



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

THE GAMBIA

4 APRIL 2008

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Preface

- i This Country of Origin Information Key Documents (COI Key Documents) on The Gambia has been produced by COI Service, UK Border Agency, for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 11 March 2008.
- ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any UK Border Agency opinion or policy.
- iii For UK Border Agency users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on The Gambia is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional source material are very welcome and should be submitted to COI Service as below.

Country of Origin Information Service

UK Border Agency

Apollo House
36 Wellesley Road
Croydon CR9 3RR
United Kingdom

Email: cois@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Website: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html

ADVISORY PANEL ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

- vii The independent Advisory Panel on Country Information (APCI) was established in 2003 to make recommendations to the Home Secretary about the content of the UK Border Agency's country of origin information material. The APCI welcomes all feedback on the UK Border Agency's COI Key Documents, COI Reports and other country of origin information material. Information about the Panel's work can be found on its website at www.apci.org.uk
- viii In the course of its work, the APCI reviews the content of selected UK Border Agency COI documents and makes recommendations specific to those documents and of a more general nature. The APCI may or may not have reviewed this particular document. At the following link is a list of the COI Key Documents, COI Reports and other documents which have, to date, been reviewed by the APCI: www.apci.org.uk/reviewed-documents.html
- ix Please note: It is not the function of the APCI to endorse any UK Border Agency material or procedures. Some of the material examined by the Panel relates to countries designated or proposed for designation for the Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA) list. In such cases, the Panel's work should not be taken to imply any endorsement of the decision or proposal to designate a particular country for NSA, nor of the NSA process itself.

Advisory Panel on Country Information:

Email: apci@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.apci.org.uk

Background information on The Gambia

Full Country Name: The Republic of The Gambia. [2c]

Area: Total area 11,300 sq. km. [2c]

Population: (2006 estimate) 1.5 million. [2c]

Capital City: Banjul. [2c]

People: (2003 census) Mandinka 42%, Fula 18%, Wolof 16%, Jola 10%, Sarahule 9%, Serere 7.8%, Krio/Aku Marabout 1.8%, Manjago 0.8%, Bambara 0.7%, other Gambians 1.2%, no declaration 0.3%. Non-Gambians 12.9% of the population. [2c]

Languages: English (official), Mandinka, Wolof, Fula, Jola, Sarahule, other indigenous languages. [2c]

Religions: Muslim 90%, Christian 9%, other 1%. [2c]

Major Political Parties: Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction, United Democratic Party, National Reconciliation Party, National Convention Party, People's Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism, National Democratic Action Movement, and the Gambia Party for Democracy and Progress. [2c]

Government: Republic. [2c]

(The US State Dept Background Note on The Gambia [February 2008] version). [2c]

Head of State: Dr Yahya Jammeh. [4]

Currency: Dalasi. [4]

Membership of International Groupings/Organisations: African Development Bank, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), African Union, Organisation of Islamic Conference. [4]

(The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Country Profile on The Gambia - January 2008 version). [4]

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GEOGRAPHY

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Country Profile on The Gambia (January 2008) version states that:

“The Gambia is a small country in Western Africa. Apart from a small Atlantic seaboard, it is entirely surrounded by Senegal. The geography of the country is dominated by the Gambia river basin and floodplain, beyond which lies savannah and low hills. The climate is tropical with a hot rainy season (June to November) and a cooler dry season (November to May).” [4]



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RECENT HISTORY

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Country Profile on The Gambia (January 2008 version) states that:

“The Gambia became a British protectorate in 1894 and gained independence from Britain in 1965, with Dawda Jawara as Prime Minister. In 1970, The Gambia became a Republic following a referendum and Jawara was elected as President. Jawara and the People’s Progressive Party dominated Gambian politics, although the country retained a multi-party system, and opposition parties were represented in the small parliament. A coup attempt in 1981 was only put down at the expense of hundreds of people being killed. In the 1980s and the early 1990s the government was increasingly unpopular, largely due to allegations of corruption.” [4]

