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The Gambia:

The Gambian government must not carry out any further executions of death row prisoners

Amnesty International and 66 international human rights organizations and West African civil society groups condemn the execution of nine death row prisoners which took place two weeks ago in the Gambia.

The executions were confirmed by the Minister of Interior on Monday 27 August. They followed a speech to the nation made by President Jammeh on 19 and again on 20 August in which he announced that "all death sentences would be carried out to the letter by mid-September". The statement from the Ministry of Interior reiterated the government's intention to carry out further executions.

The prisoners remaining on death row - at least 38 people - are now at imminent risk of execution. Many have been sentenced to death after unfair or politically-motivated trials. Due process safeguards are frequently not observed - many people sentenced to death have not had access to legal advice or have not been able to pursue a proper appeals process.

The executions carried out two weeks ago were done without prior notification to the prisoners, families or lawyers. The government confirmed the executions only after substantial international pressure to do so.

Fears for those who remain on death row have been exacerbated by the fact that family members have been unable to access the prison or to communicate with the inmates since two weeks ago.

The executions, and President Jammeh's statements about executing all death row prisoners by September, caused an international outcry. The undersigned organizations welcome the statements made by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Union, the European Union, the Commonwealth and the United Nations, as well as, among others, the governments of Benin, Nigeria and Senegal.

The Gambia's actions are in violation of international standards in relation to use of the death penalty. The executions are also in stark contrast to the trend, both in West Africa and globally, towards ending the use of the death penalty. Since 2000, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal and Togo in West Africa, as well as Burundi, Gabon and Rwanda, have abolished the death penalty for all crimes. In the last few months alone, the government of Ghana accepted the recommendation of a Constitution Review Commission to abolish the death penalty in the new Constitution, and Benin became the 75th state worldwide, and the 10th in Africa, to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

The undersigned organizations call on the Gambian government not to carry out any further executions, and to, immediately and publically, commit to an official moratorium on the use of the death penalty in the Gambia with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

The government must also release, if requested by the families, the bodies of the individuals who were executed two weeks ago.

Signed

Access to Justice Law Centre (AJLC) - Sierra Leone
Action des Chrétien(ne)s pour l'abolition de la Torture (ACAT) -Togo
Actions pour la protection des Droits de l'Homme (APDH) - Côte d'Ivoire
AdvocAid- Sierra Leone
Advocacy Movement Network- Sierra Leone
Amnesty International
Article 19- Senegal
Association Burkinabé des Femmes Juristes (AFJB) - Burkina Faso
Association des Femmes Juristes du Mali (AJM) - Mali
Association Malienne des Droits de l'Homme (AMDH) - Mali
Association pour la promotion et la défense des droits des femmes (APDF) - Mali
Avocat sans Frontière - Mali
Association Semfilm - Burkina Faso
Campaign for Good Governance (CGG) - Sierra Leone
Campaign for Human Rights in The Gambia UK (CHRG-UK) - United Kingdom
Charter 1970 Gambian Diaspora Movement (C70) - United Kingdom
Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL) - Sierra Leone
Centre for Democracy and Human Rights - Sierra Leone
Centre d'Information et de Formation en matière de Droits Humains en Afrique (CIFDHA) - Burkina Faso
Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD) - Nigeria
Civil Society Association Gambia (CSAG) - The Gambia
Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) - Nigeria
Coalition des associations de lutte contre l'impunité au Togo (CACIT) - Togo
Coalition for Justice and Accountability (COJA) - Sierra Leone
Commission Justice et Paix - Burkina Faso
Écoles instruments de paix (EIP) - Côte d'Ivoire
Fédération Internationale des Journalistes (FIJ) - Senegal
Forum des Organisations Nationales de Droits Humains - Mauritania
Gas Alert - Nigeria
Human Rights Advocacy Centre (HRAC) - Ghana
Human Rights for All (HUMRA) - Sweden
Human Rights Watch
International Institute for Child Protection - The Gambia
Liga Guineense dos Direitos Humanos - Guinea Bissau
Ligue Ivoirienne des Droits de l'homme (LIDHO) - Côte d'Ivoire
Ligue pour la Défense de la Justice et la Liberté (LIDEJEL) - Burkina Faso
Ligue pour la Justice, le Développement et le Droits Humains - Mali
Ligue Sénégalaise des Droits de l'Homme (LSDH)- Senegal
Mouvement Burkinabé des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples (MBDHP)- Burkina Faso
Mouvement Burkinabé pour l'Emergence de la Justice Sociale (MBJUS) - Burkina Faso
Mouvement Ivoirien des Droits d l'Homme (MIDH) - Côte d'Ivoire
Network of Human Rights Journalists - The Gambia
Network on Democracy and Human Rights - Sierra Leone
Network Movement for Justice and Development - Sierra Leone
Niger Delta Catholic Bishops' Forum- Nigeria
Nigerian Coalition for the Abolition of the Death Penalty (NCADP) - Nigeria
Organisations des Femmes Actives de Côte d'Ivoire - Côte d'Ivoire
Organisation for Development and Human Rights - Sierra Leone
Prison Fellowship- Liberia
Prison Watch - Sierra Leone
Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (RADDHO) - Senegal
Rehabilitation and Development Agency - Sierra Leone
Réseau des associations de Lutte contre les armes Légères en Afrique de l'Ouest (RASALAO) - Mali
Réseau Inter Africain des Femmes, Médias, Genre et Développement- FAMEDEV
Réseau des Journalistes pour la Sécurité en Afrique de l'Ouest (JRSDAO) - Mali

Sabi Yu Rights - Sierra Leone
Save the Gambia Democracy Project (STGDP) - USA
Sene-Gambian Human Rights Defence League - United Kingdom
Society for Democratic Initiatives (SDI) - Sierra Leone
Socio-Economic Rights & Accountability Project (SERAP) - Nigeria
SOS Esclaves – Mauritania
Sos Exclusion- Côte d'ivoire
Syndicat des professionnels de l'information et de la communication (SYNPICS) - Senegal
The Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS) – Nigeria
TrustAfrica- Liberia
West African Bar Association (WABA) - Nigeria
Women' Action for Human Dignity - Sierra Leone