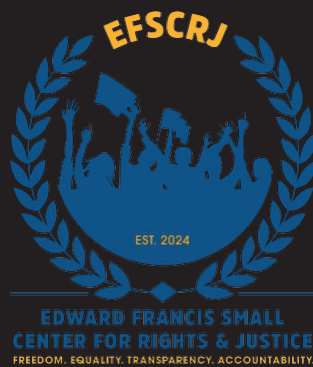
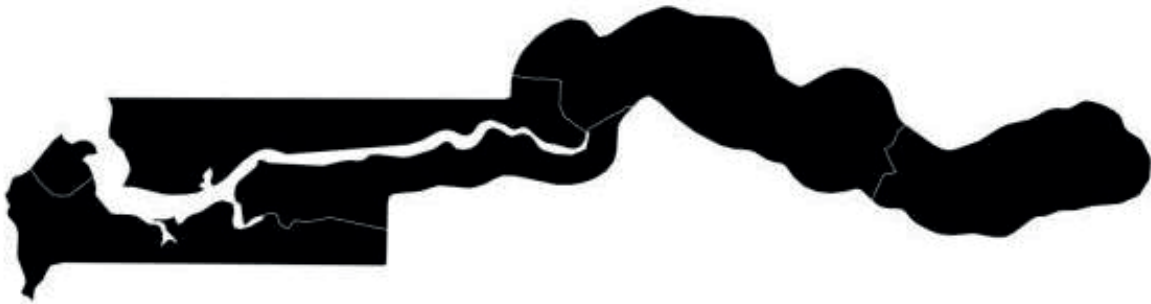


HUMAN RIGHTS INCIDENT REPORT

The Gambia | August 2026



Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice

EFSCRJ is an independent civil society organization dedicated to advancing human rights, democratic governance, accountability, transparency, and constitutionalism in The Gambia. Through regular monitoring, the Centre documents incidents that may affect the enjoyment of fundamental rights and assesses the response of public institutions.

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Monitoring, Documentation and Accountability is a core programme of the Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice through which the Centre systematically tracks, documents, and reports human rights violations and other incidents affecting the rights, freedoms, dignity and welfare of people in The Gambia. Through evidence-based monitoring and sustained follow-up, EFSCRJ seeks to make violations visible, preserve the facts, amplify the voices of victims, hold duty-bearers accountable, secure remedies and advocate for institutional reforms that prevent recurrence and strengthen respect for human rights and the rule of law.

This report consolidates significant incidents recorded in July 2026 and examines their implications for the rights to life, liberty, physical integrity, child protection, due process, and accountable law enforcement. It is intended for state institutions, civil society, the media, development partners, and the public.

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Address: Samasa House, Kerr Serign, West Coast Region, The Gambia

Tel: (220) 9995093 / 7973611 / 3730797

Email: efscrj@proton.me

Web: www.efscrj.org

Twitter: @Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice

Facebook: Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice

LinkedIn: Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice

Monitoring, Documentation and Accountability

Prepared By:

EFSCRJ Human Rights Monitors: Fatoumata Krubally, Lamin Danso, & Bubacarr Jammeh

Editors: Madi Jobarteh & Aji Fatou Bah

Publication: Helen Maria Mendy

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About this Report

This monthly report presents incidents identified through EFSCRJ human rights monitoring during August 2026. It is intended to strengthen public awareness, institutional accountability, and evidence-based advocacy on the protection of human rights in The Gambia.

Important Qualification: The report records allegations and publicly reported events. Inclusion does not amount to a judicial finding of guilt. Where investigations or proceedings remain ongoing, every suspect retains the presumption of innocence and the right to due process.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice documented **ten human rights and public-safety incidents during August 2026**. The incidents included suspected violent crime and unexplained deaths, a gunshot injury, an interception involving persons suspected of irregular migration, an alleged restriction of movement at the Banjul Ferry Terminal, and two incidents involving ethnically divisive and politically inflammatory rhetoric.

The most serious pattern in August concerns the **right to life and personal security**. Several incidents involved deaths in circumstances that remained unexplained or were alleged to involve violence. These include the death of an unidentified person in Senegambia, the death of Jainaba Jawara in Tujereng, a death following an alleged assault in Banjul, and the discovery of a dead man at the Manjai-Kotu Quarry. The circumstances surrounding each case require effective investigation and, where appropriate, forensic examination.