“In July 1994 26-year-old Captain Yahya Jammeh overturned the 30-year rule of Sir Dawda Jawara in a bloodless coup. Jammeh’s Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC) ran the country by decree and all political activity was banned. What appeared to be a counter coup in January 1995 was put down and its ringleaders, who were former close allies of Jammeh, were imprisoned.” [4]

“Jammeh’s initial 4-year programme for return to civilian rule was widely condemned at home and abroad. A controversial consultation process eventually produced a constitution, which was approved by referendum in August 1996, allowing for multiparty elections, and a Presidential term of 5 years with no limit on the number of terms served. However, the main political parties were banned in the run up to elections. Having denied his desire to stand until late in the day, Jammeh won the presidential elections of September 1996 with 56% of the vote, and his newly formed party, the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), won 33 of the 45 parliamentary seats in January 1997.” [4]

“Despite the elected government, political stability remained fragile. Few senior ministers retained their posts for long, rumours of coups regularly circulated in the country and the independent media and opposition were regularly harassed for allegedly stirring anti-government feeling. Jammeh made effective use of government media and funds to ensure victory in the October 2001 presidential elections, with 53% of the vote in the second round against 33% for Ousainou Darboe. In National Assembly elections in January 2002, Jammeh’s APRC party won a huge majority - 40 of the 43 elected seats (the other 5 seats of the 48 seat house being nominated by the President), largely owing to a boycott by the opposition due to allegations of malpractice over the electoral register.” [4]

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RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Country Profile on The Gambia (January 2008 version) states that:

“In April 2006 the regime was shaken by a coup attempt, following which 27 people were arrested and the former chief of staff of the army disappeared, having been accused by Jammeh of being behind the coup. Preparations for elections were controversial and the independence of the Independent Electoral Commission was seriously compromised by the dismissal of its last 3 Chairmen by the President. The opposition coalition (the National Alliance for Democracy and Development), which had undertaken to field a single candidate against Jammeh, split in February 2006. This damaged the capacity of the opposition to mount an effective challenge to Jammeh in the one-round election, which was held on 22 September 2006. In the event, 3 candidates were accepted: President Jammeh, Ousainou Darboe of the United Democratic Party and Halifah Salah of the National Alliance for Democracy and Development. President Jammeh won the elections on September 22 with 66% of the vote to Darboe’s 27%. The vote was considered by observers to have been free and fair on the day, although the Commonwealth Secretariat noted ‘abuses of incumbency’ in the lead up to the polls. Legislative elections were held on 27 January 2007. The ruling APRC confirmed its overwhelming dominance of the political scene, winning 37 of the 43 elected seats, but the voter turn out was at 41%.” [4]

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BASIC ECONOMIC FACTS

GDP: (2006) \$511.4 million. [2c]

Annual growth rate: (2006) 6.5%. [2c]

Per capital income: (2006) \$356. [2c]

Industries: peanut products, construction, telecommunications, brewing, soft drinks, agricultural machinery assembly, woodworking, metal working, clothing. [2c]

Major trading partners: India, UK, France, Thailand. [2c]

(The US State Dept Background Note on The Gambia - February 2008 version) [2c]

The US State Dept Background Note on The Gambia (February 2008 version) states:

“The Gambia has a liberal, market-based economy characterized by traditional subsistence agriculture, a historic reliance on groundnuts (peanuts) for export earnings, a re-export trade built up around its ocean port, low import duties, minimum administrative procedures, a fluctuating exchange rate with no exchange controls, and a significant tourism industry.”

