



STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE GAMBIA 2025



Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice (EFSCRJ)
2025





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Abbreviations

- ACC – Anti-Corruption Commission
- ACHPR – African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights
- AKI – Acute Kidney Injury
- CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- CPI – Corruption Perceptions Index
- CRC – Constitutional Review Commission
- CRPD – Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- CSOs – Civil Society Organizations
- DPOs – Disabled Persons’ Organizations
- EFSCRJ – Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice
- FPAC – Finance and Public Accounts Committee
- FSQA – Food Safety and Quality Authority
- GADHOH – Gambia Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- GALA – Gambians Against Looted Assets
- GCCPC – Gambia Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
- GFD – Gambia Federation of the Disabled
- GOVI – Gambia Organization of the Visually Impaired
- GPF – Gambia Police Force
- ICESCR – International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- IEC – Independent Electoral Commission
- NCCE – National Council for Civic Education
- NHRC – National Human Rights Commission
- NIA – National Intelligence Agency
- ONS – Office of National Security
- PURA – Public Utilities Regulatory Authority
- PWDs – Persons with Disabilities
- SIS – State Intelligence Services
- TRRC – Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission

Acknowledgements

The Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice extend its deepest gratitude to all those who made the production of The State of Human Rights in The Gambia 2025 possible. This maiden edition represents the collective effort of countless individuals, communities, and organizations committed to the advancement of human rights, democratic governance, and the rule of law in the Gambia.

First and foremost, we thank the brave citizens of the Gambia who shared their experiences, complaints, and testimonies with our monitors and researchers throughout 2025. Your willingness to speak truth to power, often at great personal risk, is the moral foundation of this report. We honor your courage and reaffirm our commitment to documenting your struggles until justice is achieved.

We extend our profound appreciation to the truth-seeking families of victims of human rights violations, including those who lost loved ones during the Jammeh era, the AKI tragedy, the Faraba Banta incident, and police brutality cases in 2025. Your relentless pursuit of accountability keeps the "Never Again" promise alive. Your pain has not been forgotten.

Our sincere thanks go to the civil society organizations, human rights defenders, and activists who work tirelessly in often hostile conditions. We particularly acknowledge our partners in GALA, Activista and TSGP for exemplary youth-led civic engagement and for steadfast advocacy, and the Gambia Participates network for corruption perception research.

This report benefited immensely from the investigative journalism that exposed corruption, land grabbing, and human rights abuses. We salute Mustapha K. Darboe and The Republic for groundbreaking reporting on Jammeh's assets, as well as The Voice, The Standard, The Point, Kerr Fatou, Fatu Network, EyeAfrica TV, The Alkamba Times, Askanwi Media, Malagen, and the entire Gambian media for keeping citizens informed despite legal and financial pressures. A free press is the cornerstone of democracy, and we stand with you.

We acknowledge the contributions of donors, lawyers, advocates, and partners including individuals who support our human rights work. Your funding and technical assistance enable monitoring, documentation, and advocacy. Internally, this report was produced through the dedication of the EFSCRJ team. All errors and omissions remain the responsibility of the Centre.

Finally, we remember Edward Francis Small – a labour leader, anti-colonial fighter, journalist, and a champion of workers' rights, whose name we bear. His struggle for justice and dignity reminds us that change is never gifted; it is fought for, inch by inch, generation by generation.

This report is dedicated to his memory and to all Gambians who refuse to accept tyranny, corruption, and impunity as the natural order.

Foreword by the Executive Director

Nine years ago, the Gambia dared to dream. In December 2016, citizens across this nation rose as one to end twenty-two years of authoritarian rule, giving birth to a "New Gambia" anchored in the solemn pledge: Never Again. Never again would security forces torture citizens with impunity. Never again would journalists be jailed for telling the truth. Never again would the state vanish its critics. Never again would corruption plunder public wealth. That promise was not merely political rhetoric; it was a sacred covenant between the people and those entrusted to govern them.

Today, as the Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice present this maiden edition of *The State of Human Rights in The Gambia 2025*, we are compelled to ask a difficult question: Has that covenant been kept?

The evidence assembled in these pages' answers with unsettling clarity: No. Not yet. And on our current trajectory, not ever, unless urgent, decisive action is taken.

Let me be unequivocal: The Gambia of 2025 is not the Gambia of 2015. We have witnessed genuine, important gains. The Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) gave voice to the voiceless. The Access to Information Act (2021), the Persons with Disabilities Act (2021), and the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act (2023) are landmark laws. A new National Human Rights Commission stands as a sentinel for accountability. The media, once muzzled, now operates with unprecedented vibrancy. Civic activism, once suicidal, now flourishes, though under growing threat.

Yet these achievements, real as they are, remain fragile, incomplete, and increasingly imperiled. The gap between law and enforcement has become a chasm. Between promise and practice, a desert.

Consider the facts before us:

The TRRC delivered 265 recommendations to heal our nation. Three years after the Government accepted 263 of them, barely 20% of planned activities have been fully implemented. Victims are still waiting for reparations. Perpetrators still walk free. The "Never Again" agenda is being hollowed out by delay and political convenience.

The people's draft Constitution, produced through the most inclusive consultation in our history, was rejected by the National Assembly in 2020 because it would have limited presidential terms. A second, executive-driven draft presented without public consultation was similarly rejected in 2025. The authoritarian 1997 Constitution, designed to concentrate power and weaken rights, remains in force. This is not a procedural failure. It is a fundamental betrayal of the transition's promise.

In 2025 alone, we documented multiple incidents of arbitrary arrests, police brutality, and the selective application of laws. Government critics face sedition charges and imprisonment. Ruling party supporters who hurl insults with impunity face no consequences. At least 40

young people stand trial or under police charge for "unlawful assembly" after peacefully protesting corruption and unfair data prices. One protester, Ebrima "Ghetto Pen" Jallow, was violently assaulted in police custody. Another, Omar Badgie, was beaten to death during a police operation in Mandinari. The cry of "Never Again" echoes hollow when teargas is deployed against citizens demanding accountability.

Corruption, far from being vanquished, appears to be resurgent. The Gambia's Corruption Perceptions Index fell to 37/100 in 2025. The opaque disposal of former dictator Jammeh's assets, exposed by courageous investigative journalism, sparked youth-led protests and revealed that the old culture of impunity has not died. Rather, it has merely changed faces. Officials banned by the Janneh Commission for corruption have been quietly reinstated through a manipulated loophole in the Commission of Inquiry Act. The message is unmistakable: Crime pays, provided your politics align with those in power.

Women hold only five of fifty-eight National Assembly seats. No person with disabilities serves in Cabinet or Parliament. Children continue to die from preventable causes, including over seventy from contaminated cough syrup in 2022, without a single conviction. Female Genital Mutilation, legally banned since 2015, persists with only three convictions in a decade. The right to education, constitutionally guaranteed as free and compulsory, remains unrealized for countless children who cannot afford uniforms, textbooks, or transport.

This is not the "New Gambia" we were promised.

The Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice, named for a man who gave his life fighting for workers' rights and colonial justice, does not produce this report to despair, but to awaken. We monitor, document, and advocate because we refuse to accept that the failures of 2025 are inevitable. We believe that the Gambian people, who overthrew a dictator with their votes, possess the courage and wisdom to demand more from their leaders.

This report is therefore both a warning and an invitation. A warning that democratic backsliding is real, measurable, and accelerating. An invitation to every citizen, and every duty-bearer, to reclaim the promise of 2017 before it is too late.

To President Barrow and his Cabinet: The world is watching. History is recording. The TRRC recommendations are not optional guidelines; they are binding obligations. The constitutional reform process cannot be hijacked by executive convenience. Corruption cannot be fought with press releases while those who loot public resources receive presidential pardons. Security forces cannot be reformed with billions in donor funding while beating citizens with the same brutality as the Jammeh era.

To the National Assembly: You are the people's representatives, not the executive's rubber stamp. Exercise your oversight powers. Repeal the Public Order Act. Reject laws that criminalize free expression. Investigate corruption without fear or favour. Remember that the constituents who elected you have the power to unelect you.



To the Judiciary: Uphold the rule of law with courage and independence. Ensure that no one, no matter how powerful, is above accountability.

To our international partners: Development assistance conditioned on human rights progress is not interference; it is fidelity to your own values. The Gambia needs your support, but it also needs your honest assessment when reforms stall. Do not celebrate cosmetic changes while systemic violations persist.

And to every Gambian reading this report: Your voice matters. Your protest is lawful. Your demand for accountability is legitimate. Do not be intimidated by those who wield state power to silence dissent. The constitution is on your side. The law is on your side. History is on your side.

The Edward Francis Small Centre will continue to stand with you, documenting, advocating, and litigating until the promise of human rights, democratic governance, and the rule of law is realized for every person in the Gambia.

This report is our contribution to that struggle. Read it. Share it. Act on it.

Never Again must cease being a slogan and become a reality. Never Again means now.

Madi Jobarteh
Executive Director
Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice (EFSCRJ)
Banjul, The Gambia
April 2026

About the State of Human Rights in the Gambia Report

The State of Human Rights in The Gambia is a national report prepared and published by the Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice. Established in September 2024, the Centre is dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights and will henceforth produce this report annually as part of its core mandate. The report constitutes a key instrument for human rights monitoring, investigation, documentation, reporting, and accountability.

Beyond its institutional purpose, the report serves as an advocacy and public awareness tool accessible to a broad range of stakeholders, including civil society actors, policymakers, legislators, students, researchers, and the general public. It is intended to inform discourse, guide policy, and support efforts to advance human rights in the Gambia. The findings presented are based on systematic observation, monitoring, and documentation of human rights developments, drawing from open sources as well as verified reports, investigations, and case submissions received by the Centre.



One of the enduring policy and human rights issues has been the prevalence of the Backway, the dangerous, mostly fatal journeys to Europe. Instead of subsiding, the phenomenon continues sore with wide and deep human rights implications.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Human Rights in The Gambia 2025 presents a mixed picture of progress and persistent structural challenges. Since the 2017 political transition, the country has recorded notable gains, including an expanded civic space, the enactment of progressive laws, and the establishment of key oversight institutions. Freedoms of expression, association, and the media are generally more respected than in previous decades, and citizens are increasingly engaged in public discourse and accountability efforts. However, these gains remain fragile and uneven, with significant gaps between legal guarantees and actual implementation.

A central finding of this report is that the primary constraint to human rights protection in The Gambia is not the absence of laws or institutions, but the weak, selective, and inconsistent enforcement of existing frameworks. Corruption remains pervasive, undermining governance, service delivery, and public trust. Despite repeated commitments by the Government to combat corruption, enforcement has been minimal, with very few prosecutions and limited accountability for major scandals, including the disposal of Jammeh assets and the Russian fuel case. This persistent impunity continues to erode the rule of law and deny citizens equitable access to resources and opportunities.

Civil and political rights have come under increasing pressure in 2025. While citizens continue to exercise freedoms of expression and assembly, there have been multiple instances of arbitrary arrests, excessive use of force, and restrictions on protests. Law enforcement agencies, particularly the police, have been implicated in cases of brutality, selective enforcement of laws, and intimidation of critics. The continued application of restrictive legal provisions and the emergence of proposed laws such as the Cybercrime Bill pose additional risks to civic space and digital rights.

Economic, social, and cultural rights remain inadequately fulfilled. Access to quality education, healthcare, and social protection continues to be limited, particularly for vulnerable groups. Women, youth, children, and persons with disabilities face systemic discrimination, exclusion, and underrepresentation in decision-making processes. Despite a robust legal and policy framework promoting equality and inclusion, implementation remains weak, and structural barriers, such as poverty, patriarchy, and harmful traditional practices, continue to limit the realization of rights.

The report also highlights significant governance and accountability deficits. Key state institutions, including the National Assembly, oversight bodies, and the judiciary, have not consistently exercised their mandates to ensure transparency and accountability. Parliamentary inquiries and audit findings have exposed widespread irregularities, yet these processes rarely lead to sanctions or corrective action. Similarly, delays in implementing transitional justice recommendations and constitutional reforms continue to undermine the broader democratic reform agenda.

In conclusion, the Gambia stands at a critical juncture. While the foundations for a rights-respecting democratic state exist, the failure to enforce laws, hold violators accountable, and address systemic inequalities threatens to reverse the gains made since 2017. Moving

forward, there is an urgent need for decisive political will, strengthened institutional independence, and active citizen engagement to bridge the gap between commitments and reality. Ensuring accountability, combating corruption, and promoting inclusive governance are essential to safeguarding human rights and advancing sustainable development in The Gambia.



*NHRC head office in Kotu
The establishment of the National Human Rights Commission is a major step towards human rights protection.*

INTRODUCTION

The protection and promotion of human rights are fundamental to the existence of a democratic, just, and inclusive society. In the Gambia, the legal and institutional framework for human rights is well established, anchored in the 1997 Constitution and reinforced by a range of national laws, policies, and international commitments. Since the political transition in 2017, the country has made notable strides in expanding civic space, strengthening institutions, and advancing reforms aimed at consolidating democracy and safeguarding rights. However, the realization of these rights remains uneven, with significant gaps between legal guarantees and lived realities.

This report, *State of Human Rights in The Gambia 2025*, provides a comprehensive assessment of the human rights situation over the course of the year. It examines developments across civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, highlighting both progress made and persistent challenges. Particular attention is given to issues of governance and accountability, the rule of law, freedom of expression and assembly, corruption, access to justice, and the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women, children, youth, and persons with disabilities.

The report situates current developments within the broader historical, political, and sociocultural context of the Gambia. It recognizes that contemporary human rights challenges are deeply rooted in structural weaknesses in governance, constitutional limitations, entrenched social norms, and the legacy of authoritarian rule. As such, the analysis goes beyond documenting violations to interrogate underlying causes, including weak enforcement of laws, selective application of justice, limited institutional capacity, and persistent socioeconomic inequalities.

Drawing on systematic monitoring, documentation, and analysis of human rights cases and trends, this report seeks to inform public discourse, guide policy interventions, and strengthen accountability. It is intended as a resource for government, the National Assembly, the judiciary, civil society, development partners, and citizens, to support evidence-based decision-making and collective action.

Ultimately, the report underscores that the advancement of human rights in the Gambia depends not only on laws and institutions but on their effective implementation, the political will to uphold accountability, and the active participation of citizens. It calls for renewed commitment by all stakeholders to bridge the gap between commitments and practice, and to ensure that the rights, dignity, and freedoms of all Gambians are respected, protected, and fulfilled.

1. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Historical Context

The human rights situation in the Gambia in 2025 cannot be assessed in isolation. Rather, it must be understood within the broader trajectory of the country's post-independence history. Fundamentally, the Constitution provides the framework for the protection and realization of human rights. However, successive constitutions, the 1965, 1970, and the current 1997 Constitution, have been structurally weak in advancing and safeguarding rights. While they confer extensive powers, privileges, and immunities on the executive, they impose comparatively fewer obligations on the State and provide limited enforceable rights for citizens. This imbalance has constrained accountability, weakened institutional performance, and limited citizen empowerment, thereby contributing to the persistent deficits in the protection and fulfillment of human rights.

During the First Republic (1965–1994), the Gambia was widely regarded as a relative beacon of human rights in Africa. It hosted the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights¹,



Leaders of the 1981 Insurrection

the monitoring body of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, popularly known as the "Banjul Charter," reflecting its adoption in the Gambia. The country maintained regular elections, an open civic space, and relative political stability. However, this period was not without challenges. In 1981, an armed insurgency², driven by grievances over corruption, poverty, and governance failures, led to the deaths of hundreds before being suppressed by Gambian and Senegalese forces.

The aftermath included mass arrests, detention, prosecutions, and reported instances of torture, underscoring early warning signs of structural weaknesses in governance and human rights protection.

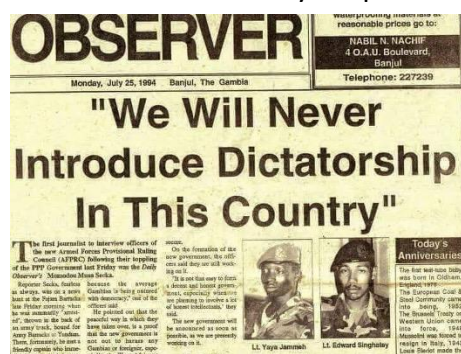
From 1981 to 1994, the Gambia remained a highly indebted and underdeveloped country, with limited availability and accessibility of public goods, services, and economic opportunities. Poverty, deprivation, inequality, and poor infrastructure were widespread, compounded by corruption, inefficiency, and weak state capacity. Although the First Republic was often associated with respect for civil liberties and democratic norms, there were notable instances of infringement and threats to civil and political rights. Despite President Sir Dawda Jawara's stated commitment to human rights³, governance deficits, weak institutions, and entrenched underdevelopment persisted, reflecting structural weaknesses in state institutions and accountability systems.

¹ African Union, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, <https://achpr.au.int/en>

² Omasanjuwa, A, Tarro, M. (2021). A Week of Mayhem: The July 30 Insurgency in the Gambia. Journal of Universal History Studies, 4 (1), 1-29. DOI: 10.38000/juhis.752635, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/1150377>

³ Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara: The Diplomat, Inaugural Lecture Of The Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, Pan-African Lecture Series 1, 28 December 2024, Omar Aliou Touray, Ph.D., President of the ECOWAS Commission

The 1994 military coup⁴ emerged against this backdrop of socioeconomic hardship and governance failures under the PPP government. The junta initially projected a reformist agenda centered on transparency, accountability, and probity, even inviting public scrutiny and criticism. However, this posture quickly unraveled. By October 1994, the regime demonstrated hostility to press freedom⁵ through the arrest and deportation of Kenneth



Best⁶, proprietor of The Daily Observer. By November 11, 1994, the junta's authoritarian nature was unmistakable, marked by the summary execution of dozens of soldiers following an alleged coup attempt⁷. From 1994 to 2017, the Gambia was governed under a repressive and corrupt autocracy that resulted in the deaths of over 200 individuals and widespread human rights abuses, including torture, sexual violence, enforced disappearances, and forced exile.

Sociocultural Context

The human rights situation in the Gambia is significantly shaped and, in many respects, constrained by deeply rooted social and cultural norms, including interpretations of religious beliefs⁸. Systems such as patriarchy, caste hierarchies, and harmful traditional practices form entrenched social, economic, and political structures that continue to define power relations within society. These norms often perpetuate discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization, particularly against women, children, persons with disabilities, and minority groups, on the basis of sex, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, region, origin, and other status.



These sociocultural dynamics extend beyond the private sphere and profoundly influence public institutions, leadership, and governance practices. They often undermine transparency, accountability, and equal participation, thereby reinforcing inequality, injustice, and impunity. As a result, efforts to advance human rights in the Gambia must not only address legal and institutional gaps but also confront the underlying cultural and social systems that sustain exclusion and limit the realization of rights.

⁴ The paradox of third world democratization in Africa : the Gambia under AFPRC-APRC rule, 1994–2008 / Abdoulaye Saine.

⁵ Media Foundation for West Africa & NAFEO Network of African Freedom of Expression Organisations, The Gambia Violations Of Press Freedom By The Government Of President Yahya Jammeh 1994 - 2006

⁶ Truth, Reconciliation And Reparations Commission, Final Report, Volume 7, Attack On The Media And Freedom Of Expression, Attack On Political Opponents

⁷ Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, Final Report, Volume 3, November 11th, 1994 Attempted Coup, <https://www.moj.gm/download-file/80b3455c-6445-11ec-8f4f-025103a708b7>

⁸ Ministry Of Gender, Children, And Social Welfare, National Gender Policy 2025- 2034, June \2024

2. 2017 AND THE “NEVER AGAIN” AGENDA

2.1 TRRC

Following the 2016 presidential election, the Gambia embarked on a democratic transition rooted in a strong "Never Again" commitment to prevent a return to authoritarian rule. This agenda was operationalized through the establishment of key transitional justice mechanisms, most notably the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, alongside the Janneh Commission of Inquiry and the Constitutional Review Commission. The overarching goal of the TRRC was to investigate and document past human rights abuses, address a culture of impunity, and lay the foundations for a 'new' Gambia characterized by strong democratic institutions, accountability, and respect for human rights.



The TRRC, established by an Act in 2017 and inaugurated in 2018, was designed as a quintessential truth commission to investigate human rights violations committed under the autocratic regime of Yaya Jammeh from July 1994 to January 2017. Its mandate was comprehensive⁹: to establish an impartial historical record, identify perpetrators, restore the dignity of victims by providing a

platform for their stories, and recommend reparations. The commission's formation was preceded by nationwide consultations¹⁰ that ensured its design reflected the will of the Gambian people, who broadly supported its goals of accountability, healing, and reconciliation. In November 2021, the TRRC concluded its work by submitting a final report containing 265 wide-ranging recommendations directed to the Government and other stakeholders. The recommendations covered several areas, including prosecution of perpetrators, reparations for victims, institutional reforms, (especially in the security sector, judiciary, and public administration), legal and constitutional reforms, memorialization and public education, and measures to guarantee non-recurrence of human rights violations.

On 25 May 2022, the Government issued its White Paper responding to the findings and recommendations of the TRRC Final Report. Out of the 265 recommendations made by the TRRC, 263 recommendations were accepted by the Government, either fully or with qualifications, and two recommendations were rejected¹¹. The 263 accepted recommendations translate into 304 activities. By May 2025, the Government implemented

⁹ Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission Act, 2017, Sections 13–14 (Objectives and Functions of the Commission).

¹⁰ Report on the National Consultations for the Proposed Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, 14th - 24th August 2017, Attorney General's Chambers and Ministry of Justice, Banjul The Gambia

¹¹ Ministry of Justice. White Paper on the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) Final Report, Banjul, Government of The Gambia, 25 May 2022.

only 60 activities while implementation of 104 activities is ongoing, with 101 activities not implemented at all¹². The next implementation status report is in May 2026.