The death of **Ebrima Gassama at Brikama Health Centre** raises a separate but equally serious concern regarding access to essential healthcare. According to his family, Ebrima, an asthma patient, was receiving oxygen when an electricity interruption allegedly occurred, after which he was moved to another part of the facility. The family further alleged that he did not receive the necessary care and support before his death. EFSCRJ and GALA called for an impartial investigation. The circumstances should be independently established before any conclusion concerning negligence or responsibility is reached.

Another significant concern is the emergence of **ethnic and divisive rhetoric** during a politically sensitive period. On 15 August, remarks attributed to Imam Baba Leigh referring negatively to

Mandinkas circulated widely on social media. On 25 August, Imam Daarou Sanyang reportedly made ethnic remarks concerning presidential candidate Talib Ahmed Bensouda and also invoked military force and firearms in discussing political power. These incidents raise concerns about discrimination, hate speech, dangerous rhetoric and the potential impact of inflammatory discourse on social cohesion and peaceful democratic competition.

The reported incident involving **Ebrima Dibba at the Banjul Ferry Terminal** also raises concerns about freedom of movement, equal treatment, and the exercise of public authority. The accounts of what occurred are contested: Mr. Dibba stated that he was prevented from boarding the ferry, while the Ministry of Information disputed this and stated that he had been asked to board but refused. EFSCRJ therefore does not make a factual determination on the disputed account but considers the matter worthy of institutional scrutiny.

The interception of **28 persons, including six minors**, in connection with suspected irregular migration also highlights the continuing protection risks associated with unsafe migration, trafficking and smuggling. Enforcement measures must protect the dignity, liberty and rights of those intercepted, with particular attention to children.

Key Finding: August's monitoring record shows a combination of serious threats to life and personal security, unresolved deaths, inflammatory ethnic rhetoric, and concerns regarding institutional accountability. These incidents reinforce the need for effective investigations, protection of fundamental freedoms, responsible public discourse, and stronger accountability by public institutions.

2. SCOPE, METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

2.1 Sources and Approach

The report is based on the monitoring of publicly available information, principally the Gambia Police Force Facebook page, media reports and information released by public institutions, as recorded in the EFSCRJ monitoring record.

Media sources referenced in the monitoring record include Askanwi Media, Kerr Fatou, Fatu Network, Kexx Sanneh, Baobab Bloomlight Gambia, What's On Gambia and other media platforms. EFSCRJ reviewed the recorded accounts, organized them chronologically, identified recurring themes and assessed the human rights concerns they raise.

2.2 Evidentiary Standard

Where facts have not been judicially determined, this report uses terms such as **alleged, reportedly, according to the monitoring record** and **preliminary information**.

Arrest, detention, accusation or the identification of a suspect does not establish guilt. Criminal responsibility may only be determined by a competent, independent, and impartial court following a fair process. Where accounts are disputed, the report identifies the competing accounts rather than presenting one version as established fact.

2.3 Limitations

- The monitoring record is incident-based and is not an exhaustive census of crime or human rights violations in The Gambia.
- The underlying information does not consistently include interviews with victims, witnesses, accused persons or investigating authorities, nor copies of police files, medical records, or court documents.
- Several investigations were ongoing when the incidents were recorded. Later developments may therefore not be reflected.
- Some incidents are based on publicly reported information that EFSCRJ was unable to independently verify.
- The report therefore avoids definitive findings where facts remain disputed or unverified.

3. LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

The incidents documented in this report engage obligations under the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia and relevant national, regional, and international human rights standards. The principal rights and duties include:

- The right to life;
- The right to personal liberty and security;
- Protection from violence and unlawful harm;
- Freedom of movement;
- Equality and non-discrimination;
- Freedom of expression;
- Protection of children and other vulnerable persons;
- Access to essential healthcare;
- Protection from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment;
- Due process and fair-trial guarantees; and
- The duty of public institutions to act lawfully and accountably.

Relevant national instruments include the Constitution, the Criminal Offences Act, applicable immigration legislation, and other relevant laws.