“Agriculture accounts for roughly 30% of gross domestic product (GDP) and employs about 80% of the labor force. Within agriculture, peanut production accounts for 6.9% of GDP and services approximately 54%. The limited amount of manufacturing is primarily agriculturally based (e.g., peanut processing, bakeries, a brewery, and a tannery). Other manufacturing activities include soap, soft drinks, and clothing.” [2c]

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HUMAN RIGHTS

The USSD 2007 Human Rights Report on The Gambia, published in March 2008, states that:

“The government’s respect for the human rights of its citizens did not improve during the year [2007]. Although the constitution and law provide for protection of most human rights, there were problems in many areas. Prison conditions remained poor. Arbitrary arrests and detentions continued. Security forces harassed and mistreated detainees, prisoners, opposition members, and journalists with impunity. Prisoners were held incommunicado, faced prolonged pretrial detention, and were denied due process. The government restricted freedom of speech and [the] press. Women experienced violence and discrimination, and female genital mutilation (FGM) remained a problem. Child labor and trafficking in persons also were problems.” [2a]

The Amnesty International 2007 Report on The Gambia, published in 2007, states that in 2006:

“More than 70 civilians and members of the military, including prisoners of conscience, were unlawfully detained for many weeks. At least 12 detainees were reportedly tortured. Trials of suspected coup plotters were continuing in military and civilian courts at the end of the year [2006]. Five people who allegedly escaped may have been extrajudicially executed. Repression of the right to freedom of expression intensified.” [8a]

The USSD 2007 International Religious Freedom Report on The Gambia, published in September 2007, states that:

“The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom covered by this report, and government policy contributed to the generally free practice of religion.”

“There was one report of societal abuse or discrimination based on religious belief or practice; most prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.”

“...Sunni Muslims constitute more than 90 percent of the population. The vast majority are Malikite Sufis, of which the main orders represented are Tijaniyah, Qadiriya, Muridiyah, and Ahmadiyya. Except for the Ahmadiyya, Sufi orders pray together at common mosques. A small percentage of Muslims, predominantly immigrants from South Asia, do not ascribe to any traditional Islamic school of thought.”

“An estimated 9 percent of the population is Christian, and less than 1 percent practice indigenous animist beliefs. The Christian community, situated mostly in the west and south of the country, is predominantly Roman Catholic; there are also several Protestant groups including Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and various small evangelical denominations. There is a small group of followers of the Baha’i Faith and a small community of Hindus among South Asian immigrants.” [2b]

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Index to key source documents

| | |
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| <p>KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY</p> | <p>[1] Europa World Online – The Gambia section http://www.europaworld.com/pub/</p> <p>[2a] United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices 2007: The Gambia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100483.htm</p> <p>[2c] United States Department of State Background Note on The Gambia (February 2008 version) www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5459.htm</p> <p>[4] Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK) The Gambia Country Profile (2 January 2008 version) http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019672596778</p> <p>[6a] BBC The Gambia Country Profile, 26 January 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1032156.stm</p> <p>[7] Central Intelligence Agency (United States), The World Factbook – The Gambia section (12 February 2008 version) https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ga.html</p> |
| <p>MAP</p> | <p>[5] Map of The Gambia http://geography.about.com/od/findmaps/ig/Country-Maps/Map-of-the-Gambia.htm</p> |
| <p>HISTORY</p> | <p>[1] Europa World Online – The Gambia section http://www.europaworld.com/pub/</p> <p>[4] Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK) The Gambia Country Profile (2 January 2008 version) http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019672596778</p> <p>[6b] BBC News Online: The Gambia Timeline, 23 October 2007 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1032207.stm</p> <p>[3] United Nations IRIN The Gambia Humanitarian Country Profile (September 2007 version) http://www.irinnews.org/country.aspx?CountryCode=GM&RegionCode=WA</p> |