While efforts are ongoing in establishing the special tribunal¹³, progress has been slow. Since the enactment of the Special Accountability Mechanisms Act and the Special Prosecutor's Office Act, these institutions are yet to be established by the end of 2025.

The overall implementation of the vast majority of the recommendations in the White Paper has been critically slow and low. This significant delay has profound implications, leaving countless victims without the promised reparations or psychosocial support and perpetuating their suffering. More fundamentally, the failure to fully implement TRRC recommendations undermines the core "Never Again" objective, as incomplete accountability allows impunity to persist and creates conditions where the recurrence of human rights violations remains a tangible threat.

2.2 Janneh Commission

While the TRRC focused on human rights violations, in July 2017 President Adama Barrow established the 'Commission of Inquiry into the Financial Activities of Public Bodies, Enterprises and Offices as Regards their Dealings with Former President Yahya Jammeh' to investigate the financial dealings of former dictator Yaya Jammeh and associated public officials, businesses, and institutions. Its primary objective was to uncover corruption, abuse



Janneh Commission Chair, Surahata Janneh presents his final report to the President in March 2019

of office, and illicit enrichment that led to financial losses for the Government, the Central Bank, and state-owned enterprises during Jammeh's 22-year misrule. The Commission was therefore tasked with exposing how public resources and state institutions were used for private gain and determining the extent of financial misconduct involving Jammeh, his family members, close associates, and collaborating businesses.

The three-member Commission submitted its final report on 29 March 2019 to President¹⁴ after 18 months of work including public hearings. The White Paper¹⁵ emphasizes that the Government broadly accepted the Commission's findings and prioritized asset recovery and

¹² National Human Rights Commission, 3rd Status Report on the Monitoring of the Government White Paper on the Report of the TRRC 2023-2027 Period: May 2024 – May 2025 Submitted to the National Assembly of the Gambia May 2025

¹³ On December 15, 2024, at the 66th Ordinary Session in Abuja, the ECOWAS Authority approved the establishment of a Special Tribunal for The Gambia.

¹⁴ The Standard, Barrow vows to implement Janneh commission report, April 1, 2019, https://standard.gm/barrow-vows-to-implement-janneh-commission-report/#google_vignette

¹⁵ Government White Paper, <https://www.moj.gm/download-file/21ba671b-d0f1-11ea-837b-025103a708b7>

restitution of public funds misappropriated during the Jammeh regime. It outlines measures such as the forfeiture and sale of properties and assets linked to Jammeh and his associates, recovery of illegally acquired funds, and institutional reforms to strengthen financial oversight and prevent future abuse of public resources. The document also highlights the broader governance context of the period under investigation and affirms the Government's commitment to restoring accountability, strengthening public financial management, and protecting state resources in the democratic transition following two decades of authoritarian rule.

The implementation of the Janneh Commission recommendations has been undermined by a severe lack of transparency and protracted delays. Since 2019, the government failed to provide any public status updates, creating an information vacuum. This opacity was shattered in May 2025 when an investigative report by The Republic¹⁶ exposed significant corruption and conflicts of interest in the disposal of assets confiscated from former dictator Yaya Jammeh. The revelations sparked spontaneous youth-led protests under the banner "Gambians Against Looted Assets."¹⁷ In response, President Barrow delivered a national address¹⁸ acknowledging lapses in both the implementation of recommendations and the asset disposal process, vowing to ensure accountability. While the National Assembly subsequently established a special parliamentary committee¹⁹ to investigate the matter, no report had been produced by the end of 2025, leaving a continued cloud of impunity hanging over the disposal of assets.

Compounding the delays and lack of transparency is a more direct assault on the accountability framework envisioned by the amendment to the Commission of Inquiry Act. The Janneh Commission had recommended that several individuals be banned from holding public office for periods ranging from five years to life. However, in 2023, the government amended the Commission of Inquiry Act to introduce provisions allowing individuals subjected to such bans to apply for amnesty or commutation, subject to presidential approval. Exploiting this legal loophole, a number of individuals banned²⁰ by the Janneh Commission have since been appointed to strategic positions in the public service, including as presidential advisors and heads of institutions²¹. This move effectively nullifies a key punitive and preventive measure, signaling a willingness to prioritize political convenience over the integrity of the transitional justice process.

¹⁶ The Republic, 'The assets of Gambia's former dictator go for a song', [April 30, 2025, Mustapha K. Darboe, https://therepublic.gm/the-assets-of-gambias-former-dictator-go-for-a-song/3042](https://therepublic.gm/the-assets-of-gambias-former-dictator-go-for-a-song/3042)

¹⁷ The Alkamba Times, 'GALA Petitions Gambia's Justice Ministry Over Opaque Sale of Jammeh's Looted Assets', May 13, 2025, <https://alkambatimes.com/gala-petitions-gambias-justice-ministry-over-opaque-sale-of-jammehs-looted-assets/>

¹⁸ Office of the President, 'Statement by His Excellency, Mr. Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of the Gambia On The Sale of the Assets of Former President Yahya Jammeh', 14th May 2025, <https://op.gov.gm/statement-his-excellency-mr-adama-barrow-president-republic-gambia-sale-assets-former-president>

¹⁹ National Assembly, 'National Assembly Establishes Special Committee to Investigate Sale of Former President Jammeh's Assets', <https://assembly.gm/?p=7403>

²⁰ Commission of Inquiry into the Financial Activities of Public Bodies, Enterprises and Offices as Regards Their Dealings with Former President Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh and Connected Matters Report, Volume 9, Individual Responsibility for Civil and Criminal Wrongs 10th August 2017 - 29th March 2019, <https://www.moj.gm/download-file/0940e9af-d0f2-11ea-837b-025103a708b7>

²¹ Kerr Fatou, 'Gov't Spokesperson Confirms Lifting Of Ban On Momodou Sabally, Others', Jan 30, 2024, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/govt-spokesperson-confirms-lifting-of-ban-on-momodou-sabally-others/>

These actions, the failure to implement core recommendations, the lack of transparency in managing recovered assets, and the legal maneuver to reinstate banned officials, collectively represent a severe erosion of the "Never Again" commitment. For victims, the continued delays in reparations and the sight of former officials returning to power perpetuate their trauma and deepen their distrust in state institutions. More broadly, this backsliding undermines the very foundation of the democratic transition, suggesting that the old culture of impunity and political manipulation of state structures is proving resilient, thereby increasing the risk of future human rights violations.

2.3 Constitutional Reforms

The 1997 Constitution, which ushered in the Second Republic, was fundamentally flawed from its inception. Emerging from a 1996 draft that was severely diluted before being presented for a public referendum, it was never a genuine instrument for democratic governance. Beyond its limited guarantees for human rights, the Constitution concentrated immense powers in the presidency²² and state institutions while lacking essential safeguards to prevent self-perpetuating rule. Between 1997 and 2017, this weak framework was compounded by over 50 amendments that progressively expanded executive dominance, eroded checks and balances, and diminished state obligations²³. This constitutional architecture did not merely enable bad governance and human rights violations, but it also actively facilitated them by design.



Consequently, the removal of dictatorship in 2017 made constitutional reform not merely desirable but indispensable for genuine system change. President Barrow's 2016 manifesto, issued while leading the coalition that removed Jammeh, explicitly recognized this imperative. He pledged to serve only three years at the head of an inclusive government aimed at, "conducting constitutional, institutional and administrative reforms that would establish the foundation of a democratic system of administration."²⁴

Specifically, he promised to "establish a body of jurists and competent personalities to review the constitution with a view to cleansing it of all provisions which are inimical to democracy and the rule of law."²⁵

The coalition's goal was never simply to remove a tyrant but to fundamentally transform the system, and constitution-building was central to that vision.

²² The Point, New Constitutional Amendment Removes Limitation on Number of Ministers in Cabinet Apr 9, 2009, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/new-constitutional-amendment-removes-limitation-on-number-of-ministers-in-cabinet>

²³ ConstitutionNet, From dictatorship to a new Constitution in The Gambia: Issues and Concerns, 22 January 2018, <https://constitutionnet.org/news/dictatorship-new-constitution-gambia-issues-and-concerns>

²⁴ Manifesto of the Coalition 2016

²⁵ Ibid

The Constitutional Review Commission, established by Act in 2017²⁶ and inaugurated in June 2018²⁷, was mandated to fulfill this promise. Following extensive nationwide and diaspora consultations, the CRC produced its first draft in November 2019 that generated intense public engagement. The final draft, submitted in March 2020²⁸ and gazetted in May 2020, reflected broad popular consensus, with polls showing over 80% support for its provisions, including presidential term limits²⁹. However, in September 2020, the draft failed its first reading in the National Assembly³⁰ when 23 members voted it down, preventing it from reaching the two-thirds threshold required for passage. The primary obstacle was the retroactive application of term limits, which would have barred President Barrow from seeking re-election in 2026, a provision his parliamentary allies opposed.

In a striking departure from the inclusive CRC process, the Minister of Justice presented a new "Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia (Promulgation) Bill 2024" to lawmakers on 23rd December 2024 without any public consultation. On 7th July 2025, the bill was rejected on its second reading, securing only 35 votes in favor, far short of the 75% majority (44 votes) required under Section 226 of the 1997 Constitution³¹.

3. SECURITY SECTOR REFORMS

3.1 Security Sector and Historical Legacy

The Gambia's security architecture dates back to the colonial period, beginning with the establishment of the Gambia Police Force in the mid-19th century. The modern GPF was formally constituted under the Police Act of 1949 (operationalized in 1950), which has since undergone several amendments. Section 4 of the Act mandates the GPF to maintain law and order, protect life and property, prevent and detect crime, and enforce the laws of the country. Over time, additional security institutions were established, including the Prisons Department under the Prisons Act of 1953, the Gambia Immigration Department under the Immigration Act of 1965, the Gambia National Army (established between 1983 and 1984 following the 1981 coup attempt), and the National Intelligence Agency, created under Decree 45 in 1995.

Despite their legal mandates, these institutions have historically been used more to protect regime³²s than to safeguard citizens. This trend was most pronounced during the Jammeh dictatorship, when security agencies became primary instruments of repression and major perpetrators of human rights violations. Arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention, torture,

²⁶ Republic of the Gambia, Constitutional Review Commission Act 2017

²⁷ State House of The Gambia, June 4, 2018, Members of the newly inaugurated Constitutional Review Commission, <https://www.facebook.com/PresidencyGambia/posts/members-of-the-newly-inaugurated-constitutional-review-commission1-justice-chen/673648469633930/>

²⁸ The Voice, President Barrow Receives Final Draft of New Constitution, March 31, 2020, <https://www.voicegambia.com/2020/03/31/president-barrow-receives-final-draft-of-new-constitution/>

²⁹ Afrobarometer, The Gambia's draft Constitution reflects citizens' preference for term limits, gender quota, Dispatch No. 338 | 27 January 2020,

³⁰ Foroyaa, Parliament Rejects Draft Constitution Bill 2020, September 22, 2020, <https://foroyaa.net/parliament-rejects-draft-constitution-bill-2020/#:~:text=September%2022%2C%20of%20irregularities%20and%20unclear%20issues.>

³¹ ConstitutionNet, Constitution Bill Rejected at Second Reading: Halting the Reform Process in The Gambia?, By Satang Nabaneh, 8 July 2025, <https://constitutionnet.org/news/voices/constitution-bill-rejected-second-reading-halting-reform-process-gambia>

³² World Bank, Gambia Security Sector Public Expenditure Review, Draft for Discussion, October 2018

enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings were routinely carried out against perceived opponents, including opposition members, journalists, activists, civil servants, and ordinary citizens, as well as non-Gambians³³.

Beyond formal institutions, the regime also established parallel, quasi-security units that operated outside the law and were notorious for grave abuses. Groups such as the Junglers³⁴ and Bulldozer functioned as de facto death squads, carrying out targeted killings and other serious violations with impunity. This legacy continues to shape public trust and underscores the urgent need for deep, sustained security sector reform grounded in accountability, professionalism, and respect for human rights.

3.2 Security Sector Reform and Continuing Challenges

The 2016 political transition ushered in renewed commitment to security sector reform, with the objective of shifting from a regime-centric model, primarily focused on protecting the head of state, to a state-centric, human security approach centered on the protection of



Yusupha Mbaye (m) with fellow Survivors of April 10/11 student massacre

citizens. This reform agenda, formally launched in 2017, aimed to modernize security institutions, enhance efficiency and accountability, and place the sector under democratic civilian oversight, and underpinned by the ‘Never Again’ agenda. Some progress has been recorded. Notably, the Office of National Security was established to coordinate security institutions and oversee implementation of the National Security Policy (2019)³⁵. The NIA was rebranded as

the State Intelligence Services, signaling an intent to break from its repressive past. Additionally, both the intelligence services and the Gambia Armed Forces have largely retreated from overt political involvement and systematic human rights abuses.

However, these reforms remain incomplete. Nearly a decade later, the foundational legal frameworks governing key security institutions, including the Police Act, Prisons Act, NIA Act, and Gambia Armed Forces Act, remain unchanged thereby limiting substantive transformation.

Critically, the Gambia Police Force continues to exhibit entrenched challenges. Incidents of police brutality, selective enforcement of laws, pervasive checkpoints, corruption, and other forms of misconduct remain widespread. These patterns point to the continued politicization and weaponization of policing, undermining public trust and the rule of law. As a result,

³³ Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, Report, Volume 15, [Institutional Hearings: Justice Sector Entities](#)

³⁴ Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, Report, Volume 8, [The Junglers](#), Unlawful Killings, Tortures And Other Human Rights Violations

³⁵ Government of the Gambia, National Security Policy 2019

despite reform efforts, the security sector has yet to fully transition into a professional, accountable, and rights-respecting system aligned with democratic principles.

3.3 Overview

The consecutive failures of 2020 and 2024 draft constitutions thus represent not procedural setbacks but a fundamental betrayal of the transition's promise by politicians, leaving the authoritarian 1997 Constitution intact and raising profound questions about whether genuine system change remains possible. They represent a profound crisis in the Gambia's democratic transition, fundamentally undermining the "Never Again" agenda and the promise of a "New Gambia" forged after Jammeh's authoritarian rule. The 1997 Constitution, drafted under Jammeh's military junta, remains in force despite being an instrument designed to concentrate power in the executive, lacking sufficient checks and balances, presidential term limits, or robust protection for human rights and democratic principles. The failure to replace this foundational document means the legal framework that enabled autocracy has been preserved, not transformed, leaving institutional vulnerabilities unaddressed and raising legitimate concerns about the potential for executive overreach to persist or re-emerge.

The 2020 draft, widely hailed as the people's draft, emerged from an inclusive two-year consultative process, and enjoyed overwhelming popular support. Its rejection in the National Assembly was not due to substantive democratic deficiencies but because its retroactive application of presidential term limits³⁶ would have barred President Barrow from seeking re-election in 2026, a provision his parliamentary allies opposed. In stark contrast, the 2024 draft was an executive-driven document produced without public consultation³⁷ contrary to the Government's version that there was consultation³⁸. It removed the retroactive term limit clause, weakened checks and balances by eliminating parliamentary oversight for key appointments, threatened judicial independence, and omitted Chapter V on leadership and integrity, a vital anti-corruption safeguard. In essence, the 2024 draft was designed to institutionalize executive dominance. As the Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice warned, it threatened to lay "the foundation for the creation of corrupt dictatorship, albeit constitutionalized".

4. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

Well before the beginning of the Dictatorship in 1994, but since Independence, the legal and institutional architecture of the Gambia has remained structurally weak, restrictive, and poorly enforced. Many of the country's laws originate from the colonial era and were designed primarily to control the population rather than protect citizens' rights. These laws conferred extensive powers on the state while imposing minimal obligations on public authorities. Coupled with the draconian provisions embedded in the 1997 Constitution, this framework

³⁶ The Standard, Presidential adviser unhappy with 'retrogressive' application of term-limit May 15, 2020, <https://standard.gm/presidential-adviser-unhappy-with-retrogressive-application-of-term-limit/>

³⁷ Askanwi Media, CSOs Raise Concerns on No Consultation on "2024 Draft Constitution", 21 Aug 2026, <https://www.askanwi.com/news/csos-raise-concerns-on-no-consultation-on-2024-draft-constitution>

³⁸ Foroyaa, Government Says Constitution Building Process Was Consultative September 3, 2024, <https://foroyaa.net/government-says-constitution-building-process-was-consultative/>

has historically produced low levels of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. Consequently, citizens have had limited capacity to participate meaningfully in governance, influence public policy, hold institutions accountable, or effectively claim their rights and demand public services.

Against this backdrop, systemic reform became imperative following the removal of the Jammeh regime in 2017. In his 2016 electoral manifesto, President Adama Barrow pledged a comprehensive program of constitutional, institutional, and administrative reforms aimed at establishing the foundations of democratic governance.

- Constitutional Reform: Entrenching the sovereignty of the people, introducing two-term presidential limits, and a 50+1 majority requirement for election, and dismantling structures that enable self-perpetuating rule.
- Institutional reforms: Undertaking broad reforms of the executive, legislature, judiciary, civil service, security sector, and oversight bodies.
- Electoral Justice: Enabling diaspora voting, creating an independent constituency boundaries commission, and reforming the IEC.
- Fundamental Freedoms: Repealing all laws criminalizing speech, including libel, sedition, and false news, within six months of assuming office.
- Accountability and Rights: Ensuring judicial independence, creating a freedom of information law, and empowering citizens to control public authority.



Members of the ACC: Auditor, Serigne Mass Jallow (Chairperson), police prosecutor Almameh S. Manga, and lawyer Isatou J. Nagra, as members

Nine years later, important progress has been made through the enactment of several human-rights-related laws, including the Access to Information Act (2021), Persons with Disabilities Act (2021), Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act (2023), Victims Reparations Act (2023), and the Personal Data Protection and Privacy Act (2025), among other reforms. Nevertheless, enforcement remains weak and inconsistent, limiting their practical impact on governance and human rights protection.

Moreover, some recently enacted or amended laws continue to contain provisions that undermine human rights or weaken institutional accountability. The Criminal Offences Act (2025) retains clauses that threaten freedom of expression, media freedom, and the right to assembly. The Elections Act (2025) excludes Gambians in the diaspora and prisoners from exercising their right to vote. Meanwhile, the Anti-Corruption Act 2023 was significantly diluted during the legislative process, particularly by denying the Anti-Corruption Commission prosecutorial powers and removing clauses on unexplained wealth, thereby constraining its effectiveness in combating corruption.

Further concern arises from the continued existence of outdated and restrictive laws that directly undermine civic freedoms. These include the Public Order Act, Official Secrets Act, Newspaper Act, and aspects of the Information and Communications Act, none of which have been adequately reformed. For democratic governance to take root, legislation must unequivocally protect fundamental rights and empower institutions with the authority and independence necessary to enforce them effectively.

At the same time, notable institutional progress has occurred. The establishment of the National Human Rights Commission, Information Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, and Victims Reparations Commission has expanded the country's formal architecture for human rights protection and public oversight. Similarly, the creation of a dedicated Ministry responsible for gender, social welfare, and children's affairs, alongside the Disability Advisory Council, represents an important step toward advancing the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.

However, despite these legal and institutional gains, significant challenges persist. Many of these bodies face chronic underfunding, limited enforcement authority, executive interference, non-enforcement of their decisions or recommendations, and delays in operationalization. As a result, their capacity to translate formal mandates into meaningful protection of human rights and accountability in everyday governance remains constrained.

4.1 Civic Space

The Gambia remained a "closed" civic space throughout the entire period of the Yaya Jammeh regime. During this time, the country was classified as "not free³⁹," reflecting severe restrictions on civil liberties, independent media, and political opposition, alongside widespread repression of dissent and civic activism.



The annual presidential media dinner highlights an open civic space despite the threats

Following the democratic transition in 2017, marked improvement in civic space was observed. Between 2017 and 2021, reforms and the easing of political repression led to greater openness for civil society, media, and public participation, resulting in improved international rankings. The country witnesses unprecedented proliferation of traditional and online media outlets, civil society organizations, political parties, and other civic entities. Civic participation increased

immensely on all platforms and spaces with incidents of state reprisal well reduced than previously.

³⁹ Gambia – CIVICUS Monitor, <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/gambia/>

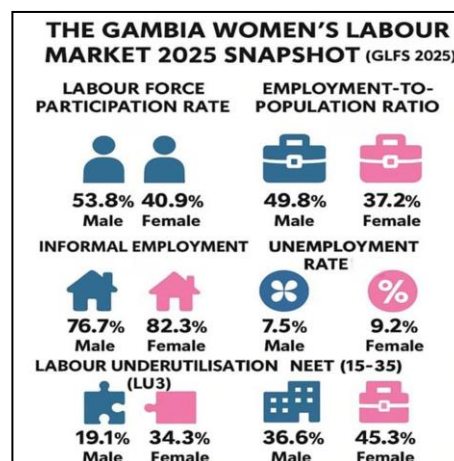
However, progress has since stagnated, with the country facing a constrained space especially between 2022 and 2025. While the environment remains significantly more open than under the dictatorship, civic space continues to face structural constraints, and recent years, particularly from 2024 onward, have seen emerging pressures that threaten to undermine earlier democratic gains. In several cases, requests for permits for protests were granted by the police though with severe restrictions. These include confining protests to uninhabited places, within short distances, limited duration, and denying picketing⁴⁰. Sporadic crackdowns⁴¹ on protests, police brutality, administrative restrictions, and the use of colonial-era laws continue to undermine civic freedoms and create uncertainty for activists, journalists, and opposition voices.

4.2 Social and Economic Rights

The 1997 Constitution recognizes only one explicit social right, the right to education under Section 30, yet even this right is only partially realized in practice. The Constitution guarantees free and compulsory basic education for all, while secondary and tertiary education are to be made free progressively⁴². However, three decades after the Constitution came into force, basic education is still not fully free and universally accessible, and the costs associated with secondary and tertiary education remain prohibitive for many Gambians⁴³.