International and regional standards include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

4. OVERVIEW OF RECORDED INCIDENTS

Date	Location	Category	Recorded account/status
5 Aug	Not disclosed	Migration/protection	28 persons, including six minors, reportedly intercepted
9 Aug	Banjul Ferry Terminal	Freedom of movement/public authority	Conflicting accounts regarding alleged denial of ferry boarding
10 Aug	Kerr Makka Tukulor	Gun violence	Man reportedly injured by gunshot during altercation

10 Aug	Senegambia	Unexplained death	Body reportedly found; circumstances remained unclear
12 Aug	Tujereng	Fatal violence/unexplained death	Jainaba Jawara found dead; investigation ongoing
15 Aug	TikTok/social media	Ethnic/divisive rhetoric	Remarks attributed to Imam Baba Leigh circulated; NHRC investigation announced
18 Aug	Banjul	Fatal violence	Woman died following alleged assault; suspect reportedly arrested
25 Aug	Badibu	Ethnic/divisive/dangerous rhetoric	Statements attributed to Imam Daaru Sanyang concerning Talib Bensouda
29 Aug	Brikama	Death in healthcare facility	Ebrima Gassama died after reported interruption to treatment; impartial investigation requested
31 Aug	Manjai-Kotu Quarry	Unexplained death	Man found dead at dumping site; police investigation ongoing

5. KEY HUMAN RIGHTS FINDINGS

5.1 Right to life and unexplained deaths

The strongest concern in the August record is the number of incidents involving death or potentially unlawful violence. The deaths reported in Senegambia, Tujereng, Banjul and Manjai – Kotu Quarry require effective investigation to establish the circumstances and cause of death. Where evidence indicates criminal conduct, those responsible should be identified and brought before a competent court.

The State's obligation to protect the right to life extends beyond prosecution after a death has occurred. It includes taking reasonable measures to protect people from foreseeable threats and ensuring effective investigations when a potentially unlawful death occurs.

5.2 Violence, firearms, and public safety

The reported gunshot injury in Kerr Makka Tukulor demonstrates the continuing threat posed by violent disputes and the use of firearms. The incident also highlights the need for effective law enforcement and community-level measures to prevent interpersonal disputes from escalating into serious injury or death.

5.3 Ethnic and divisive rhetoric

Two incidents during August involved reported ethnic stereotyping and inflammatory political rhetoric. The comments attributed to Imam Baba Leigh and Imam Daaru Sanyang are concerning not merely because they are offensive, but because ethnic identity is particularly sensitive in a politically charged environment.

The reported statements concerning Talib Bensouda are additionally concerning because they reportedly linked political ambition to military training and firearms while simultaneously invoking ethnic identity.

Political competition must remain peaceful and inclusive. Ethnicity, religion, or perceived identity should not be used to exclude citizens from political participation or to encourage hostility against political candidates or communities.

5.4 Freedom of movement and exercise of public authority

The Banjul Ferry Terminal incident raises questions about the exercise of public authority and equal treatment. Because the accounts are contradictory, EFSCRJ does not determine whether Mr. Dibba was unlawfully prevented from boarding the ferry. However, public institutions must be able to demonstrate that decisions affecting citizens' access to public services are based on lawful and objective grounds rather than personal, political, or discriminatory considerations.

5.5 Health, electricity, and the right to life

The death of Ebrima Gassama raises concerns extending beyond an individual medical incident. Where a public health facility depends on electricity for the delivery of essential or potentially life-saving treatment, reliable power supply becomes directly connected to the effective delivery of healthcare.

The allegation that an electricity interruption affected Ebrima's treatment requires impartial investigation. The purpose of such an investigation should be to establish what happened and whether the medical and institutional response met the required standards.

5.6 Migration and protection

The interception of 28 persons, including six minors, highlights the continuing risks associated with unsafe migration and trafficking. Authorities have a legitimate responsibility to prevent trafficking, smuggling and dangerous migration journeys. However, enforcement must respect the dignity, liberty and rights of persons intercepted, with particular attention to the best interests and protection needs of children.

