



EFSCRJ Opposes the Creation of a ‘Board of Inquiry’ and Calls for Independent Civilian Investigation into Former CDS Allegations

The Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice notes the press statement issued by the Gambia Armed Forces (GAF) on 2 June 2026 announcing that the President had directed the establishment of an "*independent Board of Inquiry (BOI)*" to investigate the allegations made against former Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Lt. Gen. Mamat Cham.

While we welcome the decision to investigate these serious allegations, EFSCRJ rejects the current approach as lacking the transparency, independence, and accountability required by the gravity of the matter.

First, the announcement of such an inquiry should have emanated from State House, the Ministry of Defence, or both, as the civilian authorities constitutionally responsible for oversight of the Armed Forces. The Gambia Armed Forces itself is not the appropriate institution to take the lead in communicating or managing an investigation involving the conduct of its former highest-ranking officer. Furthermore, the statement failed to disclose the composition of the so-called *Board of Inquiry*, its terms of reference, reporting procedures, or timelines, thereby raising legitimate concerns about the transparency and credibility of the process.

Second, the allegations against former CDS Cham do not concern military operations or battlefield conduct. Rather, they relate to alleged corruption, abuse of office, misuse of public resources, improper business activities, and breaches of professional and ethical standards. These are matters of public accountability and governance that demand a civilian-led investigative process independent of the military chain of command.

EFSCRJ therefore calls on the President, in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief, to address the nation on this matter and establish a genuinely independent inquiry led by a respected civilian or retired senior military officer of unquestionable integrity, supported by experts drawn from relevant institutions and disciplines, including law, public finance, auditing, procurement, governance, and security sector reform.

Importantly, the inquiry should not be narrowly confined to the allegations against Lt. Gen. Cham alone. The nature, scale, and duration of the allegations suggest deeper institutional weaknesses, systemic abuse of authority, inadequate oversight, and disregard for both the Constitution and the Gambia Armed Forces Act. This situation presents a critical opportunity to undertake a comprehensive review of the administration, management, oversight, leadership, and accountability mechanisms of the Armed Forces to identify and address corruption risks, governance failures, abuse of office, and institutional deficiencies.

We are particularly concerned that the allegations also have implications for the welfare and wellbeing of ordinary soldiers. It is widely acknowledged that many service members continue to face challenges relating to living conditions, remuneration, welfare, and career development. Where corruption and abuse of power are allowed to flourish, it is often rank-and-file personnel who suffer the greatest consequences. These concerns must therefore form part of any meaningful inquiry into the state of the Armed Forces.



EFSCRJ further urges the President and Commander-in-Chief to ensure a comprehensive clean-up of the military institution to strengthen professionalism, efficiency, discipline, integrity, and good governance. The fact that such alleged misconduct could persist for an extended period without detection or intervention, despite the existence of internal oversight structures such as the Inspector General of the Army and other supervisory mechanisms, raises serious questions about the effectiveness of military oversight and the overall progress of security sector reform.

Corruption and abuse of office were defining features of military governance during the dictatorship. One of the principal objectives of the post-dictatorship reform process was to transform the Armed Forces into a professional institution governed by the rule of law, democratic oversight, and the highest ethical standards. The allegations against a serving CDS, particularly claims involving the diversion of military resources, improper influence over decision-making, and the involvement of junior officers in questionable activities, underscore the urgent need to review and strengthen military reforms.

Corruption and abuse of power within the Armed Forces are not merely disciplinary concerns. They constitute serious threats to national security, military effectiveness, public trust, and the integrity of the state itself.

EFSCRJ therefore calls on the President and Commander-in-Chief, together with the Minister of Defence, to take all necessary measures in accordance with the law and international best practices to address this matter with the seriousness and urgency it deserves. Above all, the process must be transparent, independent, credible, and capable of restoring public confidence while ensuring full accountability for any wrongdoing uncovered.

2026: The Year of Empowerment – Empowered Citizens. Accountable Leadership.

EFSCRJ Human Rights Hotlines: +220 7434610 / +220 3730797

WhatsApp Line: +220 7434610

#Report: Violations – Corruption – SGBV – Abuse