Beyond education, the Constitution does not provide justiciable economic and social rights. Instead, these rights are placed under Chapter XX as Directive Principles of State Policy, which merely outline the state’s commitment to promote social welfare and economic development. Because these provisions are non-justiciable, citizens cannot legally enforce them in court, thereby significantly weakening the constitutional protection and realization of economic and social rights in The Gambia.

The enjoyment of economic and social rights in the Gambia therefore remains highly constrained. Socioeconomic deprivation, weak public service delivery, and the rising cost of living continue to undermine the realization of fundamental rights for many citizens, particularly women, youth, children, persons with disabilities, and rural communities. These conditions reflect deep-seated social and economic inequalities that persist across the country, creating widespread injustice and posing potential risks to social stability, peace, and national cohesion. The 2025 Budget Speech⁴⁴ as well as



⁴⁰ Kerr Fatou, Police Grant Group Permit to Protest Against Judicial Officers Bill, Jul 6, 2024, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/police-grant-group-permit-to-protest-against-judicial-officers-bill/>

⁴¹ Kerr Fatou, Police chief resigns over 3 protesters' death, Oct 4, 2021, https://www.kerrfatou.com/police-chief-resigns-over-3-protesters-death/#google_vignette

⁴² Republic of the Gambia, Laws of the Gambia, Constitution 1997, Section 30

⁴³ The Alkamba Times, Rising Costs of Higher Education in The Gambia Spark Concerns as Graduates Face Job Scarcity, March 23, 2025, https://alkambatimes.com/rising-costs-of-higher-education-in-the-gambia-spark-concerns-as-graduates-face-job-scarcity/#google_vignette

⁴⁴ Budget Speech 2025, 'Bolstering Economic Growth and Reducing Vulnerabilities while Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability,' delivered on 13th December 2025 at the National Assembly, by the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs

the National Development Plan 2023 – 2027⁴⁵ further highlights a number of economic and social challenges that directly affect the realization of these rights, noting that many citizens continue to face persistent poverty, limited employment opportunities, inequalities, and increasing living costs⁴⁶. Inflationary pressures have eroded household purchasing power, placing additional strain on already vulnerable households. These economic pressures directly affect access to essential social services such as education, healthcare, water, and social protection.

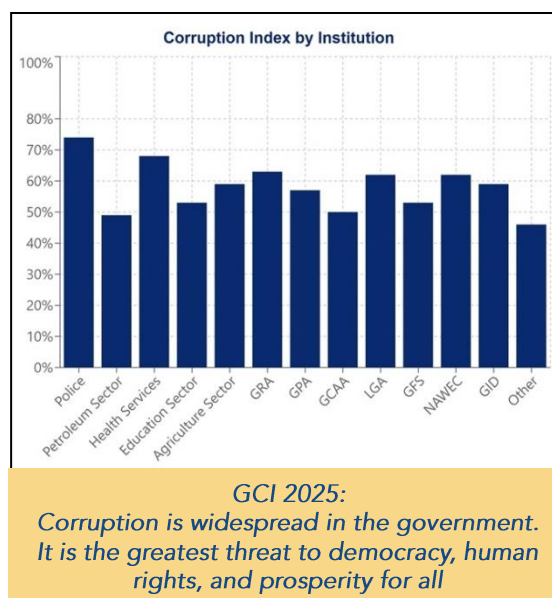
Although the Government has increased investments in key social sectors, including the expansion of schools, improvement of health facilities, and introduction of social assistance programs targeting vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, widows, and orphans, significant service delivery gaps remain. Rural and underserved communities in particular continue to face shortages of infrastructure, limited health services, and unequal access to safe water and sanitation, all of which undermine the quality of life and human development outcomes for many citizens.

The weak fulfillment of economic and social rights has also contributed to growing social distress. Rising incidences of irregular migration⁴⁷ (the “backway”), substance abuse, crime, and widespread youth disillusionment reflect the broader consequences of persistent deprivation and limited opportunities, underscoring the urgent need for stronger policy interventions to address structural inequalities and expand access to economic and social rights.

4.3 Preventing Democratic Backsliding

The 2016 presidential election marked a historic turning point in the Gambia’s political history. For the first time since independence, Gambians voted out an incumbent president and effected a peaceful transfer of power through the ballot box. This moment ushered in a new era marked by widespread optimism and strong expectations for a democratic renewal. In the immediate aftermath, citizens, communities, civil society organizations, the media, and political actors embraced the transition by exercising their rights and freedoms with renewed confidence.

Since 2017, notable progress has been recorded. These gains include legal and institutional reforms,



⁴⁵ Recovery Focused National Development Plan (RF-NDP 2023 - 2027)

⁴⁶ UNDP Gambia, UNDP The Gambia Launches the 2025 Global Human Development Report: A Call to Expand Choices and Harness AI for Inclusive Growth, June 26, 2025, <https://www.undp.org/gambia/press-releases/undp-gambia-launches-2025-global-human-development-report-call-expand-choices-and-harness-ai-inclusive-growth>

⁴⁷ The Point, Irregular migration: A devastating journey claiming lives of young Gambians

Dec 29, 2023, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/irregular-migration-a-devastating-journey-claiming-lives-of-young-gambians>

the establishment of new accountability and oversight bodies, increased media diversity, and a growing public awareness of human rights and democratic participation. Civic engagement has expanded, and citizens have become more assertive in demanding transparency, accountability, and respect for the rule of law.

However, these advances remain fragile. By 2025, signs of democratic backsliding have become increasingly evident. There has been a noticeable rise in corruption⁴⁸ and abuse of power⁴⁹, disregard of court orders, selective application of the law, incidents of police brutality, and persistent failures in the delivery of essential public services. At the same time, rising poverty, and the continued loss of young lives through irregular migration reflect deeper governance and development challenges. Together, these trends erode public trust in institutions and undermine the consolidation of democratic governance while posing serious threats to the protection of human rights.

The threats to democracy are further compounded by the increasing political polarization and intolerance and hate speech driven by tribalism on one hand and on the other hand the politics of deception and poor internal democracy within political parties. Study⁵⁰ done by the National Human Rights Commission indicates that political leaders and their supporters account for most of the hate speech in the country. Hate speech constitutes gross violations of human rights and dignity which has the potential to severely undermine democracy and governance and push society towards conflict.

The prospects for advancing human rights in the Gambia therefore depend largely on genuine political will, the independence and effectiveness of public institutions, and sustained citizen participation. While citizen engagement has remained strong since the democratic transition, the political commitment required to translate democratic aspirations into durable institutional reforms and accountable governance has often been insufficient.

5. SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN 2025

In the course of the Year 2025, EFSCRJ has monitored issues, events and cases across the country and based on our assessment provide the situation of human rights in the Gambia.

5.1 ENJOYMENT OF CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES

a. Access to Justice

Access to justice remains limited for many Gambians due to a combination of structural and operational constraints. High legal costs, lengthy delays in adjudication, limited legal aid services, inadequate geographic distribution of courts, and poorly equipped judicial facilities

⁴⁸ The Alkamba Times, Audit Reports Expose Systemic Corruption, Prompting Outrage and Calls for Accountability, October 2, 2025, <https://alkambatimes.com/audit-reports-expose-systemic-corruption-prompting-outrage-and-calls-for-accountability/>

⁴⁹ Gambia Press Union, Gambia: High Court Rules Police Violated Talk Show Host's Rights

Nov 10, 2023, <https://gpu.gm/gambia-high-court-rules-police-violated-talk-show-hosts-rights/>

⁵⁰ Research on Hate Speech in The Gambia, A Report by the National Human Rights Commission - The Gambia, <https://www.gm-nhrc.org/download-file/8c7bd684-f5ec-11f0-afa6-02a8a26af761>

all restrict the ability of citizens to effectively seek and obtain justice, expeditiously. While the judiciary today enjoys greater independence compared to the past, the enforcement of court judgments, particularly against the state, remains inconsistent, thereby weakening confidence in the rule of law.

EFSCRJ has received complaints from citizens whose cases are currently before the courts. While this report does not disclose specific names or cases, the experiences shared and our follow-up engagements reveal persistent delays in the conclusion of cases across the various levels of courts. Even where judgments are obtained, enforcement is frequently slow or ignored altogether by the Sheriff’s Division, the Police, or both, leaving litigants frustrated and justice effectively denied.



High Court compound in Basse

Access to justice is further undermined by the poor condition and limited capacity of court facilities. Many courtrooms lack the necessary technological infrastructure required for efficient case management, recording of proceedings, and timely dissemination of judgments. Courthouses are often ill-equipped in terms of space and basic amenities, with limited seating for the

public and inadequate lighting, ventilation, air conditioning, and public address systems. Administrative services within the judiciary are also weak, making access to information difficult. The Judiciary’s website is not up-to-date and lacks essential public information, including many court judgments and rulings (<https://judiciary.gov.gm/>).

In addition, the quality and efficiency of services provided by key justice sector actors, including private lawyers, judicial officers, and prosecutors, often fall below expected standards. In many cases, inadequate due diligence, weak case management, and limited professional commitment contribute to prolonged proceedings, forcing litigants to spend additional time and financial resources in pursuit of justice.

Taken together, these challenges significantly undermine the protection of human rights. Effective access to justice must be swift, affordable, transparent, and accessible, as it is central to safeguarding rights, maintaining social stability, and improving the lives and livelihoods of citizens. Without meaningful reforms to address these systemic weaknesses, the promise of justice for many Gambians will remain elusive.

b. Freedom of Opinion and Expression

The rights to freedom of opinion and expression are guaranteed under Section 25 of the 1997 Constitution. Since the political transition in 2017, there has been a notable expansion in the exercise of these freedoms, with citizens increasingly able to express views openly in public and media spaces. However, while



Abdoulaye Sanyang in cuffs

generally respected, these rights remain fragile and are often undermined by intimidation, threats, and the selective application of laws.

In 2025, freedom of expression came under increased pressure, marked by the arrest and prosecution of activists, journalists, and protesters, particularly in relation to public assemblies and critical commentary on Government actions. A notable case occurred in August 2025, when former soldier Abdoulie Sanyang was arrested following an interview on West Coast Radio⁵¹. Authorities justified his arrest on grounds of “national security⁵²” concerns arising from his remarks. He was subsequently arraigned and charged with offences including arson, seditious intention, incitement to violence, and obstruction of justice. This case exemplifies the growing use of criminal law to target dissenting voices and raises serious concerns about the protection of freedom of expression in practice.

c. Freedom of the Media

Freedom of the media is guaranteed under Sections 25 and 207 of the 1997 Constitution. Following decades of repression, the media landscape in the Gambia has become relatively open and safer since 2017, with journalists and media houses operating with greater freedom. The Government has also undertaken initiatives to engage the media, including the routine Mansa Kunda⁵³ press briefings and annual presidential dinners⁵⁴. Overall, the media environment remains vibrant, however, it continues to face structural constraints, including limited financial sustainability, legal vulnerabilities, and harassment from both state and non-state actors.



In 2025, while there were no recorded arrests or prosecutions of journalists or media outlets, the environment remained fragile. The enactment of the Criminal Offences and Procedure Act in March 2025 retained broadly framed provisions on “false information⁵⁵” and “insulting⁵⁶” public officials, which pose ongoing legal risks to journalists and can have a chilling effect on reporting.

⁵¹ The Point, Ex-soldier arrested over claims of assassination plot against Barrow, Aug 19, 2025, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/ex-soldier-arrested-over-claims-of-assassination-plot-against-barrow>

⁵² [The Gambia Police Force](#), August 18, 2025, FLASH REPORT, August 17, 2025

⁵³ ARPS Media, [Politics \(G\)](#), September 16, 2025, Hon. Minister Ceesay Presents the Information Ministry’s Vision at the Mansa Kunda Forum, <https://arpsmedia.com/hon-minister-ceesay-presents-the-information-ministrys-vision-at-the-mansa-kunda-forum/>

⁵⁴ GRTS, President Barrow Reassures Commitment To Free Media At Presidential Media Dinner, National News, December 21, 2025, <https://www.grts.gm/new-site/public/news-article-details/news/president-barrow-reassures-commitment-to-free-media-at-presidential-media-dinner>

⁵⁵ Laws of the Gambia, Criminal Offences Act 2025, Section 152, False

⁵⁶ Laws of the Gambia, Criminal Offences Act 2025, Section 107, Giving False Information, and Parental Insult to Public Officers

Additionally, public officials have made statements perceived as threatening toward the media, including during the President’s “Meet the People” tour⁵⁷. In March 2025, the Minister of Information, Media, and Broadcasting Services, Dr. Ismaila Ceesay, summoned the editor of The Voice, Musa Sheriff, alongside representatives of the Gambia Press Union, over a headline concerning declining public trust in government⁵⁸, raising concerns about undue interference and pressure on editorial independence.

Further concerns arise from the reintroduced Cybercrime Bill (2024), which remained under review by the National Assembly throughout 2025. The bill contains provisions that pose significant risks to freedom of expression, digital rights, and the protection of journalists and whistleblowers. If enacted without adequate safeguards, it could further constrain media freedom and civic space in the Gambia.

d. Right to Freedom of Assembly and Association

Section 25 of the 1997 Constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly and association. However, the Public Order Act subjects this right to police authorization, effectively granting law enforcement discretionary power to permit or deny its exercise. While there has been a noticeable expansion in civic space since 2017, recent trends indicate a regression marked by excessive policing, arbitrary restrictions, and disproportionate use of force⁵⁹.

In practice, the police frequently deny permits for public assemblies or impose onerous conditions when permits are granted⁶⁰. Protests are often confined to limited or low-visibility locations, restricted to short durations, and subjected to stringent controls, including assigning organizers responsibility for crowd conduct. The refusal to recognize spontaneous assemblies further undermines the essence of the right.



⁵⁷ The Standard, EFSCRJ concerned about widespread incidence of hate speech during President Barrow’s 2025 “Meet the People Tour”, December 10, 2025, <https://standard.gm/efscrj-concerned-about-widespread-incidence-of-hate-speech-during-president-barrows-2025-meet-the-people-tour/>

⁵⁸ The Voice, Survey Reveals Corruption at Presidency, National Assembly, <https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/03/26/survey-reveals-corruption-at-presidency-national-assembly/?amp=1>

⁵⁹ The Point, Death in Custody: Mandinari protest echoes calls against police brutality, Sep 29, 2025, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/death-in-custody-mandinari-protest-echoes-calls-against-police-brutality>

⁶⁰ The Alkamba Times, GALA Defies Police Permit Denial, Vows to Protest in Banjul, May 7, 2025, <https://alkambatimes.com/gala-defies-police-permit-denial-vows-to-protest-in-banjul/>

Several incidents in 2025 illustrate this pattern. In May, protesters were arbitrarily arrested, detained, and reportedly assaulted for assembling at the Memorial Arch to protest alleged corruption in the disposal of Jammeh assets. In July, members of GALA were granted a permit under restrictive conditions, limiting their protest to a short stretch between Iceman and Westfield and within a narrow timeframe⁶¹. In August, protesters from GALA, EFSCRJ, and TSGP were again met with arrests and violence for assembling in front of PURA to protest⁶² data floor pricing, despite legal provisions allowing non-procession assemblies without permits. The situation escalated further when police deployed teargas indiscriminately at the Kanifing Magistrates’ Court during related proceedings, resulting in additional arrests⁶³. Similarly, a September protest against the unlawful removal of the Auditor General was met with excessive force, including the use of teargas⁶⁴.

Overall, at least 40 young people are currently facing trial or police charges for “unlawful assembly,” in clear contradiction of constitutional guarantees and the Gambia’s obligations under regional and international human rights law. These developments point to a troubling pattern of shrinking civic space and the systematic undermining of the right to peaceful assembly in 2025.

e. Right to Vote



Sections 26 and 39 of the 1997 Constitution guarantee the right to vote and to participate in public affairs, a right further elaborated in the Elections Act. In principle, these provisions affirm universal suffrage for all Gambians. In practice, however, significant legal and structural barriers continue to undermine the full realization of this right⁶⁵.

The Elections (Amendment) Act 2025 effectively disenfranchises key categories of citizens. Gambians in the diaspora remain excluded from voting⁶⁶, despite clear constitutional guarantees. Similarly,

⁶¹ Askani Gambia, GAMBIA: Approval Granted by IGP for GALA’s Wednesday Protest with Certain Conditions, July 19, 2025, <https://askanigambia.com/gambia-approval-granted-by-igp-for-galas-tuesday-protest-with-certain-conditions/>

⁶² Kerr Fatou, Police Detained 19 Protesters Arrested Over PURA Data Price Floor Demonstration, Aug 24, 2025, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/police-investigate-19-protesters-arrested-over-pura-data-price-floor-demonstration/>

⁶³ The Standard, Chaos At Kanifing As Court Remands 23 Protesters, August 26, 2025, <https://standard.gm/chaos-at-kanifing-as-court-remands-23-protesters/>

⁶⁴ Kerr Fatou, Four Youths Arrested Over Protest Against Auditor General’s Removal, Sep 16, 2025, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/four-youths-arrested-over-protest-against-auditor-generals-removal/>

⁶⁵ The National Human Rights Commission, ADVISORY NOTE ON THE ELECTIONS ACT VIS-À-VIS THE 1997 CONSTITUTION AND 2020 DRAFT CONSTITUTION, <https://www.gm-nhrc.org/download-file/92fdfa76-9c4d-11eb-86ec-022a5fa1767e>

⁶⁶ The Point, NAM defends Assembly’s stance against Diaspora voting, Apr 8, 2025, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/nam-defends-assemblys-stance-against-diaspora-voting>

prisoners are denied⁶⁷ the right to vote under Section 14(a) of the Elections Act, raising serious questions about the compatibility of this provision with constitutional protections and international human rights standards.

In addition, persons with disabilities face persistent accessibility challenges during elections, including inadequate voting infrastructure, lack of assistive materials, and limited institutional support. These barriers significantly restrict their ability to participate on an equal basis with others. As a result, while the legal framework nominally guarantees political participation, its implementation falls short, leaving many Gambians excluded from exercising one of the most fundamental rights in a democratic society.

f. Right to Personal Liberty and Safety

Section 19 of the 1997 Constitution guarantees the right to liberty and security of the person, protecting individuals from arbitrary arrest, detention, and general insecurity. To give effect to this right, the State has established institutions such as law enforcement agencies and the courts, alongside essential public services, including reliable electricity and infrastructure, all of which are integral to ensuring the safety and security of individuals and communities.

However, the realization of this right depends not merely on the existence of these institutions and services, but on their effectiveness, accessibility, and accountability. Where law enforcement is weak, justice systems are delayed, or essential services are inadequate, the protection of citizens from harm and insecurity is fundamentally compromised.



Armed robbers inside El Hella shop in Banjul

In 2025, the incidents of insecurity including murders, burglary, armed attacks, and assault have been recorded with grave concern. Armed robbery incidents point to a concerning deterioration in public safety and the protection of the right to security of person. Multiple cases reported across the Greater Banjul Area, North Bank Region, and Central River Region indicate a pattern of increasingly organized and brazen criminal activity. In January alone, at least six armed

robberies were recorded⁶⁸ targeting individuals, shops, financial institutions, and money transfer bureaus with targets including the El Hella Shop in Banjul and Access Bank in Brusubi⁶⁹.

These incidents often involved the use of firearms, coordinated group operations, and getaway vehicles, with at least one case escalating into an exchange of gunfire with law

⁶⁷ The Standard, NHRC recommends prisoners given right to vote, May 7, 2024, <https://standard.gm/nhrc-recommends-prisoners-given-right-to-vote/>

⁶⁸ Askanwi Media, Police Report on Six Armed Robberies and Exchange of Gunfire in January 2025, 07 Feb 2026, <https://www.askanwi.com/news/police-report-on-six-armed-robberies-and-exchange-of-gunfire-in-january-2025>

⁶⁹ Lamtoro News, El Hella Shop, Access Bank Alleged Armed Robbers Arrested, February 10, 2025, <https://lamtoronews.com/2025/02/10/el-hella-shop-access-bank-alleged-armed-robbers-arrested/>

enforcement⁷⁰ at a GNPC petrol station in Farafenni. Subsequent incidents in Banjul and all the way to URR⁷¹ where armed robbers escaped to Senegal further demonstrate the geographic spread and persistence of these crimes.

One of the most gruesome incidents in 2025 occurred on December 20, when Isatou Fatty, a 21-year-old cashier, was fatally stabbed inside the Heewal Forex Bureau near the Brusubi Turntable⁷². The killing sparked widespread public outrage and heightened concerns about the security of financial service outlets and public safety more broadly. The brazen nature of the attack, carried out in a commercial setting and not an isolated occurrence, has intensified calls for stronger preventive measures, improved policing, and accountability to ensure the protection of lives and property.

Beyond the immediate criminal acts, these developments raise broader human rights concerns regarding the State's obligation to ensure security and protect citizens from violence. While the police have made arrests and, in some cases, neutralized suspects, the recurrence and scale of these robberies suggest gaps in prevention, intelligence, and rapid response mechanisms. The situation has generated fear and insecurity among the population, particularly for small business owners and individuals operating in isolated or poorly policed areas. Addressing this trend requires not only strengthened law enforcement capacity but also a rights-based approach that prioritizes public safety, accountability, and community trust.

Citizens continue to experience insecurity linked to poor policing standards, inadequate emergency response, and occasional excessive use of force. In addition, the dire socioeconomic conditions and the growing incidence of poverty, deprivation and inequalities continue to fuel incidences of crimes and insecurity across the country.

