



Ref: EFSCRJ/PR/004/25

8<sup>th</sup> May 2025

## **PUBLIC STATEMENT**

### **INTERNATIONAL ALERT: ILLEGAL ARREST OF PROTESTERS IN BANJUL**

The Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice hereby informs the international community of an ongoing crackdown on peaceful protesters in the capital, Banjul today May 8. The protesters who are organized under the '*Gambians Against Looted Assets*' (GALA) together with several other citizens mainly comprising the youth assembled at the Never Again Memorial Arch at the entrance of Banjul with the intention to submit a petition to the Minister of Justice concerning the disposal of assets belonging to former dictator Yaya Jammeh.

In 2017, the Gambia Government set up the Janneh Commission to investigate the financial and corrupt activities of the former dictator. In 2019, the Commission submitted its final report to the president Adama Barrow. In the course of the commission hearings, the Government froze some of the assets while taking custody of the rest.

The Government had set up a ministerial committee comprising ministers of Justice, Lands, Tourism and Agriculture to oversee the process of the disposal of the assets. The sale of the assets took place between 2018 and 2020 in circumstances that have been widely criticized as lacking transparency. The Government has never issued any report to the public about the disposal of these assets.

On April 30, 2025 an investigative journalism outfit, The Republic released a comprehensive report in the way and manner these assets were disposed (<https://therepublic.gm/the-assets-of-gambias-former-dictator-go-for-a-song/3042>). The report highlighted massive incidences of corruption, abuse of power, disregard of the rule of law and conflict of interest. Since then, a public outcry has erupted demanding transparency and accountability.

A group of Gambian youths have decided to protest as their response to the story. They had requested a permit which the police denied them without giving any reason. The Constitution under Section 25 guarantees the right to freedom of assembly. The Public Order Act under sections 5 and 6 requires a permit only when the assembly involves a procession and the use of a loudspeaker.

The GALA protesters who have been joined by scores of citizens decided not to embark on a procession or use loudspeakers. Rather they assembled at one location in Banjul, i.e., Never Again Memorial Arch. Immediately armed police pranced on them arresting dozens initially. As many more citizens come to the assembly point, the Police have been coming for more arrests including journalists. Currently the arrested protesters are detained at the Police Headquarters.

EFSCRJ wishes to alert both local and international stakeholders of this development. We demand the immediate and unconditional release of the protesters and call on the Inspector General of Police to respect and abide by the Constitution and the Public order Act.

We will continue to monitor the situation and report accordingly.

**2025 – The Year of Transparency and Accountability**

