



Ref: EFSCRJ/PR/008/2026

PUBLIC STATEMENT

22nd July 2026

EFSCRJ Statement on the July 22 Military Coup
Ten Years After Jammeh: The Promise of “Never Again” Remains Unfulfilled

Today marks exactly ten years since Gambians voted to end the tyrannical and corrupt regime of Yaya Jammeh. Having seized power through the barrel of the gun in 1994, Jammeh ruled with an iron fist under the AFPRC military junta until 1997, when the country ostensibly returned to constitutional rule under the recycled APRC regime. Despite assuming civilian garb, Jammeh continued to govern The Gambia as a militarized state, repeatedly amending and violating the 1997 Constitution to serve his personal and political interests. During his 22 years of misrule, he perpetrated gross human rights violations, entrenched corruption and abuse of power, weakened public institutions, and subjected citizens to severe socioeconomic hardship.

On this solemn anniversary, EFSCRJ pays tribute to the countless Gambians who stood up, spoke out, resisted and fought against tyranny, often at the cost of their lives, liberty, livelihoods, and physical well-being. We remember those forced into exile, many of whom never returned alive to witness the fruits of their struggle. We honour the political leaders, students, young people, journalists, activists, teachers, farmers, healthcare workers, civil servants, security officers, and ordinary citizens who endured torture, rape, dismissal, imprisonment, enforced disappearance, and death.

The decision Gambians made on 1st December 2016 was not merely a rejection of Yaya Jammeh. It was a rejection of dictatorship and everything it represented: self-perpetuating rule, corruption, impunity, abuse of office, poor service delivery, and lawlessness. It was a decision for democracy, human rights, justice, national unity, and accountable government. When The Gambia entered 2017, the nation carried enormous hope grounded in our painful experience and collective commitment to “Never Again.”

Ten years later, EFSCRJ regrets raising the alarm that the promise of 2016 is under serious threat. Having ended 22 years of self-perpetuating rule, the country now confronts the spectre of another unending one-man rule as Pres. Adama Barrow seeks a third term. This ambition fundamentally contradicts the democratic spirit of 2016, and the reform promises upon which his presidency was founded. It threatens to normalize the dangerous idea that the presidency belongs to an individual rather than being a temporary public trust exercised on behalf of the people.

The absence of presidential term limits in the current 1997 Constitution may create a legal opening for a third-term bid, but legality alone does not confer democratic legitimacy. After 22 years under one ruler, The Gambia urgently needs peaceful leadership renewal, strong institutions, and an unequivocal constitutional limit of two presidential terms. Pres. Barrow should honour the spirit of the 2016 change, abandon his third-term ambition, and support a democratic transfer of power. The struggle against Jammeh was never merely about changing the occupant of State House, rather it was about changing the system of governance.

While EFSCRJ recognises progress over the years through the creation of new laws and institutions and investments in socioeconomic development, threats to civil and political rights are increasing, while social and economic rights remain severely constrained. Arbitrary arrests, weaponization and politicization of institutions, abuse of office, unchecked





corruption, selective justice, and disregard for the Constitution remain widespread. Meanwhile, the rising cost of living and the limited availability, accessibility and affordability of essential services have deepened poverty, deprivation, and inequality. These failures are reflected in growing hardship, crime, and the continuing “Backway” phenomenon.

Ten years after dictatorship, The Gambia still lacks a new republican constitution that places the State firmly at the service of citizens. Draconian laws such as the Indemnity Act and Public Order Act remain in force, while repressive provisions in other laws continue to threaten freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and media freedom. Gambians in the diaspora and those in prison are still denied the right to vote, despite the constitutional principle that sovereignty resides in all Gambians.

The country’s transitional justice process was intended to build a new society founded on freedom, justice, equality, and accountability. Yet most recommendations of the TRRC and Janneh Commission remain unimplemented. While we welcome the commencement of reparations and the establishment of the Reparations Commission, we are deeply concerned about persistent funding challenges, especially when much of the proceeds from the sale of Jammeh’s assets remain unaccounted for. We also acknowledge efforts to establish a special tribunal but remain concerned about the slow pace and enormous costs involved, while allegations of torture continue to emerge from the security services.

EFSCRJ therefore calls on the President, National Assembly and Judiciary to undertake an honest assessment of the pace of reform and quality of governance. Public officials enjoy immense powers, privileges, immunities, and benefits solely to serve the public interest. Yet negligence, dereliction of duty, corruption and poor performance persist across the public sector with little accountability.

We note with hope the tripartite conference taking place today involving the President, the Speaker of the National Assembly, and the Chief Justice on the Commonwealth Latimer House Principles. This provides an opportune moment for the leaders of the three branches of the State to conduct a bold, objective, and honest assessment of the state of the nation. They must recognise the gains made, acknowledge the serious shortcomings that persist, and commit themselves to urgent reforms that strengthen constitutionalism, separation of powers, institutional independence, and accountable governance.

We call on all Gambians at home and abroad, including political parties, civil society, the media, academia, and traditional and religious leaders, to remember the ideals that galvanized us in 2016. This anniversary must not be reduced to oblivion. It must serve as a call to conscience and action; a moment to change course, redouble our efforts and renew our determination to build a democratic, just, and prosperous country. A better Gambia remains possible, but only if citizens remain vigilant and public officials are held accountable.

EFSCRJ pays solemn homage to all our fallen compatriots in the struggle against the AFPRC/APRC Tyranny. Their sacrifices must never be forgotten, and the promise of “Never Again” must never be betrayed.

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