



Committee to Protect Journalists

October 8, 2024

Att: Commissioner Emmanuel Daniel Joof
Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission
P. O. Box 2858
Serrekunda, Kotu
The Gambia

Via email: info@gm-nhrc.org; es@gm-nhrc.org

Dear Commissioner Joof

I am writing on behalf of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an independent organization promoting press freedom worldwide. We urge the National Human Rights Commission to intervene in a situation that significantly threatens press freedom and undermines The Gambia's standing as a beacon of free expression in West Africa following the era of Yahya Jammeh.

This issue involves the recent arrests and [charges](#) against two editors of *The Voice* newspaper. They are accused of publishing false news under Section 181A of the criminal code. CPJ believes that if this case proceeds to trial, it could set a dangerous precedent for media freedom in the country.

We recognize the critical role of the National Human Rights Commission in [monitoring](#) the implementation of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission's recommendations. This includes the crucial [call](#) for the government to repeal all repressive legislation and to finalize a comprehensive reform agenda aligned with the [recommendations](#) of the Media Law Review Committee. While [accepting](#) some of these, we note that the government rejected those calling for repealing sedition and false news. Additionally, we note the [landmark ruling by](#) the ECOWAS Court, which directed the Gambian government to immediately repeal or amend laws related to criminal libel, sedition, and false news.

The NHRC's successful mediation in at least two issues of importance to journalists and free expression advocates further guides our request:

- The 2020 [intervention](#) in the forced closure without a court order of two privately owned radio stations resulted in their reopening and the dropping of charges against the detained journalists.
- The 2020 [intervention](#) with other partners, including the Gambia Bar Association, resulted in the dropping of false news charges against human rights activist Madi Jobarteh.

We, therefore, appeal to you to take similar action for journalists Musa Sheriff and Momodu Darboe so that journalism is not criminalized in The Gambia.

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Committee to Protect Journalists

Thank you very much for considering our request. We look forward to your response and hope for a positive resolution to this urgent matter.

Yours faithfully

Angela Quintal
Head of the Africa Program
Committee to Protect Journalists
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cc::

- Minister of Justice & Attorney-General: Dawda A. Jallow
- Minister of Information: Dr Ismaila Ceesay
- Director of Press and Public Relations, Office of the President: Amie Bojang-Sissoho
- Media Council of The Gambia Chairperson: Baboucarr Cham
- Gambia Bar Association President: Neneh Cham
- The Newspaper Publishers' Association Chairperson: Pap Saine
- Gambia Press Union President: Muhammed S. Bah
- The Voice Editor-In-Chief Musa Sheriff
- African Union Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression: Ourveena Geereesha Topsy-Sonoo
- United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression: Irene Kahn
- Resident Representative of the ECOWAS Mission in The Gambia: Amb. Miatta Lily