



Ref: EFSCRJ/PR/028/2025

**PUBLIC STATEMENT**

29<sup>th</sup> July 2025

### **EFSCRJ Calls on the Government To Protect the Tanji Bird Reserve**

Today, Tuesday, July 28 marks 13 days since Malagen published its damning report about the situation of the Tanji Bird Reserve ([Tanji Bird Reserve Carved Up? Inside Deals to Turn Protected Land into Profit](#)).

Since the publication, no institution or official in the Barrow administration has officially responded to the story. The ministries of Lands, Tourism, and Environment, and departments, and agencies such as the Department of Parks and Wildlife, GTBoard, and NEA have all remained mute. Yet the story raised pertinent issues and concerns that border on the Government's domestic and international obligations to the preservation and protection of the environment. The story highlights how Tanji Bird Reserve continues to face threats since 2012 when Dictator Yaya Jammeh first occupied 25 hectares of it and then sold parts of it to both domestic and foreign interests and individuals.

Considering the precarious situation engulfing this precious reserve, EFSCRJ hereby calls on Pres. Barrow and the relevant ministers: Hamat Bah of Lands, Rohey John Manjang of Environment and Abdou Jobe of Tourism to respond by clarifying the state of Tanji Bird Reserve. The Gambia Government owes citizens the truth about how it is managing public resources. It is clear from the Malagen story that Tanji Bird Reserve continues to face threats for which silence is not an option.

The Tanji Bird Reserve has been a protected area since 1993. In 1995 attempts were made by the Department of Parks and Wildlife to properly demarcate the area without success only for Dictator Jammeh to invade it in 2012. Following the fall of the dictatorship, the Janneh Commission declared the actions of Jammeh unlawful and recommended the bird reserve be restored to the Department of Parks and Wildlife. Instead, the Gambia Tourism Board went ahead to allocate plots to businesses and individuals constituting the illegal carving up of a protected conservation area for private gain as highlighted in the Malagen story. The situation of the Tanji Bird Reserve exemplifies how protected natural lands become vulnerable to corruption, patronage, and total disregard of environmental laws and concerns.

EFSCRJ holds that the Tanji Bird Reserve should be protected in line with the 1995 proposed demarcations which we demand the Government should approve immediately. The National Land Policy 2025 has categorically provided that the Government will uphold environmental management principles and take measures to,

*“Encourage the development of wildlife sanctuaries and nature reserves and involve local communities and individuals neighbouring parks and protected areas in the co-management of protected areas.”*

It is sad to note that GTBoard, and the ministries responsible for the Environment, Lands and Tourism are notorious for allowing encroachments on protected lands, forests, wetlands, and cultural sites which constitute our collective heritage. We demand an immediate and total halt to these malpractices and call on the Government to ensure the full enforcement of environmental laws and policies.

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