6. CHRONOLOGY AND INCIDENT ANALYSIS

Interception linked to suspected irregular migration

Date: 5 August 2026 | **Location:** Not disclosed

The Kotu Anti-Crime Unit reportedly intercepted 28 persons, comprising 18 males and 10 females, including six minors, together with a person suspected of coordinating the group. The persons were subsequently handed over to the Gambia Immigration Department for immigration procedures and further action.

Human Rights Concerns: Life and safety, liberty, dignity, protection of children, trafficking and smuggling risks, and non-discrimination.

Required Response: Ensure humane and lawful treatment of all intercepted persons, assess the protection needs of the six minors and investigate any trafficking or smuggling activity.

Alleged restriction of movement at Banjul Ferry Terminal**Date:** 9 August 2026 | **Location:** Banjul Ferry Terminal

Following an alleged confrontation involving First Lady Fatou Bah-Barrow and Mr. Ebrima Dibba, National President of the UNITE Party, Mr. Dibba stated publicly that he was briefly prevented from boarding the same ferry as the First Lady. The Ministry of Information disputed this account and stated that Mr. Dibba had been asked to board but refused. Mr. Dibba subsequently rejected the Ministry's account.

Human Rights Concerns: Freedom of movement, equality, non-discrimination, and abuse of public authority.

Required Response: Clarify the circumstances surrounding the incident and ensure that access to public services is governed by lawful, objective, and non-discriminatory procedures.

Gunshot injury following altercation**Date:** 10 August 2026 | **Location:** Kerr Makka Tukolor, Upper Saloum District

An altercation reportedly occurred between two brothers, during which Sajor Jawara Senior allegedly obtained a locally made hunting gun. Alieu Njie, who reportedly intervened in separating the two, sustained a gunshot injury to his left arm. He was taken to Njau Health Centre and subsequently referred to Farafenni General Hospital. The suspect reportedly remained at large while police efforts to locate him continued.

Human Rights Concerns: Right to life, physical integrity, personal security, and community safety.

Required Response: Conduct an effective investigation, locate the suspect through lawful means, preserve evidence, and ensure that the injured person receives appropriate medical care and protection.

Unexplained death in Senegambia**Date:** 10 August 2026 | **Location:** Senegambia

A body was reportedly found in the Senegambia area. Available information stated that the deceased had previously reported to Senegambia Police Station on 15 July 2026 that he was sick. No obvious bruising or stabbing wounds were reportedly observed. Preliminary information nevertheless raised questions about whether the death may have resulted from unlawful action.

Human Rights Concerns: Right to life and effective investigation of unexplained death.

Required Response: Establish the cause and manner of death through appropriate medical and investigative procedures and publish appropriate information when the investigation permits.

Death of Jainaba Jawara**Date:** 12 August 2026 | **Location:** Tujereng

The body of Jainaba Jawara was reportedly found in the streets of Tujereng. Jainaba was reportedly a fishmonger and mother of two. She left home in the morning as usual but did not arrive at the market. Her colleagues subsequently contacted her sister, who went to the police after learning that a woman's body had reportedly been found. The case remained under investigation, with medical examination ongoing to determine the cause of death.

Human Rights Concerns: Right to life, personal security, protection of women from violence and effective investigation.

Required Response: Complete an impartial investigation, establish the cause and manner of death, protect witnesses, and ensure access to justice for the family where criminal responsibility is established.

Ethnic and divisive rhetoric attributed to Imam Baba Leigh

Date: 15 August 2026 | **Location:** TikTok/social media

An audio attributed to Imam Baba Leigh circulated widely on social media in which he reportedly made disparaging remarks concerning Mandinkas. The remarks generated public concern about ethnic stereotyping and divisive rhetoric, particularly given the approaching presidential election. Following public concerns, the National Human Rights Commission announced on 31 August that it had opened an investigation into the matter.

Human Rights Concerns: Equality, non-discrimination, dignity, ethnic stereotyping, hate or inflammatory speech and social cohesion.

Required Response: Ensure that the NHRC investigation is impartial and transparent and that public discourse remains consistent with constitutional rights and the protection of social harmony.

Death following alleged assault in Banjul

Date: 18 August 2026 | **Location:** Oxford Junction, Banjul

An alleged assault reportedly occurred during an altercation between a victim and a suspect. The victim subsequently collapsed and was taken to hospital, where she was pronounced dead. The suspect was reportedly arrested by a joint security night patrol team at Memorial Arch in Banjul and remained in police custody assisting with investigations.

