

## **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL JOINT STATEMENT**

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**16<sup>th</sup> December 2004 – 16<sup>th</sup> December 2014**

**Gambia: 10 Years of Impunity, 10 years of injustice for the murder of Deyda  
HYDARA  
Dakar, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2014**

### **Joint Statement**

The government of Yahya Jammeh continues to spread fear and to exercise extreme intolerance to any form of dissent in Gambia. Human rights defenders, journalists, political opponents, critics of government policy, public officials and citizens face intimidation, harassment, death threats, arbitrary arrests, incarceration, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions.

The unresolved assassination of the journalist Deyda HYDARA in 2004 is an emblematic case amongst the violations perpetrated over the last 20 years.

Deyda HYDARA (1954 - 2004), editor-in-chief and co-owner of the independent newspaper The Point, correspondent for Agence France Presse (AFP) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF), was shot dead in his car by unidentified individuals while returning from work, on 16 December 2004. Two of his colleagues who were in the same car were seriously injured. The shooting occurred three days after the enactment of a controversial law to increase the registration fee for media outlets and prison sentences for journalists convicted of defamation or sedition. Deyda HYDARA had taken a strong stance against the law. Since coming to power twenty years ago, President Yahya Jammeh has taken measures to stifle dissent and silence journalists and human rights defenders. He assented to a series of laws restricting the right to freedom of expression in 2004 and 2013, imposing longer sentences for journalists convicted of defamation, sedition and publishing false information.

This violent repression of dissent has created a climate of fear. Journalists, human rights defenders and citizens practice self-censorship or flee the country.

On 10 June 2014, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Court of Justice ruled against the Gambian government for not conducting an appropriate and independent investigation in the case of Deyda HYDARA and ordered the government to pay compensation of USD 50000 to his relatives.

The Court of Justice expressed particular concern about the failure of the Gambian authorities to provide "the results of ballistic tests on bullets and weapons seized from suspects."

This decision of the ECOWAS Court of Justice is an important step and represents a significant development for the family of the journalist and the protection of the right to freedom of expression in West Africa, but also a victory for the Gambian people and all the journalists seeking justice for the murder of Deyda HYDARA. The Court of Justice previously condemned Gambia for the torture of journalist Musa Saidykhan in 2006 and the enforced disappearance of journalist Ebrima Manneh in 2004.

**Thus, we urge the Gambian authorities to:**

- implement the decision of ECOWAS Court of Justice and to pay damages to the family of Deyda HYDARA;
- establish an impartial commission of inquiry to shed light on the murder of Deyda HYDARA and bring those responsible to justice in a fair trial;
- repeal the restrictive legal provisions restricting the right to freedom of expression and of the press;
- stop attacks and violence against people who exercise their right to freedom of expression, including journalists and human rights defenders.

**Signatory organizations**

- ARTICLE 19
- AFRICAN ACTIVISTS
- AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
- APPEL
- BLOGGER.SN
- CICODEV AFRICA
- INSTITUT PANOS AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST
- LIGUE SENEGALAISE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME(LSDH)
- ONDH/RADIAB
- RADDHO
- SYNPICS
- SECTION SENEGALAISE DE LA SOCIETE INTERNATIONALE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME(SIDH)
- THE AFRICAN EDITORS'FORUM
- Y EN A MARRE