5.2 ENJOYMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

The 1997 Constitution guarantees the right to education as a justiciable right under Section 30, meaning citizens can legally claim and enforce this right before the courts. However, most other economic and social rights are not constitutionally justiciable. Instead, they are addressed in Chapter XX, which outlines the Directive Principles of State Policy. These provisions frame social and economic rights as guiding principles for governance and public policy, establishing state obligations as aspirational objectives rather than enforceable legal entitlements.

Despite this constitutional limitation, several statutory laws provide concrete protection for economic and social rights. Notably, the Persons with Disabilities Act 2021, Children's Act 2005, Children's Act 2005, and the Women's Act 2010 guarantee rights relating to employment, access to services, protection, and social welfare for specific groups. In addition,

⁷⁰ Kerr Fatou, Armed Robbers Attack Farafenni GNPC, Officer Injured But Returns Fire, Jan 13, 2025, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/armed-robbers-attack-farafenni-gnpc-officer-injured-but-returns-fire/>

⁷¹ The Point, Armed robbers escape to Senegal after attack in URR, Oct 6, 2025, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/armed-robbers-escape-to-senegal-after-attack-in-urr>

⁷² Gambiana, 21-year-old woman stabbed to death in daylight attack in Brusubi, December 20, 2025, <https://gambiana.com/21-year-old-woman-stabbed-to-death-in-daylight-attack-in-brusubi/>

national policies such as the National Social Protection Policy⁷³ establish frameworks for delivering social services and safety nets to vulnerable populations.

At the international and regional levels, the Gambia has undertaken binding commitments to protect economic and social rights through instruments such as the ICESCR, CEDAW, and the Maputo Protocol⁷⁴. These treaties obligate the state to progressively realize economic and social rights through legislative, administrative, and policy measures.

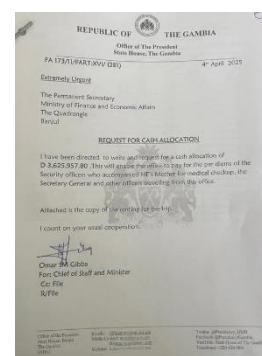
In 2025, the government continues investments in the provision of goods and services. Several public goods and services including water and electricity supply, healthcare, education, roads, and social protection continue to be built and provided in various communities across the country. Notwithstanding, public services remain inadequate, costly, and unevenly distributed, disproportionately affecting rural communities and urban poor populations.

a. Right to Health

The Gambia has made notable efforts to expand and modernize its healthcare infrastructure. Major investments include the ongoing construction of a 1500-bed hospital in Farato⁷⁵, alongside the opening of new public health facilities in rural communities and the upgrading of several polyclinics and maternity wards across the country. These developments have significantly improved the availability and geographic access to healthcare services. In addition to public sector expansion, the private health facilities have also grown, with new facilities such as the Egyptian Medical Center and longstanding facilities such as Afrimed, Lamtoro and Mbowen health facilities complement public services. Together, these developments represent important steps toward fulfilling the right to health by expanding healthcare coverage and service capacity nationwide.

Despite these improvements, the health sector continues to face serious structural challenges. Persistent underfunding, shortages of qualified personnel and essential medicines, inadequate infrastructure, shortage of health equipment, and high out-of-pocket costs significantly constrain access to healthcare. Moreover, corruption, weak management, and inefficiencies within the system further undermine service delivery, limiting the ability of many Gambians to obtain timely and affordable care. A 2025 FPAC report revealed severe corruption, financial mismanagement, and lack of accountability within public health facilities. Findings include missing payments, procurement violations, and "ghost suppliers" in hospital procurement, undermining the health sector.

These challenges not only restrict access but also hinder the attainment of the highest possible standard of healthcare. As a result, many Gambians still struggle to obtain accurate diagnoses, appropriate medicines, and quality treatment in both public and private facilities.



⁷³ The Gambia National Social Protection Policy 2015-2025, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare

⁷⁴ Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa

⁷⁵ Office of the President, Republic of the Gambia, Barrow Government to Build 1500 Bed Hospital in Farato, <https://op.gov.gm/barrow-government-build-1500-bed-hospital-farato>

This situation has contributed to the continued practice of seeking medical care abroad, even among senior public officials even though the official narrative is that the country has one of the best health systems in the world. Ironically, in April 2025, a Government memo leaked (picture) in which a request of more than three million dalasi was made for a medical trip for the President’s mother to Senegal⁷⁶ prompting a public outcry.

While progress has been made in reducing maternal mortality, the figures remain concerning. By 2025, the maternal mortality rate stood at approximately 354 deaths per 100,000 live births⁷⁷, highlighting the continued need for stronger investment, accountability, and systemic reform in the health sector.

Hygiene and sanitation continue to be challenging in both urban and rural areas. The perennial weak waste management systems remain a major contributor to environmental and public health risks. Despite the presence of the anti-littering regulations since 2015, indiscriminate dumping within communities, forest parks, and markets coupled with poor drainage and sewage systems persist due to weak law enforcement.

b. Right to Education

Section 30 of the 1997 Constitution guarantees the right to education, mandating free basic education with immediate effect and the progressive provision of free secondary and tertiary education. Three decades on, this constitutional promise remains largely unfulfilled, denying many Gambians the full enjoyment of this fundamental right.

Although there has been a visible expansion in the number of primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, including TVET centres, this growth has not translated into widespread equitable access or quality. The education system continues to be constrained by overcrowded classrooms, acute teacher shortages, inadequate learning materials, and weak infrastructure. While basic education is officially free, families still shoulder significant indirect costs such as textbooks, uniforms, transport, meals, and other essentials, effectively creating financial barriers to access.



At the tertiary level, the situation is even more restrictive. Despite the presence of four universities and limited government scholarship schemes, tuition fees remain prohibitively high for many households. Moreover, the concentration of tertiary institutions in the Greater Banjul Area and West Coast Region further entrenches geographic inequality, marginalizing students from rural regions.

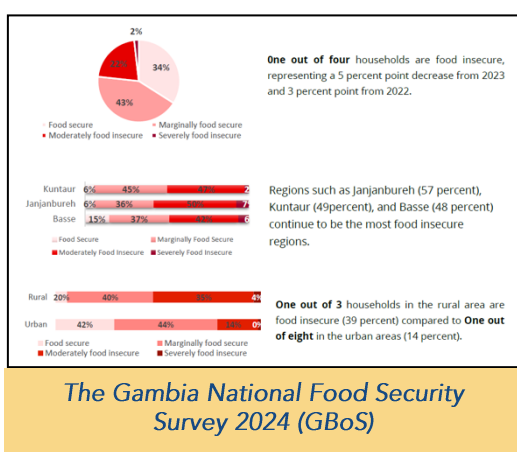
⁷⁶ Kerr Fatou, Leaked D3.6M Security Per Diem For President’s Mother’s Medical Trip Sparks Outcry, Apr 8, 2025, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/leaked-d3-6m-security-per-diem-for-presidents-mothers-medical-trip-sparks-outcry/>

⁷⁷ World Bank Group, The Gambia, <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/gambia-the#:~:text=Featured%20Indicators,210>

In effect, the constitutional vision of universally accessible and free education, from primary through tertiary level remains unmet. The prevailing reality is that education in the Gambia is neither truly free nor equally accessible, undermining both social equity and national development.

c. Right to Food

The Gambia is a food-deficit nation with roughly 27% to 29% of its population facing food insecurity, driven by high poverty rates (over 50%), climate-related shocks (droughts/floods), and reliance on food imports⁷⁸. Agriculture, which employs most of the population and contributes up to 25% of GDP, often fails to meet local demand, causing high malnutrition, especially in rural areas and among children. Consequently, food insecurity and hunger remain widespread in the country.



Notwithstanding, the government continues to increase investment in agriculture, enjoying the largest sector allocation, with an increasing private sector involvement as well. In its Recovery-Focused National Development Plan (RF-NDP) "Yiriwaa" (2023–2027), the government aims to combat high food insecurity by transforming agriculture from subsistence to commercial farming⁷⁹. It prioritizes reducing over 80% reliance on rice imports, boosting local production, and strengthening social protection to address malnutrition.

While there have been government efforts to reduce food prices, the prevailing costs remain significantly high which are blamed on persistent inflation, with bread prices officially increasing to D12 for loaves in July 2025⁸⁰. Despite some stability in core staples like rice, food inflation continues to fluctuate in the year, keeping pressure on household budgets and causing severe strain thereby constraining the right to food.

Based on 2025 assessments, approximately 244,000 people (10% of the population) are projected to face acute food insecurity during the June-August 2025 lean season, marking a rise in vulnerability. The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS), with [FAO support](#), is conducting the [2025 Extended National Agricultural Survey \(E-NASS\)](#) to monitor these conditions.

⁷⁸ World Food Programme in the Gambia,

<https://www.wfp.org/countries/gambia#:~:text=Photo:%20WFP/Mamadou%20Jallow,Crisis%20response>

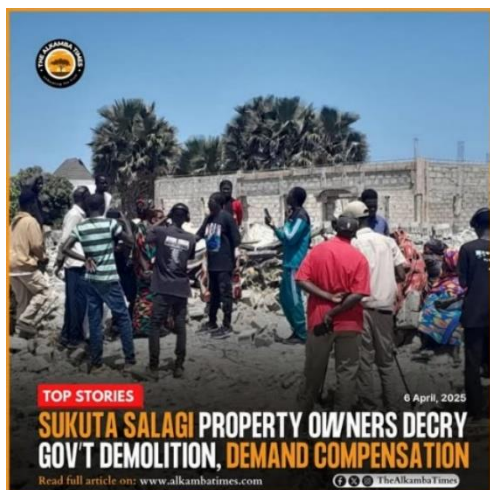
⁷⁹ Recovery Focused-National Development Plan (RF-NDP) 2023 – 2027 locally branded as “YIRIWAA”

⁸⁰ Kerr Fatou, Government Announces Bread Price Increase Effective July 1st, Jun 20, 2025,

<https://www.kerrfatou.com/government-announces-bread-price-increase-effective-july-1st/#:~:text=The%20average%20weight%20of%20Senfur,loaf%20or%20D120%20per%20dozen.>

Meanwhile the 2024 food security survey indicates widespread and intense household poverty across the country with CRR and URR facing the most severe situation⁸¹.

d. Land Rights and Dispossession



In the Gambia, the right to land and property remains increasingly under threat as community, agricultural, and protected lands continue to be taken, often without consent, due process, or adequate compensation, and reallocated to public officials, politically connected individuals, and private developers. In 2025, areas such as Sukuta-Salagi⁸², Brusubi, and key coastal zones experienced widespread land dispossession, resulting in displacement, loss of livelihoods, and escalating community tensions⁸³. In Sukuta-Salagi, residents have been declared “trespassers” on ancestral lands by the Department of Physical Planning, reflecting a broader pattern of state-backed land reclassification

that undermines customary ownership and tenure security.

Prime lands, including wetlands, coastal areas, and former community forests in the Kombo region, are frequently transferred through opaque processes to elites and commercial interests. The state often facilitates this by reclassifying customary or agricultural land as



Victims of the Sukuta-Salagi land dispossession hold a press conference in April (The Voice)

⁸¹ Gambia Bureau of Statistics, The Gambia National Food Security Survey Report, December 2024, <https://www.gbosdata.org/downloads-file/603-the-2024-gambia-food-security-survey-report>

⁸² Kerr Fatou, Sukuta Salagi Land Dispute Intensifies as Customary Owners Challenge Government Claims, Dec 2, 2025, https://www.kerrfatou.com/sukuta-salagi-land-dispute-intensifies-as-customary-owners-challenge-government-claims/#google_vignette

⁸³ The Alkamba Times, Sukuta Salagi Property Owners Decry Gov’t Demolition, Demand Compensation, April 6, 2025, <https://alkambatimes.com/sukuta-salagi-property-owners-decry-govt-demolition-demand-compensation/>

“state land” for purported public purposes such as investment or tourism, only for such lands to later be converted into private holdings. A report by Malagen in July 2025 highlighted allocated of part Tanji bird reserve⁸⁴ to prominent politician Essa Faal though he denied any wrongdoing⁸⁵. Affected communities consistently report lack of consultation, inadequate or non-existent compensation, and the absence of accessible grievance and redress mechanisms, leaving many families dispossessed and without sustainable livelihoods⁸⁶.

Although the Ministry of Lands has initiated investigations and inquiries into controversial land allocations in areas such as Kamalo, the Kotu Strip, and the Tanbi Wetlands, the findings of these processes have not been made public, and there is no clear evidence of accountability or remedial action⁸⁷. Similarly, longstanding demands for transparency, including the release of the 2019 Salagi report, remain unfulfilled. While the government has introduced a new land policy aimed at curbing illegal land acquisitions and regulating real estate practices, implementation has been weak and public confidence remains low. Without transparency, enforcement, and accountability, land governance failures will continue to drive dispossession, inequality, and human rights violations.

e. Right to Utility Supplies

Both the Gambia Government⁸⁸ and the World Bank⁸⁹ have reported rapid improvements in utility access, with electricity coverage rising to 70% in 2025. Despite this, residents still face erratic, unreliable power, and water supply with frequent outages. Rural electrification is expanding, while urban areas grapple with aging infrastructure, creating challenges in consistent service delivery. Furthermore, the cost of electricity continues to increase since April 2023⁹⁰ when NAWEC formally raised the tariff and never to come down, placing the Gambia among the highest in the region. These challenges limit or deny utility services to citizens.

The provision of utility services is a fundamental right that enhances and enables all other rights hence limitations on the quality, availability, accessibility and affordability of water and electricity severely affect not only economic and social rights but also civil and political rights.

⁸⁴ Malagen, Tanji Bird Reserve Carved Up? Inside Deals To Turn Protected Land Into Profit, 17 July 2025, <https://malagen.org/investigations/the-big-story/tanji-bird-reserve-carved-up-for-sale-inside-deals-to-turn-protected-land-into-profit/>

⁸⁵ Kerr Fatou, APP-Sobeya Leader Essa Faal Responds to Corruption Allegations Over Land Deal, Jul 25, 2025, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/app-sobeya-leader-essa-faal-responds-to-corruption-allegations-over-land-deal/>

⁸⁶ The Point, Salagi Layout demolition: Victims protest, demand justice Apr 9, 2025, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/salagi-layout-demolition-victims-protest-demand-justice>

⁸⁷ The Voice, Leaked Investigative Panel Report on Salagi Layout Reveals Land Acquisition & Compensations Act Violated, April 8, 2025, <https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/04/08/leaked-investigative-panel-report-on-salagi-layout-reveals-land-acquisition-compensations-act-violated/>

⁸⁸ Kerr Fatou, Gambia Plans to Achieve 100% Electricity Access by Early 2026, Says Information Minister, Mar 26, 2025, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/gambia-plans-to-achieve-100-electricity-access-by-early-2026-says-information-minister/#:~:text=Speaking%20on%20West%20Coast%20Radio,independence%20even%20before%20pre%2Dindependence.>

⁸⁹ World Bank Group, PRESS RELEASE June 29, 2020, The Gambia: World Bank to Strengthen Access to Energy and Water, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/06/29/the-gambia-world-bank-to-strengthen-access-to-energy-and-water#:~:text=Washington%2C%20June%2029%2C%202020%20%E2%80%93,by%20the%20COVID%2D19%20pandemic.>

⁹⁰ The Point Newspaper, Water, electricity tariffs to increase from April 10th, Mar 28, 2023, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/water-electricity-tariffs-to-increase-from-april-10th>

Despite the establishment of PURA⁹¹ and GCCPC⁹² to regulate the sector and ensure consumer rights obtain quality and value for money services, the cost of electricity continues to be a major obstacle to availability and access.

f. Right to Livelihood

The pursuit of social and economic well-being is underpinned by the rights guaranteed in the Constitution, including the rights to life, liberty, political participation, and privacy. In addition, Chapter 20 of the Constitution obliges the State to adopt policies that promote and protect social and economic rights in order to enhance the welfare of citizens. Specifically, Section 215(3) on economic objectives provides that the State shall strive to build “an efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy” grounded in principles of equal economic opportunity for all, with a meaningful role for the private sector and the encouragement of private initiative.



Road clearing exercise

In 2025, however, certain state actions undermined these objectives. The Gambia Police Force resumed “Operation Clear the Roads⁹³,” targeting roadside stalls, kiosks, and structures deemed illegal or obstructive. The operation, carried out primarily in Banjul, the Kanifing Municipality, and Brikama, led to the demolition or removal of numerous small businesses, petty trading spaces, and even parts of residential properties. The police justified the exercise as necessary to improve road safety and traffic flow⁹⁴, and in the process impounded vehicles and confiscated goods, emphasizing that the operation was non-negotiable.

⁹¹ Laws of the Gambia, The Gambia Public Utilities Regulatory Authority Act, 2001

⁹² Laws of the Gambia, Gambia Consumer Protection Act 2014

⁹³ Kerr Fatou, Gambia Police Force Launches New Phase Operation Clear the Roads, Jan 16, 2025, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/gambia-police-force-launches-new-phase-operation-clear-the-roads/>

⁹⁴ West Africa Democracy Radio, Gambia Police justify road clearing operation to address public concerns, [January 16, 2025, https://wadr.org/the-gambia-police-clarify-road-operation-is-not-a-witch-hunt/#:~:text=Gambia%20Police%20justify%20road%20clearing%20operation%20to,%C2%B7%20January%2016%2C%2025%20%C2%B7%20No%20Comments.](https://wadr.org/the-gambia-police-clarify-road-operation-is-not-a-witch-hunt/#:~:text=Gambia%20Police%20justify%20road%20clearing%20operation%20to,%C2%B7%20January%2016%2C%2025%20%C2%B7%20No%20Comments.)

While the stated objective of ensuring public order and safety is legitimate, the manner of implementation raises serious concerns⁹⁵. The operation imposed significant economic hardship on affected individuals, particularly in a context where nearly 70 percent of the private sector operates informally. No viable alternatives, relocation plans, or compensation mechanisms were provided, leaving many without livelihoods. Moreover, the enforcement appeared uneven, with some structures spared without clear justification, and affected persons were not afforded avenues for appeal or redress. As a result, the operation not only disrupted economic activity but also undermined the constitutional commitment to equitable economic opportunity and the protection of citizens' livelihoods.

5.3 INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

a. Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

Section 31 of the 1997 Constitution guarantees the rights of persons with disabilities, reinforced by the Persons with Disabilities Act 2021, as well as the Children's Act and the Women's Act. Together, these legal frameworks provide for inclusion, equal opportunity, and participation in national development. However, in 2025, the gap between legal guarantees and lived realities for PWDs remains stark⁹⁶.



Despite these protections, PWDs continue to face systemic barriers across key sectors. Public infrastructure, including roads, buildings, and transport systems, remains largely inaccessible. Essential services such as healthcare, education, information, and sports among others are insufficiently adapted to meet diverse needs, while employment opportunities remain extremely limited⁹⁷. There is no person with disabilities represented in both the Cabinet and the National Assembly, the highest

decision-making bodies of the country. These structural deficiencies severely restrict participation in public life and economic activity. As a result, many PWDs are pushed into conditions of poverty⁹⁸, exclusion, and dependency, with some resorting to street begging for survival⁹⁹.

⁹⁵ The Voice, EFSCRJ's Position on the Clearing of Roads, [January 22, 2025](https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/01/22/efscrjs-position-on-the-clearing-of-roads/), <https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/01/22/efscrjs-position-on-the-clearing-of-roads/>

⁹⁶ The Voice, Persons with Disabilities Must Be Treated Equally – Magistrate Krubally, [September 10, 2025](https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/09/10/persons-with-disabilities-must-be-treated-equally-magistrate-krubally/), <https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/09/10/persons-with-disabilities-must-be-treated-equally-magistrate-krubally/>

⁹⁷ The Voice, Krubally Calls for Equal Opportunities, Inclusion for Disabled Gambians, [thevoice August 20, 2025](https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/08/20/krubally-calls-for-equal-opportunities-inclusion-for-disabled-gambians/), <https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/08/20/krubally-calls-for-equal-opportunities-inclusion-for-disabled-gambians/>

⁹⁸ The Point, Persons with disabilities remain excluded from labour market – Report, Sep 30, 2025, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/persons-with-disabilities-remain-excluded-from-labour-market-report>

⁹⁹ The Borgen Project, Disability and Poverty in The Gambia: Pathways To Change, <https://borgenproject.org/disability-and-poverty-in-the-gambia/>

These challenges¹⁰⁰ are compounded by weak enforcement of existing laws, limited institutional capacity, and inadequate budgetary allocations. Institutions mandated to protect and promote the rights of PWDs lack or have inadequate technical expertise, coordination, and resources necessary to effectively implement legal provisions. Monitoring and enforcement mechanisms remain weak, while disability-focused programs are often underfunded or deprioritized. Consequently, the legal protections afforded to PWDs remain largely aspirational, with minimal practical impact on improving their living conditions or safeguarding their rights.

b. Rights of Women

Women constitute nearly 52% of the Gambia’s population yet remain significantly underrepresented in decision-making structures. In the 58-member National Assembly, only five are women, three elected and two nominated, while the Cabinet includes just three women out of 21 ministers, and only 17 local councilors are women¹⁰¹. This stark imbalance reflects a persistent gender gap in political representation and leadership.

Section 28 of the 1997 Constitution guarantees gender equality, affirming women’s right to equal treatment and opportunities with men, while Section 33 prohibits discrimination by any public authority. These protections are reinforced by statutory frameworks such as the Women’s Act, the Persons with Disabilities Act, the Sexual Offences Act, and the Domestic Violence Act. However, despite this robust legal architecture, women in 2025 continue to face widespread exclusion, discrimination, and denial of rights across both public institutions and society. Entrenched patriarchal norms continue to limit women’s access to power, resources, and opportunities, thereby undermining their agency and participation¹⁰².



Female NAMs: Maimuna Ceesay, Touma Njai, Fatoumatta Jawara, Fatou Cham & Amie Kolley

As a result, gender inequality remains pervasive, particularly in economic participation, political representation, and protection from gender-based violence. Weak enforcement of existing laws, limited institutional responsiveness, and sociocultural barriers continue to impede progress, leaving many women without effective protection or equal opportunity.

