

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/gambia-justice-minister-urged-to-prove-11-10-2011,41163.html>

Africa - Gambia

Proof wanted

Justice minister urged to prove claim that missing journalist is still alive

11 October 2011

Reporters Without Borders calls on Gambian justice minister Edward Gomez to quickly produce evidence of his claim that **"Chief" Ebrima Manneh**, a journalist who has been missing since July 2006, is still alive. In a newspaper interview last weekend, the minister insisted that Manneh was alive and "somewhere."

"As justice minister, your comments cannot be taken lightly," Reporters Without Borders said. "Out of respect for Manneh himself, his family and his colleagues, those who have been defending his cause in Gambia and abroad, those who have been waiting for news of him for more than five years, you must immediately provide evidence that he is still alive. Where is he? In what physical condition is he? Who is holding him? And what is he charged with?"

In an interview for the privately-owned *Daily News*, Gomez said: "Now, let me tell you with a high degree of certainty that Ebrima Chief Manneh is somewhere. We shall talk about this case at a later stage when it is more convenient; when I can prove to you beyond any reasonable doubt (...) But we will cross our bridge when we get to it. Then some of you journalists will be ashamed of what you published. Let the right time come, that's all I can tell you."



"Chief" Ebrima Manneh

A reporter for the pro-government *Daily Observer*, Manneh has been missing since 7 July 2006, when he was arrested by the National Intelligence Agency for unclear reasons shortly after an African Union summit in Banjul.

In July 2008, a court attached to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ordered the Gambian government to free Manneh and pay him compensation, but the government did not comply and continued to provide no information about his whereabouts.

On 6 April 2009, then justice minister Marie Saine-Firdaus denied that Manneh had ever been detained in a Gambian prison. But, speaking on condition of anonymity, a police officer employed at Banjul's Mile Two prison said a week later that he last saw Manneh in the prison

in 2008, before he was taken away one night by a plain-clothes police officer. No sighting has been reported since then.

Several Gambian journalists have said they suspect Manneh is dead and President Yahya Jammeh himself said in March of this year: "Let me make it very clear that the government has nothing to do with the death or disappearance of Chief Manneh."

But Reporters Without Borders has never regarded Manneh as dead and he continues to be listed as imprisoned on the Reporters Without Borders website.

Gambia's president since 1994, Jammeh has for years been on the Reporters Without Borders list of "Predators of Press Freedom" -> <http://en.rsf.org/predator-yahya-ja...>]. Another presidential election is due to be held on 24 November.

Picture at the top of the article : Gambian Justice Minister Edward Gomez
