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<http://www.rsf.org/gambia-president-jammeh-must-put-an-end-22-07-2014,46667.html>

Africa - Gambia

20 years of fear

President Jammeh must put an end to 20 years of repression and impunity for human rights violations

22 July 2014

On the 20th anniversary of the military coup that brought dictator Yahya Jahmmeh to power, Reporters Without Borders joins other free speech and human rights organizations in calling for an end to 20 years of impunity for human rights violation in Gambia.

Gambian President Yahya Jahmmeh is one of the world's 39 "[Predators of press freedom.](#)"

22 July 1994 - 22 July 2014: 20 Years of Fear in Gambia

Joint Statement

On 22 July 1994, a group of military officers led by lieutenant Yahya Jammeh overthrew President Dawda Jawara, who had been in power in Gambia since 1970. Supported by the Army, Yahya Jammeh proclaimed himself President of the Republic and, over time, took direct control of the Ministry of Defence and of the Interior.

Since then, the Gambian government tolerates no dissent and commits serious human rights violations. Human rights defenders, journalists, political opponents and other Gambians who are critical of government policies face intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, ill-treatment, death threats and enforced disappearance.

Some of the human rights violations recorded over the last 20 years include the killing of 14 protesters in April 2000, the unlawful killing of journalist **Deyda Hydara** in 2004, the enforced disappearance of journalist **Ebrima Manneh** in 2006, the torture of journalist **Musa Saidykhan** in 2006, the arbitrary executions of 9 prisoners in 2012, and the "incommunicado" detention of human rights defender Imam Baba Leigh for five months of the same year.

The Gambian government has repeatedly failed to comply with several rulings by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Court of Justice, namely refusing to compensate Musa Saidykhan, and the families of Ebrima Manneh and Deyda Hydara.

The justice system has also been weakened since President Yahya Jammeh came to power, undermined by interference from the executive branch and by the increasingly repressive legislation aimed at muzzling dissent.

In April 2013, the National Assembly amended the Criminal Code, increasing sanctions for "giving false information to public servants" (Section 114) from six months imprisonment and/or a fine of 500 Dalasi (approximately US\$13) to imprisonment of up to five years and a fine of 50,000 Dalasi (US\$1,293).

In July 2013, the National Assembly passed the Information and Communication (Amendment) Act saying that internet users, journalists and bloggers found guilty of spreading false news can be punished by up to 15 years in prison and may be fined up to 3 million dalasi (approximately US\$74,690).

In this pervasive climate of fear, most journalists, human rights defenders and citizens are forced to practice self-censorship or flee the country. In response to these flagrant and ongoing human rights violations by the Gambia, the country hosting the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights - the primary human rights institution of Africa - our organizations continue to mobilize to put an end to repression and impunity in Gambia.

We call the attention of the international community - in particular, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Economic Community of West African States, (ECOWAS) and African States - to the deteriorating human rights situation and lack of effective remedies for victims in Gambia over the past 20 years.

We urge President Yahya Jammeh to ensure that Gambian authorities :

- Investigate all reported human rights abuses and bring perpetrators to justice;
- Repeal legislative provisions used to restrict freedom of expression, in particular the Information and Communication Act, the Indemnity Act and the Criminal Code Amendment;
- Uphold the universal rights of freedom of expression, assembly and association and allow journalists, human rights defenders and political activists to continue their activities unhindered without fear of attacks, arbitrary arrests, torture and enforced disappearance;
- Release immediately and unconditionally all prisoners of conscience, including journalist Ebrima Manneh and members the opposition party United Democratic Party (UDP) Amadou Sanneh, Alhagie Sambou Fatty and Malang Fatty;
- Release all those who are currently detained unlawfully or charge them with a recognizable offence in a fair trial;
- Promptly implement and enforce judgments from the ECOWAS Court of Justice on the situation of journalists Ebrima Manneh (June 2008), Musa Saidykhan (December 2010) and Deyda Hydara (June 2014).

Signatories:

1. Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria
2. South African National Editors Forum (SANEF) (Burkina Faso)
3. Centre de Presse Norbert Zongo (Cote d'Ivoire)
4. Coalition de Société Civile pour la paix et le Développement Démocratique en Côte d'Ivoire (COSOPCI)
5. Club Union Africaine CI Cote d'Ivoire
6. Ligue Ivoirienne des Droits de l'Homme (LIDHO) (Gambia)
7. Democratic Union of Gambian Activists (DUGA)
8. Coalition for Change Gambia (CCG) (Ghana)
9. Akoto Ampaw, Lawyer Kenya
10. Wilson Kipkazi (Liberia)
11. Center for Media Studies and Peace Building (CEMESP)
12. Union des journalistes Liberians (Mali)
13. Institut pour la Démocratie et l'Education au Mali (IDEM)
14. Maison de la Presse (Nigeria)
15. Institute for Media and Society
16. International Press Centre (IPC)
17. Media Rights Agenda (MRA) (Sénégal)
18. Cicodev Afrique
19. Conseil des Organisations non Gouvernementales (CONGAD)
20. Ligue Sénégalaise des Droits de l'Homme(LSDH)
21. Rencontre Africaine pour les droits de l'homme (RADDHO)
22. Y'en à Marre
23. Africa Freedom of Information Centre
24. Amnesty International
25. ARTICLE 19
26. Association Des Barreaux Africains (ABA)
27. Comité pour la Protection des Journalistes (CPJ)
28. Fédération des Journalistes Africains (FAJ)
29. Fédération Internationale des Journalistes (IFJ)
30. Forum des Editeurs Africains
31. International Press Institute (IPI)

32. Media Foundation for West Africa

33. Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)

34. Panos Institute for West Africa (IPAO)

35. Reporters Without Borders (RWB)

36. Union des Journalistes de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (WAJA)

(photo slideshow : Yahya Jammeh, Gambia president. Photo AFP)

(photo logo : from left to right, journalists Deyda Hydara, Ebrima Manneh et Musa Saidu Khan)

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