¹⁰⁰ Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons With Disabilities in the Gambia Country Report, https://unprpd.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CR_Gambia_2021-9a7.pdf

¹⁰¹ Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare, National Gender Policy (2025-2034)

¹⁰² Westminster Foundation for Democracy, The Cost of Politics in The Gambia: A gender inclusive assessment, November 2025.

Women continue to face structural disadvantages in employment despite their significant participation in the economy¹⁰³. Women remain disproportionately concentrated in informal, low-paying, and insecure sectors such as petty trading, agriculture, and domestic work, with limited access to formal employment, social protection, and decent working conditions. Gender disparities persist in labour force participation, earnings, and career advancement, driven by entrenched sociocultural norms, unequal access to education and skills development, and the burden of unpaid care work. Additionally, workplace discrimination and weak enforcement of labour protections further constrain women’s economic empowerment¹⁰⁴.

c. Rights of the Youth

Youth constitute the majority of Gambia’s population, making their status central to the country’s human rights and development trajectory. However, findings from the 2025 labour landscape reveal significant structural challenges affecting young people. Youth unemployment remains high, while labour force participation is relatively low, with a substantial proportion, over 40%, classified as not in employment, education, or training (NEET)¹⁰⁵. Even among those employed, the overwhelming majority are engaged in informal, low-paying, and insecure jobs with little or no social protection. These conditions reflect a weak transition from education to work, limited access to skills development, and insufficient job creation in the formal sector.



High unemployment, exclusion from decision-making, and limited opportunities continue to drive frustration, drugs abuse, crime, and migration among young people with devastating consequences¹⁰⁶. These challenges have profound human rights implications, undermining their right to work, dignity, and meaningful participation in national development. The situation is particularly acute for young women, who face compounded barriers due to gender inequality and unpaid care responsibilities.

Persistent youth marginalization has contributed to increased vulnerability to poverty, irregular migration, and social disaffection. Despite various policy interventions, weak implementation, limited institutional capacity, and inadequate investment continue to constrain progress, underscoring the urgent need for a coordinated, rights-based approach that prioritizes decent work, skills development, and inclusive governance.

¹⁰³ The Alkamba Times, Gambia Labour Force Survey 2025 Reveals Persistent Challenges in Employment, September 23, 2025, <https://alkambatimes.com/gambia-labour-force-survey-2025-reveals-persistent-challenges-in-employment/>

¹⁰⁴ Afrobarometer, Dispatch AD1070: Gambian women still face barriers to equality in education, employment, and participation in politics, <https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad1070-gambian-women-still-face-barriers-to-equality-in-education-employment-and-participation-in-politics/>

¹⁰⁵ The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS), The Gambia Labour Force Survey GLFS 2025, Labour Force Snapshot, <https://www.gbosdata.org/downloads-file/594-glfs-2025-labour-force-snapshot>

¹⁰⁶ QTV, A migrant boat carrying more than 190 people, December 25, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/QTVGM/posts/a-migrant-boat-carrying-more-than-190-people-including-at-least-45-women-and-children/1340583494747872/>

While the government continues to invest in youth development, particularly in sports, education, recreation, and related services, these interventions remain limited in scope, quality, and impact. Access to higher education is still constrained by high tuition costs, placing university education beyond the reach of many young people. In the sports sector, infrastructure remains grossly inadequate where the country effectively relies on a single national football stadium, which has been under renovation for several years, while facilities across the regions are scarce, poorly equipped, and weakly managed. Similarly, opportunities in the creative and performing arts remain underdeveloped, with no national theatre, structured arts competitions, or sustained public funding to support young talent.

In the digital economy, where many youths seek livelihoods, structural barriers persist. Social media and digital platforms are not effectively monetized locally, while internet services remain expensive, unreliable, and of low quality, further constraining innovation and income generation.

In August 2025, the PURA introduced a mobile data floor price policy¹⁰⁷, which was widely criticized for favoring GSM operators at the expense of consumers. The decision triggered public backlash and protests, with citizens and civil society actors raising concerns over affordability, access to information, and transparency in decision-making. Months later, in response to sustained public pressure, the Government directed PURA to remove the data floor price, effectively reversing the policy¹⁰⁸.

Overall, Gambian youth continue to face significant structural challenges that limit their opportunities and potential. Despite multiple government initiatives, these efforts have yet to produce transformative outcomes for the majority, leaving many young people marginalized, underemployed, and without meaningful pathways for advancement.

d. Rights of Children

The situation of children in the Gambia in 2025 remains deeply concerning despite a robust legal and policy framework. Section 29 of the 1997 Constitution guarantees children's rights to identity, participation, survival, and development, reinforced by the Children's Act, the Persons with Disabilities Act, and other national commitments. However, persistent protection challenges, including child labour, inadequate social services, and weak enforcement of child rights laws, continue to undermine these guarantees. Although Section 30(a) provides for free, compulsory, and accessible basic education, many children remain out of school due to limited school availability, poverty, and entrenched sociocultural practices. The State has also failed to consistently enforce this right, as those responsible for keeping children out of school are rarely held accountable.

Widespread poverty at both household and community levels continues to deprive children of essential needs, including adequate nutrition, healthcare, education, and protection.

¹⁰⁷ The Alkamba Times, Outrage in Gambia as PURA's Data Price Hike Sparks Backlash from GALA, Journalists, August 21, 2025, <https://alkambatimes.com/outrage-in-gambia-as-puras-data-price-hike-sparks-backlash-from-gala-journalists/>

¹⁰⁸ The Standard, Gov't says Pura directed to remove floor price on mobile data, December 11, 2025, <https://standard.gm/govt-says-pura-directed-to-remove-floor-price-on-mobile-data/>

Opportunities for holistic development remain limited, with a shortage of child-friendly public spaces, recreational facilities, and accessible social services. While the Children’s Act and the Persons with Disabilities Act mandate the establishment of child protection structures, such as children’s courts in every administrative region, implementation remains incomplete. Since the establishment of the first children’s court in Banjul¹⁰⁹ in 2006, additional courts have been set up in Kanifing, Brikama, Mansa Konko, and Basse. However, Kerewan, Janjanbureh, and Kuntaur still lack such courts, leaving significant gaps in access to child-friendly justice and protection mechanisms.



Since 2017, the protection of children’s rights to life and health in the Gambia remains gravely inadequate, particularly in homes, educational institutions, and public spaces. Several high-profile incidents underscore systemic failures in safeguarding children and ensuring accountability. In 2021, six children died in a fire at the Bilal Islamic Boarding School in Yundum¹¹⁰. Despite concerns raised by the NHRC¹¹¹, UNICEF¹¹², and CPA¹¹³ which called for

closure of the school, no one has been held accountable. In 2025, a scabies outbreak at the Daara Madina Suwaneh Qur’anic memorization school¹¹⁴ in Brufut Heights similarly exposed serious lapses in child welfare oversight yet yielded no accountability even though the Ministry of Health said they were investigating¹¹⁵.

Most alarming was the 2022 tragedy in which over 66 children died¹¹⁶ after consuming contaminated cough syrup imported from India and distributed through local pharmacies. Despite presidential¹¹⁷ and parliamentary¹¹⁸ inquiries, there has been no meaningful

¹⁰⁹ All Africa, Gambia: First Gambian Children's Court Launched, 17 February 2006, <https://allafrica.com/stories/200602170496.html#:~:text=17%20February%202006,Children's%20Act%20in%20June%202005>

¹¹⁰ The Standard, 6 die in boarding school fire, 6 die in boarding school fire, October 18, 2021, <https://standard.gm/6-die-in-boarding-school-fire/>

¹¹¹ National Human Rights Commission, The National Human Rights Commission, The Gambia PRESS RELEASE, <https://www.gm-nhrc.org/download-file/16f8a74e-4b91-11ec-86ec-022a5fa1767e>

¹¹² UNICEF Gambia, Statement by UNICEF on the fire incident at the Bilal Boarding School

18 October 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/gambia/press-releases/statement-unicef-fire-incident-bilal-boarding-school>

¹¹³ CPA Demands Closure Of Bilal Boarding School Pending Investigations, Oct 30, 2021, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/cpa-demands-closure-of-bilal-boarding-school-pending-investigations/>

¹¹⁴ The Alkamba Times, Scabies Outbreak at Gambian Quranic School Sparks Calls for Urgent Action and Accountability, May 28, 2025, <https://alkambatimes.com/scabies-outbreak-at-gambian-quranic-school-sparks-calls-for-urgent-action-and-accountability/>

¹¹⁵ Ministry of Health The Gambia, May 27, 2025, Public Health Alert: Scabies Outbreak Response at Daara Madina Suwaneh, Brufut Heights, <https://www.facebook.com/100063560141099/posts/-public-health-alert-scabies-outbreak-response-at-daara-madina-suwaneh-brufut-he/1271690738292919/>

¹¹⁶ World Health Organization, Epidemic - 2022-07 - The Gambia Acute Kidney Injury (AKI), <https://go.ifrc.org/emergencies/6198/details>

¹¹⁷ The Point, Presidential Taskforce Report confirms Indian cough killed 70 children Jul 24, 2023, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/presidential-taskforce-report-confirms-indian-cough-killed-70-children>

¹¹⁸ National Assembly, Parliamentary Inquiry Report On The Acute Kidney Injury Among Children Select Committee On Health, Disaster, Refugees And Humanitarian Relief, December 20, 2022, www.assembly.gm

accountability, prompting affected families to pursue legal action against the State, a case that remains ongoing in 2025¹¹⁹.

Harmful traditional practices continue to expose children to abuse and long-term harm. Early marriage, FGM, excessive domestic labour, and social exclusion remain prevalent despite legal prohibitions. Although FGM was banned in 2015, the practice persists with minimal enforcement¹²⁰. To date, only three convictions have been recorded, in 2023, involving the mutilation and death of eight girls between four months and one year in Niani Bakadagi¹²¹. Three women were convicted to pay a fine of D15,000 each or serve one year in jail in default. Immediately the ruling was passed, prominent pro-FGM imam Abdoulie Fatty rushed to pay off the fines¹²². In August 2025, another one-month-old child died as a result of female genital mutilation in Wellingara. Three women were subsequently charged in connection with the incident, and the case remains before the courts as of the end of 2025¹²³.

Weak public sensitization, limited monitoring, and inadequate reporting and prosecution mechanisms continue to undermine efforts to eradicate the practice¹²⁴. In 2024, attempts by some National Assembly members, led by NAM for Foni Kansala Almami Gibba, to repeal Section 32 of the Women's Act to effectively legalize FGM were met with strong resistance from the legislature, government, and civil society, leading to the failure of the amendment. However, the matter has since been taken to the Supreme Court, prolonging legal uncertainty and raising concerns about the protection of girls from harmful practices.

Children with disabilities face heightened levels of exclusion and deprivation across healthcare, education, recreation, and other essential social services. Access to inclusive education remains severely limited. There are no public schools specifically dedicated to children with disabilities. Existing specialized institutions are largely operated by faith-based organizations and DPOs. These include St. John's School for the Deaf (Catholic Mission), the GOVI School for the Blind, and a school run by GFD, all located in Kanifing, as well as a facility for children with physical disabilities operated by GADHOH in Brikama. Notably, there are no specialized schools in the provincial regions, leaving children with disabilities outside urban areas almost entirely without access to appropriate education.

¹¹⁹ Askanwi Media, High Court Grants Defendant's Motion to Call Additional Witness in AKI Case, 02, December 2025, <https://www.askanwi.com/feature-publications/high-court-grants-defendants-motion-to-call-additional-witness-in-aki-case>

¹²⁰ Humanium, Progress and challenges in ending female genital mutilation (FGM) in The Gambia Posted on [October 28, 2025](https://www.humanium.org/en/progress-and-challenges-in-ending-female-genital-mutilation-fgm-in-the-gambia/), <https://www.humanium.org/en/progress-and-challenges-in-ending-female-genital-mutilation-fgm-in-the-gambia/>

¹²¹ UNFPA Gambia, Landmark Convictions Signal Progress In The Fight Against Fgm In The Gambia, 06 September 2023, <https://gambia.unfpa.org/en/news/landmark-convictions-signal-progress-fight-against-fgm-gambia>

¹²² The Standard, Imam Fatty, Others Pay Fines for Women Convicted of FGM September 4, 2023, <https://standard.gm/imam-fatty-others-pay-fines-for-women-convicted-of-fgm/>

¹²³ Reuters, Gambian police charge three women after death of newborn girl linked to FGM, August 14, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/gambian-police-charge-three-women-after-death-newborn-girl-linked-fgm-2025-08-14/>

¹²⁴ Aljazeera, 'Cut in secret': Gambia anti-FGM activists fear babies targeted despite ban, 29 August 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/29/cut-in-secret-gambia-anti-fgm-activists-fear-babies-targeted-despite-ban>

Although national education policy provides for inclusive education, implementation remains weak. Despite efforts by MoBSE¹²⁵ and partners¹²⁶, there is a shortage of trained special needs teachers, with only a limited number of itinerant specialists available, and most public schools lack the necessary learning materials and support systems. As a result, children with disabilities are disproportionately excluded from education and development opportunities.

More broadly, child poverty remains widespread, with stark disparities between rural and urban areas further compounding exclusion. While the Government has taken steps, including the establishment of a dedicated ministry for children and established child protection units within some institutions, these efforts have yet to translate into meaningful, nationwide access to inclusive services and protection for all children, especially children with disabilities.

e. Right to Diversity and Inclusion

The Gambia is a multiethnic, multireligious, and socially diverse society. Section 33 of the 1997 Constitution guarantees equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on any grounds. This constitutional protection is reinforced by a range of laws and policies promoting inclusion, including frameworks on gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities, children, older persons, and other vulnerable groups. In principle, these instruments provide a comprehensive legal foundation for an inclusive and equitable society.

Over the decades, the Gambia has made notable efforts to advance diversity and inclusion through legislation and international commitments. Key laws such as the Women’s Act, the Children’s Act, and the Persons with Disabilities Act have been enacted to safeguard the rights



The 10th International Women Power Conference in Celebration of Women’s Leadership – one of the many international women’s conferences hosted in the Gambia

¹²⁵ The Point, MoBSE trains 20 new Itinerant teachers to support inclusive education, Sep 23, 2025, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/mobse-trains-20-new-itinerant-teachers-to-support-inclusive-education>

¹²⁶ The Voice, CRS, EU Launch Disability-Inclusive Education Project in The Gambia, December 22, 2025, <https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/12/22/crs-eu-launch-disability-inclusive-education-project-in-the-gambia/>

of marginalized groups. Additionally, the country is a party to major regional and international human rights instruments, including the Maputo Protocol, CEDAW, and CRPD, among others. Institutionally, several bodies have been established to promote inclusion and social protection. These include the Women’s Bureau (established in 1980), the Department of Social Welfare, gender, and children’s units within public institutions, and more recently, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare¹²⁷ and the National Disability Council. Together, these frameworks and institutions demonstrate a sustained commitment to advancing equality and inclusion, although their effectiveness ultimately depends on implementation and enforcement.

The establishment of these policies¹²⁸, laws, and institutions has been complemented by a range of initiatives aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion, particularly through conferences, forums, and public engagements. In 2025 alone, several high-level events focused on women’s empowerment and gender equality were held. These included the National Conference on Women’s Political Participation and Representation¹²⁹ in December 2025 under the theme “Breaking Barriers, Building Power,” aimed at addressing the low representation of women in politics, the 10th International Women Power Conference (IWPC)¹³⁰ in November 2025, celebrating women’s leadership and innovation, the Merck Foundation Africa-Asia Luminary Conference in October 2025, which addressed health and social challenges including women’s empowerment, and the Women and Girls Climate Conference¹³¹ in September 2025, focusing on climate resilience and gender equality. The Gambia also continues to mark International Women’s Day annually on March 8. At the international level, the country has maintained a longstanding commitment, having participated in landmark global processes such as the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Conference on Women, and hosting the Beijing+15 Africa review conference in 2009.

Similarly, initiatives to advance the rights of persons with disabilities have continued, with notable activities in 2025. In September, the National Human Rights Commission convened a national forum on disability rights¹³², emphasizing the implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act. In April, a national conference on autism was held to promote awareness, education on neurodiversity, and support for individuals with autism and related conditions. Throughout the year, various workshops and seminars were organized to strengthen inclusion

¹²⁷ Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, <https://mogcsw.gov.gm/>

¹²⁸ UNDP Gambia, The Gambia Launches UNDP Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions, October 6, 2025, <https://www.undp.org/gambia/press-releases/gambia-launches-undp-gender-equality-seal-public-institutions>

¹²⁹ International Idea, National Conference on Women’s Political Participation and Representation in The Gambia, 15 December 2025 - 16 December 2025, <https://www.idea.int/events/national-conference-womens-political-participation-and-representation-gambia>

¹³⁰ The Alkamba Times, Gambia Hosts 10th International Women Power Conference in Celebration of Women’s Leadership, November 28, 2025, <https://alkambatimes.com/gambia-hosts-10th-international-women-power-conference-in-celebration-of-womens-leadership/#:~:text=Over%20the%20past%20decade%2C%20IWPC,leadership%20on%20the%20world%20stage.>

¹³¹ The Alkamba Times, Women and Girls Climate Conference 2025 Champions Resilience and Gender Equality in Banjul. September 6, 2025, <https://alkambatimes.com/women-and-girls-climate-conference-2025-champions-resilience-and-gender-equality-in-banjul/#:~:text=National%20News-,%20Women%20and%20Girls%20Climate%20Conference%202025%20Champions%20Resilience%20and%20Gender,and%20imple,mentation%20significantly%20enhances%20outcomes.>

¹³² The Point, NHRC opens national forum to advance disability rights in Gambia, Sep 10, 2025, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/nhrc-opens-national-forum-to-advance-disability-rights-in-gambia#:~:text=NHRC%20opens%20national%20forum%20to,gathering%20as%20timely%20and%20necessary.>

across sectors. Collectively, these initiatives, alongside existing legal and institutional frameworks, demonstrate a broad recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion in the Gambia, even as significant gaps remain in implementation and outcomes.

In practice, however, discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion remain pervasive. Many citizens continue to face systemic barriers based on ethnicity, sex, disability, age, origin, and other status. These violations manifest hate speech, social and economic exclusion, underrepresentation in decision-making, and limited participation in public life.

Representation gaps are particularly pronounced within national institutions. Women remain significantly underrepresented in the Cabinet, with no persons with disabilities or many minority groups included. In the National Assembly, several ethnic and religious minorities, such as Christians, Manjago, Karoninka, Aku, and Mankagne, have no representation, and there are no members with disabilities. Political party leadership also remains overwhelmingly male, further entrenching the exclusion of women from positions of power.

Despite existing legal and policy commitments, the realization of diversity and inclusion remains limited. Efforts to introduce affirmative action measures, such as the proposed 2021 constitutional amendment to increase women's representation in Parliament, failed to materialize¹³³. Consequently, large segments of the population remain excluded from social, economic, and political processes. This systemic exclusion not only violates the right to equality and non-discrimination but also weakens democratic governance and undermines the broader protection and enjoyment of human rights in the Gambia.

5.4 UNLAWFUL ACTIONS

a. Arbitrary Arrest and Detention

Section 18 of the 1997 Constitution guarantees protection from arbitrary arrest and detention, affirming that no person shall be deprived of liberty except in accordance with the law. The Criminal Procedure Act reinforces these safeguards by stipulating that arrest is only lawful where there is reasonable suspicion of or act of commission of an offence (Section 7), that the person must be promptly informed of the reasons for the arrest (Section 9), and that their family must be notified (Section 10). The Constitution requires that an arrested person be informed of the reasons for their arrest within three hours.

With respect to detention, Section 19 provides that any person detained must be brought promptly before a court of law or released on bail, and in any event, cannot be held in custody beyond 72 hours. These provisions establish clear procedural safeguards intended to protect individual liberty and prevent abuse of power.

¹³³ Kerr Fatou, Parliament Again Fails To Vote On Constitution Amendment Bill, Feb 21, 2022, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/parliament-again-fails-to-vote-on-constitution-amendment-bill/#:~:text=The%20speaker%20further%20stated%20that,absence%20of%20the%20required%20threshold.>

However, in 2025, there have been multiple instances of arrests and detentions that fall short of these legal standards. Reports indicate cases of prolonged detention beyond the constitutional limit, failure to promptly inform detainees of the reasons for arrest, and lack of due process, raising serious concerns about compliance with both constitutional and statutory protections.

- May 2025: More than 25 individuals¹³⁴ were arrested on May 8, 2025, when protesters gathered at the Memorial Arch to demand transparency and accountability in the alleged illegal sale and disposal of assets linked to former President Yahya Jammeh. The protest was triggered by an investigative report by Mustapha K. Darboe, Editor-in-Chief of The Republic¹³⁵, which documented multiple instances of corruption, disregard for the law, and conflicts of interest in the handling of these assets.



*Ghetto Pen
abused*

The police swiftly dispersed the assembly, sparking further protests across the Greater Banjul Area over the following three days. During this period, several protesters were arrested and detained, with reports of excessive use of force. Notably, one protester, Ebrima Jallow, widely known as “Ghetto Pen”¹³⁶ was violently assaulted by police officers and subsequently hospitalized.

- August 2025: On August 22, 2025, at least 23 individuals were arrested¹³⁷ for protesting against the PURA mobile data price floor. After being held for 72 hours in various police cells, they were arraigned before the Kanifing Magistrates’ Court on August 25 and charged with unlawful assembly. The court subsequently remanded them to Mile Two Central Prison¹³⁸, a decision that triggered further public protests and led to the arrest and detention of an additional 19 protesters¹³⁹ during which the police deployed excessive force and teargas. While these 19 individuals were later granted bail, they remain under police charge without being promptly brought before a court, in clear violation of their constitutional rights.

