensure that individuals' wishes for a durable solution are facilitated including through access to UNHCR, IOM and the national human rights commission and other relevant bodies, and if, following a full and fair assessment, there is no breach of the principle of non-refoulement, we urge the states of the men's countries of origin to expedite their repatriation.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump advanced a mass deportation campaign targeting millions of immigrants and people seeking safety. As part of this, eight men – only one of whom was South Sudanese – were deported to South Sudan after a weeks-long legal battle. Two of the eight men have since been released from detention, with Jesus Munoz-Gutierrez repatriated to Mexico. The U.S. government is obligated under international law to ensure that its immigration policies do not commit or increase the risk of human rights violations. While the U.S. has the authority to regulate immigration, it must do so within the framework of its international human rights obligations.

In a diplomatic note between the USA and South Sudan signed on 10 May 2025, South Sudan agreed that it would “treat the individuals in a manner that is consistent with its international legal obligations regarding human rights.” In a note verbale dated 12 May 2025, the South Sudanese government requested the United States to, amongst others, lift sanctions imposed on then First Vice President, Benjamin Bol Mel, to revoke visa restrictions on South Sudanese nationals, to reactivate a bank account at the New York Federal Reserve, and to support the state’s prosecution of First Vice President and opposition leader, Riek Machar who remains under house arrest. In September 2025, a news outlet reported that South Sudanese authorities denied the existence of any agreement with the U.S. to receive third-country nationals.

In South Sudan, civic space for engagement in public life continues to be under attack and engaging in legitimate civic activities has resulted in arbitrary arrests, prolonged detention, torture and other ill treatment, and extra-judicial killings. South Sudan’s security actors and authorities, especially the National Security Service (NSS), systematically harass and target civil society members and individuals critical of the government. Even though the NSS continues to be implicated in human rights violations, in August 2024, President Kiir allowed a bill maintaining the National Security Service’s abusive and unconstitutional powers of arrest and detention to become law. Article 159 of South Sudan’s 2011 Transitional Constitution, however, mandates the NSS to conduct classic intelligence activities and “focus on information gathering, analysis and advice to the relevant authorities”.

Throughout the course of the conflict that broke out in South Sudan on 15 December 2013, the NSS has become increasingly powerful, acting as a de facto police force to powerful elites. The NSS and Military Intelligence Directorate (MID) have detained hundreds of people, mostly men, in various detention facilities across the country. Amnesty International has documented cases of torture and other forms of ill-treatment in at least three of the main detention centers in the capital, Juba. Amnesty International has also documented cases of individuals being detained and threatened by the NSS for freely expressing their opinion that is critical of the government, or who have otherwise been perceived to act against the interests of powerful elites. Relatives of detainees can become persons of interests, increasing their risk of being surveilled and possibly detained if the NSS disapproves of their speech or behaviour.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 11 September 2026

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Jose Manuel Rodriguez-Quinones, Kyaw Mya, Thongxay Nilakout, Tuan Thanh Phan (All he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AFR65/0280/2025/en/>