



Ref: EFSCRJ/PR/005/25

8th May 2025

PUBLIC STATEMENT

Update on the Illegal Arrest of Protesters in Banjul

We have learnt that at least 17 individuals are currently held by the Gambia Police Force when they clamped down on the protesters at the Never Again Memorial Arch. These citizens were protesting the lack of transparency in the disposal of assets stolen by former director Yaya Jammeh. Following the investigative report by journalists at The Republic, it exposed several instances of abuse of office, disregard of the law and conflict interest by public officials led by the Ministry of Justice and Ministerial Committee set up to oversee the process.

We have been monitoring the police in their handling of the protest. After arresting the first batch and taken into custody in Banjul police headquarters, a second batch followed. After spending several hours in Banjul without bail or charge, the police began taking the protesters to an unknown location. Now we can confirm that the police have divided the protesters into small groups of less than five and distributed them among various police stations within the Kanifing and West Coast regions.

We find this practice to be unlawful and unprofessional. The rule of law requires that suspects are processed within the jurisdiction of their alleged crimes or place of arrest. These citizens were protesting inside Banjul hence they should be processed within Banjul which has a police station serving the city. By subjecting the protesters to such movement without their information tantamount to abuse, psychological torture and inhuman treatment. Therefore, we consider this police action to be in violation of sections 19 and 21 of the Constitution and other relevant laws of the Gambia.

We wish to therefore call on the Inspector General of Police once again to immediately release these protesters unconditionally. The protest has not violated the Public Order Act or any other law. We call on the Attorney General and Minister of Justice to assume his responsibilities and ensure that the rule of law is adhered to by state institutions. We call on both the IGP and the Attorney General to open criminal investigations on the Ministerial Committee for their management of the process of the disposal of these Jammeh assets.

In this regard, we call on Pres. Barrow to ensure that Gambians enjoy their full rights and freedoms without any fear of reprisal. We remind him of his oath of office which requires him to uphold the Constitution which is to ensure that executive institutions abide by the rule of law and protect human rights.

Furthermore, we wish to call on the Gambia Bar Association, the civil society, and political parties to come out to stand with and by these protesters to demand their immediate and unconditional release. Further, we call on these stakeholders to demand that the President and the National Assembly institute impartial inquiry to investigate the process of disposal of Jammeh assets. In this vein, we call on the President to ensure that there is total transparency and accountability in the way Jammeh assets were managed and disposed.

2025 – The Year of Transparency and Accountability