¹³⁴ APNews, [World News](https://apnews.com/article/gambia-protest-jammeh-de25c0b03eca2cf74283b0c1048b7185), 27 people arrested in a protest in Gambia over the sale of a former dictator’s assets, <https://apnews.com/article/gambia-protest-jammeh-de25c0b03eca2cf74283b0c1048b7185>

¹³⁵ The Republic, The assets of Gambia’s former dictator go for a song, April 30, 2025, <https://therepublic.gm/the-assets-of-gambias-former-dictator-go-for-a-song/3042>

¹³⁶ Kerr Fatou, Gambian Activist “Ghetto Pen” Reportedly Injured While In Police Custody, May 9, 2025, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/gambian-activist-ghetto-pen-reportedly-injured-while-in-police-custody/>

¹³⁷ EU System for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society, Arrest of protesters in The Gambia, August 27, 2025, <https://eusee.hivos.org/alert/arrest-of-protesters-in-the-gambia/>

¹³⁸ The Point, 23 PURA protesters refused court bail, remanded at prison, Aug 26, 2025,

<https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/23-pura-protesters-refused-court-bail-remanded-at-prison>

¹³⁹ The Alkamba Times, 19 Protesters Arrested in Clash with Police Over PURA’s Data Price Hike, August 22, 2025, <https://alkambatimes.com/19-protesters-arrested-in-clash-with-police-over-puras-data-price-hike/>



Youths on trial at Kanifing Magistrates Court

The arrests were unlawful. Under Sections 5 is only required where a protest involves a procession or the use of a public address system. The August 22 protest, organized by GALA, TSGP, and EFSCRJ, did not involve either and therefore required no permit. Despite this, the police arrested and detained dozens of protesters and employed excessive force in dispersing the

gathering. These actions constitute a direct violation of the right to peaceful assembly and due process and reflect a broader pattern of unlawful restrictions on civic space.

- August 2025: A former military officer, Abdoulie Sanyang, was arrested and subsequently detained on August 17, 2025, in connection with remarks he made during an appearance on the current affairs program, Coffee Time with Peter Gomez on West Coast Radio¹⁴⁰. In the interview, Sanyang made strong and controversial statements regarding his past role in the military, his alleged involvement in the burning of the APRC Bureau, and his opposition to President Barrow. The police justified his arrest on the basis of “security-related remarks” made during the broadcast¹⁴¹. He has since been remanded at Mile Two Central Prison and is standing trial on charges including arson, seditious intention, incitement to violence, and obstruction of justice.



Abdoulie Sanyang

While some of Sanyang’s statements may be considered provocative or inappropriate, they fall within the scope of his constitutional right to freedom of opinion and expression. The criminalization of such speech raises serious concerns about the misuse of security-related justifications to suppress dissenting views. His arrest, prolonged detention, and prosecution therefore point to a troubling infringement on fundamental freedoms and due process guarantees.

- September 2025: Three protesters, Omar Camara, Alieu Bah, and Kemo Fatty¹⁴², were arbitrarily arrested and detained during a protest against the unlawful removal of Auditor General Momodou Ceesay. The incident followed reports that Mr. Ceesay had been offered an appointment as Minister of Trade on September 10, which he declined¹⁴³. On September 15, an armed police contingent entered the premises of

¹⁴⁰ The Point, Ex-soldier arrested over claims of assassination plot against Barrow, Aug 19, 2025, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/ex-soldier-arrested-over-claims-of-assassination-plot-against-barrow>

¹⁴¹ The Gambia Police Force, August 18, 2025, FLASH REPORT, DATE: August 17, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/PolisoMagazine/posts/flash-reportdate-august-17-2025the-gambia-police-force-confirms-the-arrest-of-mr/1048176864193343/>

¹⁴² The Gambia Police Force, Flash Report, Police Arrest Five Individuals For Unlawful Assembly At National Audit Office, Date: September 15, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/PolisoMagazine/posts/flash-reportpolice-arrest-five-individuals-for-unlawful-assembly-at-national-aud/1070289688648727/>

¹⁴³ Kerr Fatou, Auditor General Modou Ceesay Declines Appointment As Trade Minister, Sep 11, 2025, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/auditor-general-modou-ceesay-declines-appointment-as-trade-minister/>

the National Audit Office to remove him, prompting public protests led by GALA. During the protest, the three individuals arrested were subsequently charged. During the protest, the police used excessive force including tossing activist Alieu Bah onto a truck¹⁴⁴, and indiscriminate use of teargas, raising serious concerns about the suppression of lawful dissent and violations of constitutional protections on liberty and peaceful assembly.



b. Weaponization of Laws and Institutions

Section 1(2) of the 1997 Constitution affirms that sovereignty resides in the people and that all Gambians are equal in rights. Section 17 imposes a binding obligation on the State to respect, protect, and fulfill the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in Chapter IV. In addition, Section 214(5) under the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution requires the Government to promote accountability and transparency at all levels, while Section 222 under the Code of Conduct for Public Officers obliges public officials to act without prejudice and to avoid nepotism and favoritism. These provisions collectively establish the foundation for equality before the law, impartial governance, and non-discriminatory application of justice.



Notwithstanding these guarantees, and public commitments by state authorities, including the President's pledge in January 2025 to combat corruption without fear or favour¹⁴⁵, and the Inspector General of Police Seedy Muctarr Touray's assurance of impartial law enforcement¹⁴⁶, there have been multiple instances in 2025 indicating selective application of the law.

¹⁴⁴ [What's On - Gambia, September 15, 2025](#), Police recruits throwing activist Alieu Bah into a pickup truck.

¹⁴⁵ The Standard, [BARROW VOWS GOV'T WILL GO TOUGH AGAINST CORRUPTION Says even relatives will not be spared](#), January 27, 2025, <https://standard.gm/barrow-vows-govt-will-gotough-against-corruption-says-even-relatives-will-not-be-spared/>

¹⁴⁶ Kerr Fatou, Maiden Press Conference by the IGP Seedy Muctarr Touray, June 16, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/Kerrfatou/posts/at-his-maiden-press-conference-on-june-16-2024-inspector-general-of-police-igp-t/1061977549290355/>

“Issues like tribal bigotry, violent rhetoric, insulting our elders, and insulting our leaders, must cease in this country. I am saying this because there will be no selective justice—rule for one, rule for all. If anyone dares to challenge this statement from the Inspector General of Police, as soon as we finish this press briefing, you can go in the air and start insulting the elders of this country. We will not relent; we will execute our functions as law enforcement elements of this country,” IGP Seedy Muctarr Touray¹⁴⁷.

Evidence suggests that supporters of the ruling party, including public officials and party members, have engaged in inflammatory rhetoric, insults, and attacks against opposition figures, critics, journalists, and human rights defenders without facing legal consequences. Conversely, similar, and even lawful expressions by opposition members, critics, activists, and journalists have resulted in arrests, detention, and prosecution. This pattern of differential treatment undermines the rule of law, violates constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination, and erodes public trust in state institutions.

- February 2025: On February 24, a prominent Barrow supporter, Baboucarr Bahoum, publicly insulted the people of Kiang on Facebook¹⁴⁸, describing them as “the most ungrateful people” following the Masembeh by-election in which the NPP candidate lost. Although the police invited him for questioning¹⁴⁹ after public outcry, the matter was subsequently dismissed on the basis of an apology¹⁵⁰. Bahoum has a documented pattern¹⁵¹ of using abusive and inflammatory language against political opponents and critics of the Government, yet has never been arrested or prosecuted, suggesting a pattern of selective non-enforcement and protection from accountability.
- March 2025: On March 19, the Minister of Tourism, Hamat Bah, referred to members of the opposition as “big mouths” while speaking on the floor of the National Assembly¹⁵². This statement, consistent with his prior characterization of the opposition as “rats¹⁵³,” drew no formal rebuke or sanction from either the President or law enforcement authorities, reflecting tolerance for derogatory and inflammatory rhetoric by public officials.
- May 2025: On May 17, Fatoumatta Jahumpa Ceesay, the Gambia’s Ambassador to South Africa, was heard in a WhatsApp audio recording using derogatory language against UDP National Assembly members and activists, including Juka Ceesay, among others¹⁵⁴. Despite the clear implications for violations of the constitutional Code of

¹⁴⁷ Ibid

¹⁴⁸ [The Fatu Network, February 24, 2025](https://www.facebook.com/fatunetwork/posts/breaking-police-have-summoned-baboucarr-bahoum-for-questioning-after-his-social-1172192287633008/), BREAKING: Police have summoned Baboucarr Bahoum for questioning after his social media posts in the wake of the Kiang Councillor election, <https://www.facebook.com/fatunetwork/posts/breaking-police-have-summoned-baboucarr-bahoum-for-questioning-after-his-social-1172192287633008/>

¹⁴⁹ Gambiana, [Gambian police question Baboucarr Bahoum after calling Kiang residents ‘ungrateful’](https://www.gambiannews.com/gambian-police-question-baboucarr-bahoum-after-calling-kiang-residents-ungrateful/), February 24, 2025

¹⁵⁰ ARPS Media, [The Police Chief Dismisses Bahoum’s Comments and Views His Apology as a Goodwill Gesture](https://arpsmedia.com/the-police-chief-dismisses-bahoums-comments-and-views-his-apology-as-a-goodwill-gesture/), March 1, 2025, <https://arpsmedia.com/the-police-chief-dismisses-bahoums-comments-and-views-his-apology-as-a-goodwill-gesture/>

¹⁵¹ Baboucarr Bahoum’s pattern of insults, <https://www.facebook.com/fatou.touray.96/posts/some-of-the-instances-baboucarr-bahoum-insulted-prominent-politicians-but-the-po/10220393109537296/>

¹⁵² The Standard, [Hamat sparks uproar in National Assembly calling opposition ‘big mouths’](https://standard.gm/hamat-sparks-uproar-in-national-assembly-calling-opposition-big-mouths/), March 21, 2025, <https://standard.gm/hamat-sparks-uproar-in-national-assembly-calling-opposition-big-mouths/>

¹⁵³ Kairaba News Network, [Hamat Bah Apologises for ‘Rat’ Comment](http://kairabanewsnetwork.com/hamat-bah-apologises-for-rat-comment/), October 19, 2020, <http://kairabanewsnetwork.com/hamat-bah-apologises-for-rat-comment/>

¹⁵⁴ The Alkamba Times, [Ambassador FJC Faces Backlash Over Leaked Audio Attacking UDP and Activists](https://alkambatimes.com/ambassador-fjc-faces-backlash-over-leaked-audio-attacking-udp-and-activists/), May 18, 2025, <https://alkambatimes.com/ambassador-fjc-faces-backlash-over-leaked-audio-attacking-udp-and-activists/>

Conduct for Public Officers, no action was taken by the police – no questioning, arrest, or prosecution – further underscoring weak enforcement standards.

- October 2025: On October 22, presidential adviser Momodou Sabally described opposition leader Essa Mbye Faal as “a person with the character of a vulture” on Facebook¹⁵⁵. No action was taken by law enforcement, continuing the pattern of impunity for politically aligned actors.
- Pattern of Selective Enforcement: Beyond these cases, several ruling party supporters, including individuals such as Mama Jabbi and Baba Jah, have repeatedly engaged in public insults and attacks against opposition leaders and government critics without consequence on social media. Notably, in October, while Mama Jabbi had persistently targeted NDP leader Kebba Madi Bojang without sanction, her complaint led to the summoning of NDP supporters by the Kabafita Police Post¹⁵⁶ for alleged verbal messages. This contrast highlights a clear pattern of unequal application of the law, where enforcement appears contingent on political alignment¹⁵⁷ rather than legal standards.

In contrast, multiple cases in 2025 demonstrate that individuals who criticize the President or Government policies, or who engage in protest, are subjected to swift police action, prosecution, and punishment, highlighting a pattern of selective enforcement.

- January 2025: Ebrima Dibba, a former UDP executive and current UMC executive member, continued to face trial on charges of sedition¹⁵⁸ stemming from remarks critical of the President made in 2024. His prolonged prosecution underscores the use of criminal law to penalize dissenting political expression.
- July 2025: Mariama Naba Darboe was convicted by the Brusubi Magistrates’ Court and fined D40,000 or, in default, sentenced to one month imprisonment for insulting President Barrow¹⁵⁹. The Criminal Offenses Act 2025 prohibits parental insult directed at public officials¹⁶⁰. The case raises concerns about the criminalization of speech and disproportionate penalties for expression.
- August 2025: As previously noted, 23 youths are currently on trial, while an additional 19 remain under police charge for unlawful assembly and related offences following

¹⁵⁵ Facebook, Momodou Sabally’s page, October 22, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/TheGambiasPen/posts/it-is-quite-a-remarkable-irony-that-essa-faal-is-accusing-this-government-of-dec/1357823352369031/>

¹⁵⁶ The Standard, NDP says Mama Jabbi got police to summon their supporters, October 17, 2025, <https://standard.gm/ndp-says-mama-jabbi-got-police-to-summon-their-supporters/>

¹⁵⁷ Africa Press, NDP Warns NPP to Curb Personal Attacks on its Leadership, 2025-10-16, <https://www.africa-press.net/gambia/all-news/ndp-warns-npp-to-curb-personal-attacks-on-its-leadership>

¹⁵⁸ Kerr Fatou, Court Orders Ebrima Dibba to Open Defence in Sedition Trial, Jan 1, 2025, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/court-orders-ebri-ma-dibba-to-open-defence-in-sedition-trial/>

¹⁵⁹ The Standard, Woman convicted for insulting president, July 23, 2025, <https://standard.gm/woman-convicted-for-insulting-president/>

¹⁶⁰ Gambiana, [Gambian parliament approves law penalising insults against state officials](https://gambiana.com/gambian-parliament-approves-law-penalising-insults-against-state-officials/), April 2, 2025, <https://gambiana.com/gambian-parliament-approves-law-penalising-insults-against-state-officials/>

protests against the PURA data price floor¹⁶¹. These arrests and prosecutions lack legal basis, as the protest did not require a permit under the Public Order Act. In a press release released to that effect the NHRC called on the police to drop the charges¹⁶². The continued prosecution of these individuals and restrictions due to the police charge reflect the misuse of legal and security frameworks to suppress peaceful assembly.

- December 2025: On December 4, UDP executive member Borry Touray was summoned to police headquarters, detained, and charged with incitement to violence following remarks made at a political meeting in which he strongly criticized the President. He remains on trial, further illustrating the targeting of opposition figures by the police¹⁶³.

Taken together, these cases reveal a troubling pattern in which legal and security institutions are selectively deployed against critics and opposition actors, while similar or even more egregious conduct by politically aligned individuals goes unpunished. This differential application of the law undermines the constitutional principle of equality before the law and constitutes a serious threat to fundamental rights and democratic governance.

c. Police Brutality The Gambia has a longstanding history of brutality by armed and security forces against citizens, including torture, beatings, rape, and extrajudicial



Protester in Brikama carried by Red Cross volunteers

killings. This pattern is deeply rooted in past abuses. On April 10 and 11, 2000, security forces shot and killed 16 students, including a Red Cross volunteer Omar Barrow¹⁶⁴, and subjected many others to torture and sexual violence during protests demanding justice for earlier cases of police brutality – the killing of schoolboy Ebrima Barry by fire service officers and the rape of schoolgirl Binta Manneh by PIU agents¹⁶⁵. Similarly, on April 14, 2016, security forces violently

suppressed a peaceful protest for electoral reforms led by Solo Sandeng and fellow UDP members. Protesters were arrested and detained at the NIA, and subjected to severe torture, resulting in the death of Sandeng¹⁶⁶ and the sexual abuse of female

¹⁶¹ The Alkamba Times, 23 Peaceful Protesters Face New Charges in Anti-PURA Demonstration Case, October 2, 2025, <https://alkambatimes.com/23-peaceful-protesters-face-new-charges-in-anti-pura-demonstration-case/>

¹⁶² The Standard, NHRC Asks Gov't To Withdraw Charges Against Protesters, Amend Public Order Act, August 27, 2025, <https://standard.gm/nhrc-asks-govt-to-withdraw-charges-against-protesters-amend-public-order-act/>

¹⁶³ The Point, Lawyer Borry S. Touray charged with incitement of violence. Dec 5, 2025, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/lawyer-borry-s-touray-charged-with-incitement-of-violence>

¹⁶⁴ Truth, Reconciliations and Reparations Commission, The Gambia, REPORT, VOLUME 6, APRIL 10 & 11 2000, STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, <https://www.moj.gm/download-file/0ebc0af2-6446-11ec-8f4f-025103a708b7>

¹⁶⁵ Ibid

¹⁶⁶ Amnesty International, Press Release, 16 April 2016, Gambia: Death in detention of key political activist, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2016/04/gambia-death-in-detention-of-key-political-activist/>

detainees. During the Jammeh era, protests were either suppressed entirely or met with extreme violence and heavy casualties¹⁶⁷.

Despite the political transition in 2016, the use of excessive force by security forces has persisted. In June 2018, three protesters were shot dead in Faraba¹⁶⁸ during demonstrations against sand mining, during which journalist Pa Modou Bojang was assaulted by police¹⁶⁹. Subsequent protests, including those by the Three Years Jotna movement (2019–2020)¹⁷⁰, spontaneous demonstrations following the death of Serre Kunda market vendor Ousman Darboe¹⁷¹ allegedly tortured in police custody, and the “Occupy BAC” protest¹⁷² in Brikama whose request for permit was denied by the police¹⁷³, were met with heavy-handed responses.

Incidents of excessive force including use of teargas also occurred at the compound of opposition UDP leader Ousainou Darboe following their rejection of the results of the 2021 presidential elections. The police action was condemned by the NHRC¹⁷⁴. Also, during the 2022 parliamentary nominations in Brikama¹⁷⁵. In August 2024 soldiers shot and injured a civilian, Stanislav Gomez, at a military checkpoint in Bijilo¹⁷⁶. Police brutality continues to be reported in the context of arrests, detention, community operations, and public assemblies.

NHRC, in collaboration with the Gambia Police Force, has developed a Code of Conduct¹⁷⁷ for the Police and Guidelines on Policing Public Assemblies¹⁷⁸. These instruments, alongside

¹⁶⁷ Media Foundation for West Africa, *The Gambia Under Yahya Jammeh: 22 Years of Repression and Rights Violations*, <https://mfwa.org/country-highlights/the-gambia-under-yahya-jammeh-22-years-of-repression-and-rights-violations/>

¹⁶⁸ The Faraba Banta Commission of Inquiry Report

¹⁶⁹ International Federation of Journalists, Press Release, *The Gambia: Journalist brutally assaulted and arrested*, 22 June 2018, <https://www.ifj.org/es/sala-de-prensa/noticias/detalle/category/human-rights/article/the-gambia-journalist-brutally-assaulted-and-arrested>

¹⁷⁰ Amnesty International, 27 January 2020, *Gambia: Mass arrests risk fuelling tensions*,

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/01/gambia-mass-arrests-risk-fuelling-tensions/>

¹⁷¹ Civicus, *Several arrested during protests* 24 July 2019, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/Several-arrested-during-protests/>

¹⁷² The Voice, *Occupy BAC Protest 50 Wounded, 8 Arrested*, July 24, 2019,

<https://www.voicegambia.com/2019/07/24/occupy-bac-protest-50-wounded-8-arrested/>

¹⁷³ *The Gambia Police Force, August 2, 2019*, IGP's Press Statement On The Issue Of Brikama Permit Refusal, Statement Dated: 29th July, 2019 Banjul, The Gambia, <https://www.facebook.com/PolisoMagazine/posts/igps-press-statement-on-the-issue-of-brikama-permit-refusalstatement-dated-29th-1282453441916162/>

¹⁷⁴ Gambiana, *Police condemned for firing tear gas on UDP supporters*

in *News* — by Adama Makasuba — December 7, 2021, <https://gambiana.com/police-condemned-for-firing-tear-gas-on-udp-supporters/#:~:text=in%20News%20%E2%80%94%20by%20Adama%20Makasuba,done%20throughout%20the%20electoral%20cycle.>

¹⁷⁵ Jollof News, *Police Under Fire For Beating Opposition Supporter At Brikama Protest*, March 16, 2022,

<https://jollofnews.gm/police-under-fire-for-beating-opposition-supporter-at-brikama-protest/#:~:text=NHRC%20Condemns%20Assault%20Of%20Opposition,Sabally's%20nomination%20by%20the%20Independent%20%20A6>

¹⁷⁶ The Standard, *Checkpoint shooting victim accuses army of false statement*

October 1, 2024, <https://standard.gm/checkpoint-shooting-victim-accuses-army-of-false-statement/>

¹⁷⁷ National Human Rights Commission, *Guidelines on Policing Public Assemblies in The Gambia*, <https://www.gm-nhrc.org/download-file/f9783686-9c4e-11eb-86ec-022a5fa1767e>

¹⁷⁸ Code of Conduct for the Gambia Police Force, <https://www.gm-nhrc.org/download-file/fa6c59fd-c457-11ea-9dc8-022a5fa1767e>

training and support from civil society¹⁷⁹, foreign governments¹⁸⁰, regional¹⁸¹, and international partners¹⁸², are intended to align policing practices with human rights standards. However, recurring incidents of police brutality indicate weak enforcement, limited accountability, and a persistent culture of impunity within the security sector. As a result, the right to life, liberty, and freedom from torture and ill-treatment remains inadequately protected.

Notwithstanding ongoing reforms, multiple incidents of police brutality were recorded in 2025, reflecting a persistent pattern of excessive force and abuse of power by law enforcement.

