

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/gambia-two-journalists-held-for-reporting-14-01-2014,45726.html>

Africa - Gambia

Trial postponed

Authorities delay trial, keep pressure on two journalists

22 January 2014

Reporters Without Borders notes that the authorities have delayed the trial of *The Voice* editor **Musa Sheriff** and freelance journalist **Sainey Marenah** on charges of "conspiracy to commit a felony and publication of false news with intent to cause fear and alarm to the public."

They were due to have been tried yesterday but the hearing was postponed until 4 February.

"It seems clear that this stalling is designed to maintain the pressure on these two journalists, a tactic that reflects the Gambian government's systematic harassment of the media," Reporters Without Borders said. "We call on the authorities to just drop this arbitrary prosecution."

Freed on bail of 20,000 dalasi (380 euros) on 16 January, Sheriff and Marenah presented themselves at the Banjul magistrates' court for trial yesterday only to be told that the judge in charge of the case was not available because he was in a meeting.

14.01.2014 - Two journalists held for reporting defections from ruling party

Reporters Without Borders condemns yesterday's arbitrary arrests of **Musa Sheriff**, the owner and editor of the Banjul-based tri-weekly newspaper *The Voice*, and **Sainey Marenah**, one of his reporters, on a charge of "publishing false information."

They are being held in connection with a report in their paper last month that 19 members of the ruling Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction defected to the opposition United Democratic Party.

"We call on the Gambian authorities to release these two journalists at once and to stop persecuting media personnel," Reporters Without Borders said. "These latest arrests are yet further evidence of the government's authoritarian attitude and its attempts to silence any criticism."

"[President Yahya Jammeh's New Year's resolutions](#) about the media did not last long. We urge the government to respect its obligations to guarantee freedom of expression, as stipulated in article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Gambia ratified in 1979."

After being arrested at his Banjul office, Sheriff was taken to a police station at Sanyag, 30 km outside of the city. Marenah was arrested when he went to visit Sheriff at the police station. The charge against them carries a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison and a fine of 3 million dalasi (64,000 euros).

Gambia is ranked 152nd out of 179 countries in [the 2013 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

Photo : President Yahya Jammeh AFP/SEYLOU

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