Human Rights Concerns: Right to life, physical integrity, public safety, effective investigation, and due process.

Required Response: Conduct a prompt and impartial investigation, establish the circumstances of the death, and ensure due process for the suspect.

Ethnic stereotyping and dangerous political rhetoric

Date: 25 August 2026 | **Location:** Facebook/social media

Imam Daarou Sanyang reportedly made statements concerning Mayor Talib Ahmed Bensouda, a presidential candidate of Coalition 2026. He reportedly used ethnic language in referring to Mr.

Bensouda's identity and stated that Gambians would not elect a person associated with an Arab or North African background.

He also reportedly urged Mr. Bensouda to consider joining the military, learning to use firearms, and acquiring military skills if he wished to become President, while stating that he would not achieve the presidency through the ballot. The Imam reportedly made additional allegations concerning Mr. Bensouda's conduct as Mayor and his political ambitions. These allegations have not been independently verified.

Human Rights Concerns: Non-discrimination, ethnic stereotyping, hate or inflammatory speech, dangerous political rhetoric, and peaceful democratic participation.

Required Response: Public authorities and relevant institutions should monitor and address rhetoric capable of promoting ethnic hostility, discrimination, or political violence while respecting freedom of expression and due process.

Death of Ebrima Gassama at Brikama Health Centre

Date: 29 August 2026 | **Location:** Brikama Health Centre

According to his family, Ebrima Gassama became ill and requested to be taken to hospital. He was an asthma patient and was reportedly able to walk to the vehicle before travelling to the health facility. The family stated that he was placed on a bed in the outpatient department and was receiving oxygen when electricity allegedly went out. He was subsequently moved to the maternity wing, which the family said had solar power. The family further alleged that Ebrima did not receive the necessary care and support and subsequently died.

EFSCRJ and GALA called for an impartial investigation into the circumstances of his death.

Human Rights Concerns: Right to life, access to healthcare, continuity of essential health services and institutional accountability.

Required Response: Conduct an impartial investigation into the circumstances of the death, including the reported interruption of electricity and the continuity of medical treatment, and make appropriate findings available to the public.

Body discovered at Manjai – Kotu Quarry

Date: 31 August 2026 | **Location:** Manjai – Kotu Quarry

A man was reportedly found dead at the Manjai-Kotu Quarry dumping site. The body was discovered inside a water channel after an individual went to dispose of garbage and noticed him. Police reportedly attended the scene and investigations remained ongoing at the time of reporting.

Human Rights Concerns: Right to life, personal security, and effective investigation of unexplained death.

Required Response: Establish the identity, cause, and manner of death through appropriate investigation and forensic examination and ensure accountability where criminality is established.

7. INSTITUTIONAL AND ACCOUNTABILITY ASSESSMENT

August's incidents demonstrate the need for institutions to combine **effective investigation with prevention, protection, and accountability**.

7.1 Protection of life and effective investigation

The number of deaths recorded during the month underscores the importance of effective homicide and unexplained-death investigations. The State must ensure that deaths occurring in suspicious or unexplained circumstances are investigated promptly and impartially. Families of deceased persons are entitled to clarity concerning what happened to their relatives and to access to justice where wrongdoing is established.

7.2 Ethnic rhetoric and protection of social cohesion

The incidents involving Imam Baba Leigh and Imam Daarou Sanyang demonstrate the risks posed by inflammatory public discourse during an election period. Freedom of expression is a fundamental right, but political and public discourse must not become a vehicle for discrimination, ethnic hostility, or incitement to violence. The response to such incidents should be lawful, proportionate and consistent with freedom of expression while protecting individuals and communities from discrimination and violence.

7.3 Accountability in the exercise of public authority

The Banjul Ferry Terminal incident highlights the importance of transparency and accountability whenever public authority is exercised in circumstances that affect individual rights. Where a public institution takes action that restricts access to a public service or affects an individual's freedom of movement, the legal and objective basis for that action should be capable of explanation and scrutiny.

7.4 Health-system accountability

The death of Ebrima Gassama raises questions about the resilience of essential health services and the relationship between infrastructure failures and patient safety. An impartial investigation should establish the facts without prejudging responsibility. Where institutional shortcomings are identified, corrective action should follow.