- January 2025: On January 21, 2025, the Gambia Police Force (GPF) announced the dismissal of Sergeant Lamin Gibba for “gross misconduct and discreditable behavior” following an internal investigation that found him in breach of the police Code of Conduct. The action stemmed from a widely circulated video from late 2024/early 2025 showing Sgt. Gibba stripping a couple naked at Lemon Creek Beach, threatening to blackmail them, and attempting to extort D30,000¹⁸³.



Auditor General Momodou Ceesay being removed from his office by the police

- August and September 2025: During protests against the PURA data price floor and related court proceedings, and protests against the illegal removal of the Auditor General, security forces used disproportionate force, including beatings, throwing protesters into vehicles, and indiscriminate deployment of teargas, resulting in injuries and hospitalizations. Police action was

condemned by the NHRC¹⁸⁴.

¹⁷⁹ The Point, CRPD hosts dialogue to enhance human rights, Civil Society collaboration, Aug 28, 2024, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/national-news/crpd-hosts-dialogue-to-enhance-human-rights-civil-society-collaboration>

¹⁸⁰ GIZ, Improving national police structures in The Gambia, <https://www.giz.de/en/projects/building-future-making-it-gambia-eutf-gambia>

¹⁸¹ ECOWAS Mission, ECOWAS Security Sector Reform & Governance Training Workshop, 21st - 23th February 2022, <https://www.africansecuritynetwork.org/assn/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Report-The-Gambia-ECOWAS-SSRG-Training-Workshop.pdf>

¹⁸² Delegation of the European Union to the Gambia, The European Union, DCAF and the Gambia Police Force celebrate the successful training of 20 female officers, 06.02.2025, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/gambia/european-union-dcaf-and-gambia-police-force-celebrate-successful-training-20-female-officers_en

¹⁸³ Gambiana, Police Sergeant dismissed for stripping couple naked on beach, January 21, 2025, <https://gambiana.com/police-sergeant-dismissed-for-stripping-couple-naked-on-beach/>

¹⁸⁴ The Voice, NHRC Condemns Police Heavy-Handedness, Urges Government to Uphold Protest Rights, August 27, 2025, <https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/08/27/nhrc-condemns-police-heavy-handedness-urges-government-to-uphold-protest-rights/>

- September 2025: A police operation in Mandinari in Kombo North targeting youths allegedly involved in cannabis use or possession¹⁸⁵ resulted in the fatal beating of Omar Badjie¹⁸⁶. Subsequent community protests were also met with excessive force and violent dispersal¹⁸⁷.
- September 2025: In Jabang, a police operation during a protest by youths over land dispute in the community led to indiscriminate use of teargas, excessive force, and unlawful intrusion into private homes, including that of journalist Khadija Bokum¹⁸⁸. She and her family were harassed, and her phone was forcibly seized by a police officer.
- Throughout 2025: EFSCRJ documented numerous complaints from individuals alleging brutality during arrests, detention, and routine police encounters, including at checkpoints, on beaches, and in other public and private spaces.



Since 2017, the government has undertaken security sector reforms with significant donor support¹⁸⁹, reportedly exceeding seven billion dalasi¹⁹⁰. However, these investments have yet to translate into meaningful behavioral change within the police. Despite the adoption of a Code of Conduct and Guidelines on Policing Public Assemblies, the incidence police brutality remains widespread while accountability is weak.

Investigations into misconduct are often announced but rarely concluded transparently, and disciplinary or criminal sanctions are seldom enforced. Even where courts have ruled against the police, such as in cases involving journalist Pa Modou Bojang and comedian Alhagie Bora Sisawo, compliance with judgments, including payment of compensation, has been inconsistent.

Police brutality poses a direct and serious threat to fundamental rights, including the right to life, personal liberty, and freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, which are rights that are entrenched and non-derogable under the 1997 Constitution.

¹⁸⁵ The Gambia Police Force, September 27, 2025, Update: Police Respond To Incident In Mandinary, Date: September 27, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/PolisoMagazine/posts/updatepolice-respond-to-incident-in-mandinarydate-september-27-2025the-gambia-po/1079800834364279/>

¹⁸⁶ The Voice, Four Police Officers Detain in Relation to Omar Badjie's Death, October 3, 2025, <https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/10/03/four-police-officers-detain-in-relation-to-omar-badjies-death/>

¹⁸⁷ The Point, Death in Custody: Mandinari protest echoes calls against police brutality Sep 29, 2025, https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/death-in-custody-mandinari-protest-echoes-calls-against-police-brutality#google_vignette

¹⁸⁸ Kerr Fatou, abang Residents Accuse PIU Officers of Brutality and Theft During Land Dispute Clash, Sep 21, 2025, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/jabang-residents-accuse-piu-officers-of-brutality-and-theft-during-land-dispute-clash/>

¹⁸⁹ UNOWAS, United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Launch of the Security Sector Reform process in The Gambia, 12 September 2017, <https://unowas.unmissions.org/en/launch-security-sector-reform-process-gambia>

¹⁹⁰ Malagen, D7.2 Billion Later, Old Laws, Same Problems for Security Forces, <https://malagen.org/investigations/the-big-story/d7-2-billion-later-old-laws-same-problems-for-security-forces/>

d. The Incidence of Bribery and Corruption

Bribery and corruption remain major obstacles to the respect, protection, and fulfillment of human rights. Public perception remains alarmingly high, with 67%¹⁹¹ of citizens in 2025 identifying corruption as a major problem. Corruption does not only divert public resources but also enables and conceals human rights violations, as officials often breach laws and rights to sustain and hide illicit practices. According to Transparency International, the Gambia's Corruption Perceptions Index score fell to 37 out of 100 in 2025¹⁹², ranking 99th out of 180 countries, underscoring persistent weaknesses in public sector integrity and accountability.

The Constitution seeks to address this menace through various checks and balances, including disqualification from public office, a Code of Conduct for public officers under Section 222, and mandatory asset declaration under Section 223. Despite these safeguards, corruption has persisted as a systemic governance challenge in the Gambia. The Janneh Commission found that former dictator Yahya Jammeh misappropriated at least US\$362 million¹⁹³, alongside vast assets including hundreds of properties and significant cash holdings, underscoring the scale of state capture and abuse of office.



Following the 2017 political transition, the Barrow administration pledged a “Never Again” agenda against corruption and abuse of power. However, since then, numerous allegations of financial mismanagement, opaque contracting, unlawful land allocations, and abuse of public office have emerged from audits, parliamentary inquiries,

commissions, and investigative reporting. Despite these findings, accountability remains minimal.

For example, in 2018, the President received 57 vehicles which were subsequently distributed to members of the National Assembly. Despite sustained public demand for transparency, the source and procurement details of these vehicles have never been disclosed. In 2017, reports emerged that US\$750,000 was deposited into the account of the President's wife, Fatou Bah, by a Chinese company, TBEA, an arrangement the government claimed was intended to facilitate the President's travel to China. TBEA would come to win a multibillion-dalasis government electricity infrastructure contract in 2020¹⁹⁴.

¹⁹¹ Gambia Participates, Gambia Corruption Perception Index, September 2025

¹⁹² Transparency International, Corruption Perception Index 2025, Gambia, <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/gambia>

¹⁹³ OCCRP, How Yahya Jammeh Stole a Country, March 27, 2019, [How Yahya Jammeh Stole a Country | OCCRP](https://www.occrp.org/en/countries/gambia)

¹⁹⁴ The Voice, Chinese electromechanical manufacturer wins gov't billion-dalasis contract, [September 29, 2020, https://www.voicegambia.com/2020/09/29/chinese-electromechanical-manufacturer-wins-govt-billion-dalasis-contract/](https://www.voicegambia.com/2020/09/29/chinese-electromechanical-manufacturer-wins-govt-billion-dalasis-contract/)

Additionally, there have been multiple reports of land allocations made in contravention of the State Lands Act to current and former presidents, vice presidents, ministers, senior officials, and private individuals, including relatives of high-ranking public office holders. In one case in 2022, a Government leak showed that land allocations were made to several current and former vice presidents and ministers, their family members and affiliates that the Minister of Lands Musa Drammeh defended as lawful¹⁹⁵. In another landmark case in 2024, the Lands Minister Hamat Bah also confirmed the allocation of a Fajara property, previously the Chief Justice's residence, to President Adama Barrow, sparking controversy. Bah defended the action as legal, noting the land was unoccupied¹⁹⁶.

Concerns have also been raised over several major Government contracts from 2017 to date, such as Securiport¹⁹⁷, the Banjul roads rehabilitation project¹⁹⁸, Semlex¹⁹⁹, and the Banjul port concession²⁰⁰, whose agreements have not been made public and, in some instances, were not even presented to the National Assembly. Both the National Assembly and the National Audit Office²⁰¹ have queried most of these contracts. Although several parliamentary inquiries have been conducted, including investigations into AKI²⁰², GTBoard, and GPA²⁰³, these processes have largely failed to yield accountability or sanctions.

Notwithstanding these concerns, President Barrow has repeatedly pledged to combat corruption, affirming in public statements that no individual, including members of his own family, would be shielded from accountability. However, in practice, enforcement has been minimal²⁰⁴.

Since 2017, only one senior public official, the former Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Fisheries, Dr. Bamba Banja²⁰⁵, has been convicted on corruption charges linked to dealings with a Chinese fishing company. Despite receiving a two-year sentence, he was pardoned by the President after serving just eight months²⁰⁶. This pattern reflects a significant gap between

¹⁹⁵ Minister Drammeh Confirms The Allocation Of Land To VP, Ministers and Others, Apr 20, 2022,

<https://www.kerrfatou.com/minister-drammeh-confirms-ministers-receives-lands/>

¹⁹⁶ The Standard, Minister says allocation of land to Barrow in Fajara is 'legal and justified'

December 5, 2024, <https://standard.gm/minister-says-allocation-of-land-to-barrow-in-fajara-is-legal-and-justified/>

¹⁹⁷ The Standard, Inside the Securiprofit deal, September 19, 2022, <https://standard.gm/inside-the-securiprofit-deal/>

¹⁹⁸ The Point, Gai Construction awarded Banjul Road Project without tender- report

Aug 16, 2022, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/gai-construction-awarded-banjul-road-project-without-tender-report>

¹⁹⁹ OCCRP, The Gambian Government Continues Controversial Contract, July 19, 2018,

<https://www.occrp.org/en/investigation/the-gambian-government-continues-controversial-contract>

²⁰⁰ Kerr Fatou, Minister Sillah Clarifies Concession Agreement with Albayrak Group Over Banjul Port, Aug 8, 2025,

<https://www.kerrfatou.com/minister-sillah-clarifies-concession-agreement-with-albayrak-group-over-banjul-port/>

²⁰¹ National Audit Office Banjul Rehabilitation Project Final Management Letter For The Period 1 January 2019 to 31 August

2021, <https://nao.gm/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Banjul-Rehabilitation-Project-Report-2022.pdf>

²⁰² National Assembly, Select Committee on Health, Disaster, Refugees and Humanitarian Relief, Parliamentary Inquiry Report on the Acute Kidney Injury among Children, December 20, 2022, [https://www.assembly.gm/wp-](https://www.assembly.gm/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Motion-on-AKI-outbreak.pdf)

[content/uploads/2022/10/Motion-on-AKI-outbreak.pdf](https://www.assembly.gm/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Motion-on-AKI-outbreak.pdf)

²⁰³ National Assembly, Report of th Standing Committee on Public Petitions on alleged corruption at the Gambia Ports Authority, March 2023

²⁰⁴ Kerr Fatou, Thirteen Corruption and Fraud Cases Involving Public Officials Now Before Courts, Aug 29, 2025,

<https://www.kerrfatou.com/thirteen-corruption-and-fraud-cases-involving-public-officials-now-before-courts/>

²⁰⁵ The Standard, PS Banja Gets 2 Years For Bribery, March 9, 2023, <https://standard.gm/ps-banja-gets-2-years-for-bribery/>

²⁰⁶ Standard, Barrow pardons Banja and 36 other inmates, January 22, 2024, <https://standard.gm/barrow-pardons-banja-and-36-other-inmates/>

official commitments and actual enforcement, undermining efforts to deter corruption and uphold the rule of law.

Corruption continues to rise in the Gambia, as reflected in both local²⁰⁷ and international²⁰⁸ assessments. The Gambia SDGs Survey 2025²⁰⁹ indicates that 14.6% of individuals who interacted with public officials reported being asked for or having paid a bribe, highlighting the persistence of everyday corruption in public service delivery. Several cases of bribery and corruption emerged or are ongoing in courts in the course of 2025.

April 2025: The National Audit Office had issued a damning audit of the Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital, covering the period January 2021 to April 2024²¹⁰, highlighting major financial irregularities and systemic disregard for procurement rules and financial regulations. By the end of 2025, no meaningful action had been taken in response to the findings.



May 2025: The investigative journalism platform The Republic published a report²¹¹ exposing serious irregularities in the sale and disposal of assets belonging to former dictator Yaya Jammeh. The investigation alleged widespread abuse of office, conflict of interest, and corruption, including the looting of recovered assets by public officials, private individuals, and businesses following the work of the Janneh Commission. The revelations triggered spontaneous youth protests and led to the emergence of GALA, which organized and led a three-day protest demanding transparency and accountability²¹². In response to mounting public

pressure, President Adama Barrow addressed the nation on 8 May 2025, promising action. On 14 May, Majority Leader Billay G. Tunkara tabled a motion in the National Assembly establishing a Special Select Committee to investigate the disposal of the Jammeh assets. The committee has since conducted public hearings while GALA continues to exert pressure through petitions and civic advocacy²¹³.

June 2025: The National Assembly released the report of a parliamentary inquiry into the illegal entry and sale of Russian petroleum products in the country. The inquiry, initiated by

²⁰⁷ Gambia Participates, The Gambia Corruption Index (GCI) 2025, 24 September 2025, <https://www.gambiaparticipates.org/>

²⁰⁸ Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index, 2025, <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/gambia>

²⁰⁹ Gambia Bureau of Statistics, [Gambia Bureau of Statistics - GBOS, September 26, 2025](https://www.facebook.com/GambiaBureauofStatistics/posts/the-gambia-sdgs-survey-2025-prevalence-of-bribery-sdg-16.5.1), The Gambia SDGs Survey 2025 - Prevalence of Bribery (SDG 16.5.1), <https://www.facebook.com/GambiaBureauofStatistics/posts/the-gambia-sdgs-survey-2025-prevalence-of-bribery-sdg-16.5.1>

²¹⁰ The Alkamba Times, Audit Exposes Financial Misconduct at EFSTH: Former Medical Director, Procurement Officer Implicated in Over D2M Misuse, April 29, 2025, <https://alkambatimes.com/audit-exposes-financial-misconduct-at-efsth-former-medical-director-procurement-officer-implicated-in-over-d2m-misuse/>

²¹¹ The Republic, The assets of Gambia's former dictator go for a song, April 30, 2025, Mustapha K. Darboe, <https://therepublic.gm/the-assets-of-gambias-former-dictator-go-for-a-song/3042>

²¹² The Alkamba Times, Hundreds March in The Gambia as GALA Demands Sweeping Anti-Corruption Reforms, July 23, 2025, <https://alkambatimes.com/hundreds-march-in-the-gambia-as-gala-demands-sweeping-anti-corruption-reforms/>

²¹³ The Standard, GALA petitions gov't, May 15, 2025, <https://standard.gm/gala-petitions-govt/>

Member for Saloum Sainey Jawara²¹⁴, investigated allegations of bribery, tax evasion, and money laundering involving 36,935.614 metric tonnes of petroleum products valued at approximately US\$30 million²¹⁵. Following nearly a year of hearings, the committee reported serious irregularities implicating both public officials and private entities. Among its recommendations was the dismissal of then Minister of Petroleum and Energy Abdou Jobe and Minister of Interior Abdoulie Sanyang, who served as IGP during the period under investigation. However, in August 2025, the government rejected the recommendations²¹⁶, stating that allegations of bribery, money laundering, and tax evasion could not be substantiated and affirming that the former petroleum minister acted within his legal authority when issuing the policy note referenced in the report.



June 2025: A joint parliamentary inquiry by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Public Enterprises Committee (PEC)²¹⁷ into the “Russian Fuel” scandal uncovered significant irregularities, including the unlawful importation and sale of fuel without proper taxation or regulatory compliance²¹⁸. The Government rejected most of the recommendations of the Assembly.

August 2025: A Special Select Committee was established to investigate the sale and disposal of assets linked to former dictator Yahya Jammeh²¹⁹, raising renewed concerns about transparency and accountability in the management of recovered public resources. This

²¹⁴ National Assembly, Motion, Parliamentary Inquiry into Sale of Petroleum Products, By Hon. Sainey Jawara, 9 August 2024

²¹⁵ Report of the Joint Committee of Finance and Public Accounts (FPAC) & Public Enterprises Committee report on the Parliamentary Inquiry into the alleged corruption, bribery, tax evasion, and money laundering involving the sale of 36,935.614 metric tonnes of petroleum products valued at Thirty Million (\$30M) Dollars, AUGUST 2024 – MAY 2025, June 2025

²¹⁶ State House, Government Response to the Parliamentary Inquiry Report into the importation and sale of 36,935.614 metric tonnes of petroleum products valued at Thirty Million (\$30M) Dollars, 13th August 2025

²¹⁷ National Assembly, Report on the Parliamentary Inquiry into the alleged corruption, bribery, tax evasion, and money laundering involving the sale of 36,935.614 metric tonnes of petroleum products valued at Thirty Million (\$30M) Dollars, August 2024 – May 2025, June 2025

²¹⁸ The Republic, Gambia: parliamentary inquiry accuses two ministers of misconduct, calls for ‘motion of censure’ June 26, 2025, <https://therepublic.gm/gambia-parliamentary-inquiry-accuses-two-ministers-of-misconduct-calls-for-criminal-inquiry/3042>

²¹⁹ National Assembly, Report Of The Special Select Committee On The Inquiry Into The Sale And Disposal Of Assets Identified By The Commission Of Inquiry Into The Financial Activities Of Public Bodies, Enterprises & Offices As Regards Their Dealings With Former President Yahya Jammeh And Connected Matters, March 2026, <https://assembly.gm/>

intervention came six years after the Janneh Commission had concluded its work on the same subject. The inquiry was triggered by an investigative report by The Republic, which uncovered that the assets had been sold and disposed of amid allegations of corruption, disregard for the law, and conflicts of interest. The revelations sparked widespread public outrage and protests, ultimately compelling the authorities to constitute the committee²²⁰.

September 2025: The National Audit Office released its 2021, 2022, and 2023 audit reports, revealing significant financial mismanagement across multiple government institutions, including billions of dalasi in unaccounted funds. The reports, covering areas such as COVID-19 spending and sectoral expenditures, were submitted to the National Assembly for review. Several corruption-related cases also remained before the courts throughout 2025, many of which have been ongoing for years. These include the trial of former lands minister Sheriff Abba Sanyang and six others accused of abuse of office, criminal trespassing, and fraud linked to the illegal sale of land valued at D13.1 million. Another case involves former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health Muhammed Lamin Jaiteh, Malaria Control Programme Manager Balla Kandeh, and HePDO Director Omar Malleh Ceesay, who face charges of forgery, economic crimes, and theft linked to Global Fund grants between 2018 and 2020. In addition, three officials from the national registry office are facing prosecution over a D14 million fraud case. Despite these proceedings, the government reported in August 2025 that 13 corruption trials were ongoing²²¹, yet no convictions were secured during the year.

One of the most consequential accountability cases remains the Acute Kidney Injury tragedy currently before the High Court in Banjul. The case seeks justice for the deaths of more than 70 children in 2022, linked to contaminated imported cough syrups from India. Despite parliamentary and presidential inquiries, victims did not receive justice. Consequently, in 2023 families of the victims eventually instituted a lawsuit against the government, Atlantic Pharmaceuticals, and Maiden Pharmaceuticals, claiming millions in damages²²². As of the end of 2025, the matter remained unresolved before the courts.

Overall, corruption continues to permeate both public institutions and wider society. Numerous reports from the National Assembly, the National Audit Office, civil society organizations, investigative journalists²²³, and law enforcement have exposed financial mismanagement and abuse of office. Yet accountability remains limited. Officials implicated in wrongdoing are often redeployed, promoted, or ignored, despite repeated commitments by President Barrow²²⁴ to combat corruption. The persistent gap between exposure and enforcement continues to undermine public trust, weaken governance, and stalls the country's democratic and development aspirations.

²²⁰ National Assembly, National Assembly Establishes Special Committee to Investigate Sale of Former President Jammeh's Assets, <https://assembly.gm/?p=7403>

²²¹ Kerr Fatou, Thirteen Corruption and Fraud Cases Involving Public Officials Now Before Courts, Aug 29, 2025, <https://www.kerrfatou.com/thirteen-corruption-and-fraud-cases-involving-public-officials-now-before-courts/>

²²² Reuters, Exclusive: Gambia families sue Indian drugmaker after cough syrup deaths, June 30, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/gambia-families-sue-indian-drugmaker-after-cough-syrup-deaths-2023-06-30/>

²²³ Askanwi, Featured Publications, <https://www.askanwi.com/feature-publications/category/Corruption>

²²⁴ The Standard, Barrow Vows Gov't Will Go Tough Against Corruption Says even relatives will not be spared, January 27, 2025, <https://standard.gm/barrow-vows-govt-will-gotough-against-corruption-says-even-relatives-will-not-be-spared/>

5.5 LEGAL AND INSTITUTION FRAMEWORKS ON FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

“Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law.” UDHR Preamble

The Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights underscores that the protection of human rights through the rule of law is essential to prevent citizens from resorting to rebellion against tyranny and oppression. This principle affirms that a just and accountable legal order is the primary safeguard against abuse of power and the denial of rights.

A robust legal framework defines the rights to be protected, empowers citizens to claim and seek redress for violations, and establishes clear obligations for duty bearers. It provides the checks and balances necessary to restrain state power, prevent abuse, and ensure accountability. Through law, institutions are created, and their mandates, powers, and responsibilities are clearly prescribed. Ultimately, the purpose of the State is to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights by enforcing laws, strengthening institutions, and ensuring the equitable provision of goods, services, and opportunities.

