

March 26, 2019

Media Release

**SOUTH SUDANESE PEACE ACTIVIST PETER BIAR AJAK CHARGED
WITH INSURGENCY, SABOTAGE**

UN Human Rights Experts Have Previously Urged Ajak's "Immediate Release"

Juba – Yesterday, March 25, 2019, a South Sudanese court charged respected peace activist Peter Biar Ajak with the following crimes under South Sudan's Penal Code Act, 2008:

- 1) Section 48: "Acts Committed by Several Persons in Furtherance of Common Intention"
- 2) Section 67: "Insurgency, Banditry, Sabotage or Terrorism"
- 3) Section 72: "Possession of Dangerous Weapons"
- 4) Section 83: "Disorderly Conduct in [a] Public Place"

Ajak was also charged under Section 57 of South Sudan's National Security Act, 2014: "Penalties for Espionage, Terrorism, Attempts to Overthrow a Constitutionally Established Government, Spying."

These charges are unequivocally false.

Ajak, who has been detained in South Sudan's "Blue House" – the headquarters of the country's National Security Service – since his arrest on July 28, 2018, still has not been charged with any crime related to his original arrest.

Instead, the charges against Ajak relate to an October 2018 episode in which other detainees in the Blue House held a spontaneous armed protest to draw attention to rights violations in the prison, including extended detention without charge. Ajak was not involved in any way in the planning or execution of the protest.

At one point during the protest, an armed detainee sent Ajak to give [an interview with Voice of America Radio](#), and Ajak complied. The story that was published afterwards noted that Ajak was "unarmed and said he is hiding in a bunker along with other unarmed civilians."

Afterward, Ajak acted as a mediator, communicating between prison authorities and the armed detainees in an attempt to negotiate peace. No one was killed in the protest, and in the end, the armed detainees laid down their weapons voluntarily.

Ajak's ongoing detention has been widely criticized by the international community, including in a [March 6 statement by UN human rights experts](#), who said they "condemn in the strongest terms Mr. Ajak's continued detention and urge the South Sudanese authorities to release him immediately." Several members of the U.S. Congress have also called for Ajak's release, including most recently Congresswoman Madeleine Dean (PA-4), who denounced his detention during a February 2019 [speech on the House floor](#).

Attending yesterday's hearing in Juba were numerous outside representatives, including individuals from the United States, the United Nations, and civil society.

For more information:

Jared Genser
jgenser@perseus-strategies.com
+1 202 466 3069