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| <p>POLITICS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS</p> | <p>[1] Europa World Online – The Gambia section http://www.europaworld.com/pub/</p> <p>[2a] United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices 2007: The Gambia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100483.htm</p> <p>[2c] United States Department of State Background Note on The Gambia (February 2008 version) www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5459.htm</p> <p>[4] Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK) The Gambia Country Profile (2 January 2008 version) http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019672596778</p> |
| <p>THE ECONOMY</p> | <p>[1] Europa World Online – The Gambia section http://www.europaworld.com/pub/</p> <p>[2c] United States Department of State Background Note on The Gambia (February 2008 version) www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5459.htm</p> <p>[4] Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK) The Gambia Country Profile (2 January 2008 version) http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019672596778</p> |
| <p>HUMAN RIGHTS – GENERAL:</p> | <p>[2a] United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices 2007: The Gambia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100483.htm</p> <p>[8a] The Gambia section of the Amnesty International Annual Human Rights Report 2007 http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/africa/west-africa/gambia</p> <p>[4] Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK) The Gambia Country Profile (2 January 2008 version) http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019672596778</p> <p>[15] The Gambia section of the Freedom in the World 2007 Report http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2007&country=7180</p> |

| HUMAN RIGHTS – SPECIFIC ISSUES: | | |
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| (IN ADDITION TO GENERAL REPORTS ABOVE, INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IS PROVIDED IN THE DOCUMENTS LISTED BELOW) | | |
| ABUSES BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ARMED FORCES | [2a] | United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices 2007: The Gambia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100483.htm |
| ARREST AND DETENTION – LEGAL RIGHTS | [2a] | United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices 2007: The Gambia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100483.htm |
| CHILDREN | [1] | Europa World Online – The Gambia section http://www.europaworld.com/pub/ |
| | [2a] | United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices 2007: The Gambia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100483.htm |
| | [2d] | United States Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report, 12 June 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007/82805.htm |
| | [10] | The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), The Gambia section http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/gambia.html |
| | [3] | United Nations IRIN The Gambia Humanitarian Country Profile (February 2007 version) http://www.irinnews.org/country.aspx?CountryCode=GM&RegionCode=WA |
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| DEATH PENALTY | [8b] | Amnesty International, Death Penalty: Abolitionist and Retentionist countries, (19 September 2007 version) http://www.amnesty.org/en/death-penalty/abolitionist-and-retentionist-countries |
| DISABILITY | [2a] | United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices 2007: The Gambia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100483.htm |
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| FOREIGN REFUGEES | [2a] | United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices 2007: The Gambia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100483.htm |
| FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT | [2a] | United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices 2007: The Gambia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100483.htm |
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| | [2b] | United States Department of State, 2007 International Religious Freedom Report on The Gambia, 14 September 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78736.htm |
| | [15] | The Gambia section of the Freedom in the World 2007 Report http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2007&country=7180 |
| FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA | [2a] | United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices 2007: The Gambia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100483.htm |
| | [15] | The Gambia section of the Freedom in the World 2007 Report http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2007&country=7180 |
| | [17] | Reporters Without Borders 2008 Annual Report on the Gambia http://www.rsf.org/ |
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| | [3] | United Nations IRIN The Gambia Humanitarian Country Profile (February 2007 version) http://www.irinnews.org/country.aspx?CountryCode=GM&RegionCode=WA |

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| INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS) | [2a] | United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices 2007: The Gambia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100483.htm |
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| | [2d] | United States Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report, 12 June 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007/82805.htm |
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Date accessed 19 March 2008
b 2007 International Religious Freedom Report on The Gambia,
14 September 2007
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90099.htm>
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c Background Note: The Gambia (February 2008 version)
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Date accessed 13 February 2008
d The Gambia section of the Trafficking in Persons Report, 12 June 2007
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Date accessed 13 February 2008
- [3] **United Nations IRIN** <http://www.irinnews.org/>
The Gambia Humanitarian Country Profile, September 2007 version
<http://www.irinnews.org/country.aspx?CountryCode=GM&RegionCode=WA>
Date accessed 13 February 2008
- [4] **Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK)** <http://www.fco.gov.uk>
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<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019672596778>
Date accessed 13 February 2008
- [5] **Map of The Gambia**
<http://geography.about.com/od/findmaps/ig/Country-Maps/Map-of-the-Gambia.htm>
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