

**UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY, SOUTH SUDAN RELEASES POLITICAL
PRISONER PETER BIAR AJAK AFTER PARDON BY
PRESIDENT SALVA KIIR**

Juba and Washington, D.C. – Nearly 18 months after his initial arrest, Peter Biar Ajak, a renowned South Sudanese human rights activist and economist, has been released. He was one of 31 prisoners pardoned by South Sudanese President Salva Kiir on Thursday, January 2nd. He walked out of Juba Central Prison at 11 am East Africa time (GMT+3) and is resting at home, soon to be reunited with his family.

From the beginning, it was clear that Peter had been targeted because of his outspoken criticism of the Government, his work with the South Sudan Young Leaders Forum, and his call for a generational change in the country's leadership on all sides for their failure to secure a permanent peace for the people of South Sudan. Held initially without charge for eight months while being investigated on bogus treason and terrorism accusations, he was ultimately convicted and sentenced to two years in prison on June 11, 2019, for having given an interview to Voice of America in the middle of a prison riot while he was detained in South Sudan's notorious Blue House.

After his release, Peter commented: "So many people I know, and countless others at home and around the world have raised their voices and supported me and my family for the last year and a half. Words cannot express how grateful I am for their support. It has meant so much to us and given us the strength we needed. It's a new year and a new decade and my wish is that this year will be the start of lasting peace in South Sudan."

Jared Genser, Peter's pro bono counsel, issued the following statement: "I am thrilled and relieved that South Sudan has finally released Peter. He is a brilliant and tireless advocate for peace in South Sudan and for ensuring the voices of the country's youth are heard and respected. His detention was a travesty of justice. I urge the Government to engage with the people of South Sudan and to listen and adopt their best ideas, rather than attempt to intimidate or silence those with which it disagrees. Although the work of freeing Peter has been accomplished, the extraordinary global network that came together to advocate

for his release will remain vigilant to ensure he has the support to continue his important work.”

Peter’s detention was condemned by numerous prominent individuals and organizations. For example, US Senators [Bob Casey](#), [Marco Rubio](#), [Cory Booker](#), [Chris Coons](#), [Bob Menendez](#), and [Patrick Leahy](#) and Representatives [Madeleine Dean](#), [Dwight Evans](#), and [Barbara Lee](#) spoke out against his detention. Amnesty International denounced the “[sham trial](#)” that resulted in his conviction. Furthermore, in March 2019, five UN experts – including the Chair-Rapporteur of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion or Expression, and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders – issued a joint [statement](#) condemning Peter’s detention and calling for his immediate release.

Jared Genser and Brian Tronic have served as pro bono counsel to Peter Biar Ajak since September 2018.

Contact: Jared Genser
International Counsel to Peter Biar Ajak
jgenser@perseus-strategies.com
+1 (202) 320-4135

###