7.5 Migration and protection

The interception of persons suspected of irregular migration demonstrates the continuing need for an enforcement approach that combines migration control with human-rights protection. Children and other vulnerable persons require particular safeguards, and enforcement should focus on those who facilitate trafficking, exploitation and unsafe migration.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 To the Government of The Gambia

- Strengthen mechanisms for prompt, impartial, and effective investigation of unexplained deaths and serious violence.
- Ensure that essential public services, particularly healthcare, have adequate contingency arrangements to prevent infrastructure failures from compromising life-saving treatment.
- Strengthen national measures to prevent ethnic discrimination and politically motivated violence.
- Support public education and community initiatives promoting tolerance, peaceful political participation, and social cohesion.
- Ensure that all public institutions exercise authority lawfully, transparently and without discrimination.

8.2 To the Gambia Police Force

- Conduct prompt and evidence-based investigations into all fatal and serious violent incidents.
- Ensure that families of victims receive appropriate information concerning investigations, consistent with due process and the integrity of proceedings.
- Ensure that all arrests and detention are lawful and subject to due-process safeguards.
- Investigate allegations of violence, threats, and other criminal conduct without political or personal considerations.
- Strengthen community-level violence prevention and early intervention mechanisms.

8.3 To the National Human Rights Commission

- Complete and publicly communicate the outcome of its investigation into the remarks attributed to Imam Baba Leigh, consistent with due process and applicable confidentiality requirements.
- Monitor ethnic and inflammatory rhetoric during the electoral period.
- Strengthen public education on equality, non-discrimination, and peaceful political participation.
- Continue monitoring allegations involving restrictions on fundamental rights by public authorities.

8.4 To the Ministry of Health and relevant health authorities

- Ensure that reported deaths occurring in public health facilities are appropriately reviewed where circumstances raise concerns.
- Investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of Ebrima Gassama at Brikama Health Centre.
- Strengthen contingency arrangements for electricity and other essential infrastructure in health facilities.
- Ensure continuity of life-saving treatment during power or infrastructure failures.

8.5 To political, religious and community leaders

- Reject ethnic stereotyping, discrimination, and inflammatory rhetoric.
- Promote peaceful political participation and respect for democratic processes.
- Avoid language that may encourage violence, militarization or hostility against political opponents or communities.
- Use their influence to strengthen tolerance, dialogue, and national cohesion.

8.6 To families, communities, civil society, and the media

- Promote early identification and peaceful resolution of community conflicts.
- Report credible incidents responsibly while avoiding the circulation of unverified allegations as established facts.
- Support victims and families affected by violence and unexplained deaths.
- Continue independent monitoring of institutional responses and case outcomes.

9. CONCLUSION

August 2026 was marked by a range of incidents that raise significant concerns regarding the protection of life, personal security, equality, freedom of movement, access to essential services and social cohesion.

The number of deaths and serious violent incidents recorded during the month demonstrates the continuing need for effective investigation and stronger preventive measures. At the same time, the emergence of ethnic and politically inflammatory rhetoric is particularly concerning as The Gambia approaches the December 2026 presidential election.

The reported death of Ebrima Gassama at Brikama Health Centre also illustrates how failures in essential public infrastructure can potentially intersect with the protection of fundamental rights. His death requires an impartial investigation capable of establishing the facts and determining whether any institutional or individual responsibility exists.

EFSCRJ also recognises the responsibility of citizens, political actors, religious leaders, the media, and civil society to contribute to a culture of tolerance, accountability, and respect for human dignity. The State has the primary responsibility to protect human rights. That responsibility requires more than responding after harm has occurred. It requires effective prevention, lawful institutions, independent investigation, accountability, and access to remedy.

EFSCRJ will continue to monitor and document human rights developments across The Gambia and to advocate for institutions that protect citizens, respect constitutional freedoms, and uphold the rule of law.

EFSCRJ Position: Every life matters. Every citizen is entitled to equal protection of the law. Political disagreement must never become a justification for discrimination, violence, or abuse of public authority. Prevention, protection, justice, and accountability must remain at the centre of human rights protection in The Gambia.

The End