In the Gambia, a comprehensive body of laws has been developed since independence to safeguard human rights. Beyond the Constitution, numerous statutes exist to protect specific groups, such as women, children, and persons with disabilities, as well as to uphold civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights more broadly. Additional legal instruments aim to promote transparency, accountability, and good governance, guiding the conduct of both state and non-state actors. However, the effectiveness of this framework ultimately depends on consistent implementation, enforcement, and accountability.

The fundamental challenge confronting the Gambia is not the absence of laws, but the lack of effective, impartial enforcement and the weak performance of institutions. This persistent gap has significantly undermined the protection and enjoyment of human rights. Notably, some of the most progressive human rights and accountability laws and institutions were established during the Jammeh era, including the Public Finance Act (2004), National Audit Office Act (2001), PURA Act (2001), Labour Act (2004), Ombudsman Act (1997), Children’s Act (2005), Trafficking in Persons Act (2007), Women’s Act (2010), Sexual Offences Act and Domestic Violence Act (2013), Tourism Offences Act (2014), and Consumer Protection Act (2014).

Key institutions such as the IEC, NCCE, FSQA, PURA, GCCPC, and the Office of the Ombudsman among others were also created. Yet, this same period (1994 – 2016) remains the most repressive²²⁵ in the country’s history, marked by widespread and systematic human rights

²²⁵ United Nations, General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Thirty Ninth Session, Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns, on his mission to the Gambia (3–7 November 2014)

violations²²⁶, demonstrating that the existence of laws and institutions alone does not guarantee protection.

Between 2017 and 2025, the Gambia has continued to expand its legal and institutional framework with the enactment of progressive laws such as the Persons with Disabilities Act (2021), Access to Information Act (2021), Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act (2023), Victims Reparations Act (2023), Personal Data Protection and Privacy Act (2024), Anti-Corruption Act (2025), and amendments to the Criminal Offences Act and Elections Act (2025). New institutions, including the Ministry of Gender, Social Welfare and Children, NHRC, Information Commission, Reparations Commission, and Anti-Corruption Commission, have been established. The Gambia is also a signatory to major regional and international human rights instruments.

Notwithstanding these advances, human rights violations persist due to disregard for the law and its selective application by law enforcement and public institutions. Enforcement remains inconsistent, accountability weak, and compliance mechanisms ineffective. A review conducted by EFSCRJ of key human rights laws enacted between 2021 and 2025²²⁷ found that most provisions are either partially implemented or not implemented at all. This systemic failure to operationalize legal protections continues to erode the rule of law and deny citizens the full enjoyment of their rights.

Below is a set of five key human rights instruments whose key structures, processes and tools are either only partially implemented or not implemented at all.

1. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2021

- National Fund for Persons with Disabilities (section 18)
- Register of Persons with Disabilities (section 27)
- Village, Ward, Area Council, Regional, Municipal, and City Council Committees (section 16)
- Formulation of Programs for Integration, Social Support, Rehabilitation, Education, Employment, and Accessibility (sections 21-23, 31-32, 33-35, 36-43, 44-47)
- Statistics and Data Collection Mechanisms (section 26)

2. ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT, 2021

- Designation of Information Officers in Public Bodies (section 9)
- Submission of Implementation Plans, Annual Reports, and Publication of Information (section 8)

²²⁶ Truth, Reconciliations and Reparations Commission, FINAL REPORT, 2018 – 2021, Report Volume 1 (Part A) Compendium Of Reports On Findings And Recommendations

²²⁷ Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Centre, POSITION PAPER, EFSCRJ Position Paper on the Status of Law Enforcement for Anti-Corruption and Human Rights Protection in the Gambia, 24th September 2025, www.efscrj.org

- Review and Enforcement Processes by the Information Commission (sections 39-40, 54-66)
- Implementation Plan and Manual (section 61-62)

3. PREVENTION AND PROHIBITION OF TORTURE ACT, 2023

- Regulations for Implementation (section 25)
- Complaint and Investigation Processes (sections 12-14)
- Protection of Victims, Witnesses, and Reporters (section 22)
- Duty to Report Torture (section 21)
- Transfer and Extradition Restrictions (sections 17, 23)

4. ANTI-CORRUPTION ACT, 2023

- Establishment of Anti-Corruption Commission (section 3)
- Appointment of Executive Secretary and Staff (sections 73-75, 78)
- Funds and Financial Provisions (sections 69-72)
- Commission's Power to Make Rules (section 85)
- Investigation, Prosecution, and Evidence Processes (parts IV-VII)

5. CRIMINAL OFFENCES ACT, 2025

- Sentencing Guidelines (section 33)
- Capacity Building and Training for Justice Actors (implied in Parts IV-VII)
- Public Awareness and Education Campaigns (general obligation under the Act's transformative intent)
- Monitoring and Review Mechanisms for Controversial Provisions (sections 45, 58, 107, 113)

These legal provisions require the establishment of concrete structures, effective operational tools, and functional processes, alongside consistent implementation, without which human rights cannot be meaningfully protected or realized. The mere enactment of laws and creation of institutions is insufficient; without effective, impartial, and consistent enforcement, such frameworks remain largely symbolic. In the absence of enforcement and accountability, the prevention and detection of violations, access to justice, availability of remedies, and the actual enjoyment of rights are severely compromised. This persistent enforcement deficit remains a central and recurring challenge in the Gambia's human rights landscape.

6. CONCLUSION

The State of Human Rights in The Gambia 2025 presents a sobering assessment of a country at a critical crossroads. Nine years after the historic 2017 transition that ended for dictator Yahya Jammeh's authoritarian rule, the promise of a "New Gambia" built on accountability, justice, and respect for human rights remains largely unfulfilled.

While significant legal and institutional gains have been made, including the enactment of progressive laws such as the Access to Information Act (2021), Persons with Disabilities Act (2021), and Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act (2023), these achievements have not translated into meaningful improvements in the daily lives of most Gambians. The persistent gap between law and practice, between commitment and implementation, remains the defining feature of the country's human rights landscape.

The most alarming finding of this report is the clear pattern of democratic backsliding. The consecutive failures of constitutional reform in 2020 and 2024 have left the authoritarian 1997 Constitution intact, a document designed to concentrate power in the executive without adequate checks and balances. The slow and incomplete implementation of TRRC recommendations (only 60 of 304 activities completed by May 2025) undermines the core "Never Again" agenda and allows impunity to persist. The amendment of the Commission of Inquiry Act to reinstate officials banned for corruption, the lack of transparency in disposing of Jammeh's assets, and the selective application of laws, where government critics face arrest while ruling party supporters act with impunity, all point to a troubling erosion of accountability.

Civic space, which expanded significantly after 2017, has become increasingly constrained. In 2025 alone, at least 40 young people faced trial or charges for "unlawful assembly" during peaceful protests. Police brutality remains widespread, with incidents including the fatal beating of Omar Badgie in Mandinari and the violent dispersal of protests using teargas and excessive force. The weaponization of laws, including sedition charges, insult laws, and the misuse of "national security" justifications, has created a chilling effect on freedom of expression.

Economic and social rights continue to be systematically neglected. The constitutional promise of free, compulsory basic education remains unfulfilled after three decades. Healthcare access is undermined by corruption, shortages of medicines and personnel, and high out-of-pocket costs, as evidenced by the damning FPAC report on public health facilities. Food insecurity affects 27-29% of the population. Land dispossession, driven by politically connected elites, has displaced communities and families without compensation or due process.

The rights of vulnerable groups such as women, children, persons with disabilities, and minorities remain largely aspirational. Women hold only 5 of 58 National Assembly seats and 3 of 21 Cabinet positions. No person with disabilities serves in any high-level decision-making body. Children continue to die from preventable causes, including 70+ children from

contaminated cough syrup in 2022, without accountability. FGM persists despite legal prohibition, with only three convictions since 2015.

The cumulative effect of these failures is a crisis of public trust. Corruption is perceived as rampant (CPI score 37/100), unemployment and poverty drive irregular migration and social disaffection, and citizens increasingly question whether genuine system change remains possible. Without urgent, decisive action, the Gambia risks not only the erosion of democratic gains but a return to the conditions that enabled authoritarian rule.

Ultimately, the protection of human rights in the Gambia is not constrained by the absence of laws or institutions, but by the failure to enforce them effectively, impartially, and consistently. Without decisive action to strengthen accountability, reform institutions, and address underlying socioeconomic inequalities, the country risks deepening democratic backsliding, entrenching impunity, and reversing the gains achieved since the transition. A rights-based, citizen-centered, and accountability-driven approach is therefore imperative to secure justice, dignity, and sustainable development for all Gambians.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Executive Branch (Presidency and Cabinet)

1. **TRRC Implementation:** Reinforce the Post-TRRC Unit with adequate resources and clear timelines and public reporting mechanisms. Prioritize reparations for victims, prosecution of perpetrators, and security sector reforms.
2. **Constitutional Reform:** Immediately initiate a genuinely inclusive, consultative constitutional reform process based on the 2020 CRC draft, including presidential term limits, absolute electoral majority, robust checks and balances, and justiciable economic and social rights.
3. **Anti-Corruption:** Publicly disclose all asset recovery and disposal processes related to Jammeh's assets. Reverse the amendment to the Commission of Inquiry Act that allows banned officials to return to public office. Ensure the Anti-Corruption Commission has prosecutorial powers and operational independence.
4. **Security Sector:** Expedite the review and passage of a reformed Police Act, Prisons Act, Gambia Armed Forces Act, drug Control Act, and National Intelligence Agency Act. Ensure all security personnel receive mandatory human rights training. Establish an independent police complaints mechanism with enforcement powers.
5. **Civic Space:** Issue a directive to the Inspector General of Police to cease requiring permits for non-processional and non-use of loud speaking assemblies and to respect constitutional guarantees of peaceful assembly. Publicly condemn all forms of hate speech and threats against journalists and activists, regardless of political affiliation.

6. **Economic and Social Rights:** Increase budgetary allocations to health, education, and social protection to meet international benchmarks. Ensure free basic education is genuinely free by eliminating hidden costs. Implement the National Social Protection Policy with adequate funding.
7. **Operational Independence of Oversight Bodies:** Ensure all oversight bodies have protected budgets, independent staffing, and unfettered access to information. The Government must cease interference in investigations and implement all recommendations.
8. **Prosecutorial Powers:** Amend the Anti-Corruption Act to grant the ACC prosecutorial powers and authority to investigate, and restore provisions on unexplained wealth.
9. **NHRC Mandate:** The Government must implement NHRC recommendations including on police brutality, arbitrary arrests, as well as and prioritize its advisory notes.

To the National Assembly

1. **Legislative Reform:** Repeal or amend the Public Order Act, Official Secrets Act, Newspaper Act, and Criminal Offences Act provisions on "false information" and "insult" that criminalize free expression. Reject the Cybercrime Bill in its current form and reviewed it in line with international law and best practices to protect freedom of expression.
2. **Electoral Justice:** Amend the Elections Act to enable diaspora voting, prisoner voting, and accessible voting for persons with disabilities. Introduce campaign financing provisions to control the use of money in elections and ensure transparency.
3. **Oversight Function:** Exercise robust oversight of executive actions, including the disposal of Jammeh's assets, major government contracts (Securiport, Semlex, Banjul port concession), and audit reports. Ensure the full implementation of parliamentary reports and resolutions.
4. **Code of Conduct:** Enforce the Code of Conduct for Public Officers against members who engage in hate speech, insults, or corruption. Strengthen the asset declaration system with public disclosure and verification mechanisms.
5. **Women's Representation:** Pass legislation establishing gender quotas for elected and appointed positions to achieve at least 30% women's representation in all decision-making bodies.
6. **Audit Implementation:** The National Assembly must debate and act on all NAO audit reports within six months of submission. Public officials implicated in audit findings must face investigation and appropriate sanctions.

To the Judiciary

1. **Access to Justice:** Establish legal aid schemes in all regions. Reduce case backlogs through case management reforms, additional judicial officers, and technology adoption. Ensure timely enforcement of court judgments, including against the state.
2. **Judicial Independence:** Resist executive interference in judicial appointments, transfers, and disciplinary proceedings. Ensure the Judicial Service Commission operates transparently and independently.
3. **Child-Friendly Justice:** Establish children's courts in Kerewan, Janjanbureh, and Kuntaur as mandated by law. Train all magistrates and judges on child rights and trauma-informed procedures.
4. **Timely Adjudication:** Prioritize corruption cases, human rights including SGBV cases, and cases involving prolonged pre-trial detention. Ensure strict compliance with the 72-hour constitutional limit for bringing detainees before court.

To the Gambia Police Force

1. **End Impunity:** Ensure all allegations of police brutality, torture, and excessive force are promptly investigated by an independent body. Publicly disclose investigation outcomes and disciplinary actions.
2. **Policing of Assemblies:** Adhere strictly to the Guidelines on Policing Public Assemblies. Cease the use of teargas, beatings, and arbitrary arrests against peaceful protesters. Respect the legal principle that non-processional or non-use of loud speakers in assemblies do not require permits.
3. **Professional Standards:** Mandate annual human rights training for all officers. Establish functional Police Public Complaints Offices in all regions. Ensure whistleblower protection for officers reporting misconduct.
4. **Public Safety:** Strengthen crime prevention and rapid response mechanisms to address the rise in armed robberies and violent crime. Build community trust through transparent, accountable policing practices.

To the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General's Chamber

1. **Prosecutorial Independence:** Ensure the Director of Public Prosecutions operates free from political interference. Publicly commit to non-selective application of laws, and prosecuting all offenders regardless of political affiliation.

2. **International Obligations:** Accelerate the ratification and domestication of outstanding international human rights instruments, including the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT).
3. **Special Tribunal:** Expedite the establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Gambia to carry out and conclude its work within four years. Ensure adequate funding, independent judges, and witness protection mechanisms especially for SGBV survivors.
4. **Law Reform:** Complete the review and repeal of all colonial-era laws that restrict fundamental freedoms. Ensure all new legislation undergoes human rights impact assessments.

To the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare

1. **Child Protection:** Establish functional child protection units in all regions. Investigate and prosecute all cases of child abuse, including the Bilal boarding school fire, Daara scabies outbreak, and AKI tragedy. Ensure mandatory reporting mechanisms are operational.
2. **FGM Enforcement:** Strengthen monitoring, reporting, and prosecution of FGM cases. Conduct nationwide awareness campaigns on the physical and psychological harms of FGM. Protect survivors and witnesses from reprisals.
3. **Disability Rights:** adequately fund to fully operationalize the National Disability Council. Establish the National Fund for Persons with Disabilities. Ensure all public buildings, transportation, and information systems are accessible in line with the Persons with Disabilities Act.
4. **Social Protection:** Expand social assistance programs to reach all vulnerable households. Ensure cash transfer programs are adequately funded and reach intended beneficiaries without political bias.

To the Ministry of Lands, Regional Government, and Physical Planning

1. **Land Governance:** Publicly release all investigation reports on land allocations (Salagi, Kotu Strip, Tanbi Wetlands). Establish an independent land tribunal to adjudicate disputes and compensate victims of unlawful dispossession.
2. **Transparency:** Publish all land allocations, leases, and conversions online in a publicly accessible register. Ensure any conversion of customary land to state land follows due process with free, prior, and informed consent of affected communities.
3. **Accountability:** Investigate and prosecute public officials involved in illegal land allocations, including the allocation of protected areas such as the Tanji Bird Reserve.

To the Ministry of Health

1. **Healthcare Access:** Increase budgetary allocation to health to at least 15% of national budget as committed under the Abuja Declaration. Address shortages of medicines, equipment, and qualified personnel, especially in rural areas.
2. **Corruption:** Implement all FPAC recommendations on financial mismanagement in public health facilities. Ensure procurement processes are transparent and competitive. Publish all major health contracts.
3. **Maternal Health:** Intensify efforts to reduce maternal mortality (currently 354 per 100,000 live births) through improved emergency obstetric care, skilled birth attendance, and family planning services.

To the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education

1. **Free Education:** Eliminate all hidden costs associated with basic education (textbooks, uniforms, study and extra-curricular fees). Ensure adequate school infrastructure, trained teachers, and learning materials in all regions.
2. **Inclusive Education:** Train itinerant teachers for all regions. Ensure all public schools have accessible facilities and learning materials for children with disabilities. Establish specialized schools in provincial regions.
3. **Enforcement:** Enforce compulsory education laws by holding parents and guardians accountable for keeping children out of school. Establish re-entry policies for pregnant girls and young mothers.

To Civil Society Organizations and Human Rights Defenders

1. **Strategic Advocacy:** Prioritize advocacy for TRRC implementation, constitutional reform, and the repeal of restrictive laws. Strengthen coalitions to amplify collective voices.
2. **Victim Support:** Expand psychosocial support, legal aid, and documentation services for victims of human rights violations, including survivors of police brutality, FGM, and the AKI tragedy.
3. **Public Awareness:** Intensify civic education on constitutional rights, especially the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, and access to information. Monitor and expose hate speech from all political actors.
4. **International Engagement:** Utilize UN human rights mechanisms (Universal Periodic Review, treaty bodies) to hold the government accountable. Engage with ECOWAS and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

To International Partners and Donors (UN Agencies, World Bank, ECOWAS, AU, EU)

1. **Conditional Aid:** Tie development assistance and budget support to measurable progress on TRRC implementation, constitutional reform, anti-corruption, and civic space protection. Publicly report on compliance.
2. **Security Sector Reform:** Increase funding for police accountability mechanisms, independent complaints bodies, and human rights training. Ensure reform programs include monitoring and evaluation components.
3. **Special Tribunal:** Provide technical and financial support for the swift establishment and the efficient operationalization of the ECOWAS Special Tribunal for The Gambia.
4. **Economic and Social Rights:** Prioritize funding for free quality education, accessible healthcare, social protection, and rural infrastructure. Support programs addressing youth unemployment and irregular migration.
5. **Diplomatic Pressure:** Use bilateral and multilateral forums to raise concerns about democratic backsliding, police brutality, arbitrary arrests, and the shrinking of civic space. Issue public statements calling for accountability.

To the National Human Rights Commission

1. **Monitoring and Reporting:** Continue regular public reporting on TRRC implementation, police brutality, and civic space violations. Ensure reports are widely disseminated and followed up with government engagement.
2. **Complaints Mechanism:** Strengthen the NHRC's capacity to receive, investigate, and resolve individual complaints of human rights violations. Ensure protection for complainants and witnesses.
3. **Preventive Mandate:** Expedite the ratification of OPCAT and establish a National Preventive Mechanism under OPCAT once ratified and revise the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture to include the creation of a National Prevention Mechanism. Conduct regular inspections of detention facilities, police stations, and prisons.
4. **Public Engagement:** Expand civic education on human rights, especially in rural areas. Strengthen the engagement with CSOs, media, and community leaders to build a culture of human rights.

To Political Parties and Leaders

1. **Hate Speech:** Publicly condemn and sanction party members who engage in hate speech, tribalism, or incitement to violence. Adopt and enforce internal codes of conduct.
2. **Internal Democracy:** Strengthen internal party governance, including transparent candidate selection, financial accountability, and respect for party constitutions.
3. **Women and Youth Inclusion:** Adopt affirmative action measures and stipulate in party byelaws to ensure at least 30% of candidates for public elections and party committees and leadership are women and youth. Provide resources and training for women and youth candidates.
4. **Peaceful Politics:** Commit to resolving political disputes through dialogue and legal channels. Refrain from deploying supporters to intimidate opponents or disrupt assemblies.

To the Media and Journalists

1. **Professional Standards:** Adhere to ethical journalism standards, including verification, fairness, and avoidance of hate speech. Strengthen self-regulatory mechanisms.
2. **Safety and Protection:** Establish rapid response networks for journalists facing threats or legal action. Document and report all violations of media freedom.
3. **Public Interest Reporting:** Continue investigative journalism exposing corruption, human rights violations, and governance failures. Protect whistleblowers and sources.
4. **Digital Security:** Invest in digital security training and tools to protect against surveillance, hacking, and online harassment.

To Traditional and Religious Leaders

1. **Harmful Practices:** Publicly denounce FGM, early marriage, and other harmful traditional practices. Use influence to shift social norms and protect children, especially girls.
2. **Tolerance and Inclusion:** Promote messages of ethnic and religious tolerance, gender equality, and disability inclusion. Counter hate speech and tribalism within communities.
3. **Accountability:** Support victims of human rights violations to seek justice. Encourage community members to report corruption, police brutality, SGBV, and child abuse.

To All Citizens and Residents of the Gambia

1. **Know Your Rights:** Educate yourself and your family and community on constitutional rights, especially the rights to assembly, expression, and access to information.
2. **Demand Accountability:** Use Access to Information requests, parliamentary petitions, and complaints mechanisms to hold public officials accountable. Participate in civic audits and budget tracking.
3. **Peaceful Activism:** Exercise your right to peaceful assembly and protest. Document and report police misconduct. Support civil society organizations defending human rights.
4. **Reject Hate:** Refrain from hate speech, tribalism, and political violence. Promote dialogue, tolerance, and respect for diversity in all spaces, online and offline.
5. **Vote Wisely:** Participate in all elections. Hold political parties and candidates accountable to their human rights and anti-corruption commitments.

Final Note: The Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice calls on all stakeholders – government, parliament, judiciary, security forces, civil society, media, international partners, and citizens – to treat this report as an urgent call to action. The "Never Again" promise is not merely a slogan but it is a binding commitment to past victims and future generations. Without immediate, decisive, and sustained action, the Gambia risks losing the democratic gains of 2017 and descending into a future where human rights violations become normalized once more. The time for half-measures and empty promises has passed. The time for accountability, justice, and transformative change is now.

