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**EFSCRJ Welcomes Return of US\$2.5 Million in Jammeh Assets and Demands Full
Transparency and Exclusive Use for Victims**

The Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice welcomes the return of approximately US\$2.5 million to The Gambia from the sale of a property linked to former President Yahya Jammeh in Potomac, Maryland. The property was purchased in 2010 for approximately US\$3.5 million using public funds misappropriated from the Gambian people, as established by the United States Department of Justice. We commend the Government of The Gambia, its partners, victims' organizations and all individuals whose sustained efforts made the recovery and return of these funds possible.

The recovery and return of these funds constitute an important step in the pursuit of accountability for the corruption, abuse of office and human rights violations committed during the Jammeh regime. For victims who have waited for years for justice and adequate reparations, the return offers an opportunity to provide financial compensation, medical and psychosocial support, educational assistance, rehabilitation, and other measures necessary to rebuild their lives and restore their dignity.

EFSCRJ recognizes that the returned funds have been deposited into the Reparations Fund at the Central Bank of The Gambia under the control of the Reparations Commission. We welcome this arrangement and insist that the entire amount must be used exclusively for the benefit of victims. This is both a legal and moral obligation upon the Government and the Reparations Commission. Funds recovered from assets purchased with stolen public resources during a regime responsible for widespread human rights violations must not be diverted to general government expenditure or any purpose unrelated to victims.

While welcoming the return, EFSCRJ is deeply concerned about the apparent loss in the value of the property. If Yaya Jammeh purchased the property for approximately US\$3.5 million in 2010 in Potomac, an affluent suburb of Washington, D.C., but The Gambia received only approximately US\$2.5 million sixteen years later, the country appears to have suffered a nominal shortfall of about US\$1 million. Considering the passage of time and the potential appreciation of property values, the actual economic loss could be even greater.

The Government must therefore explain whether US\$2.5 million represents the gross selling price or the net proceeds after deductions. The fact that US authorities managed the forfeiture and sale does not relieve the Gambian Government of its duty to obtain and disclose a complete account of the transaction. The US authorities owe this explanation to the Gambia in the interest of transparency and justice.

EFSCRJ therefore calls upon the Ministry of Justice to obtain and publish the full details of this sale including the independent valuation of the property before its sale, the gross selling price and date of sale, the method by which it was sold, the identity of the agency responsible for the sale, the total number of bids or offers received, an itemized account of all taxes, legal fees, brokerage charges, maintenance expenses and administrative costs deducted, details of any payments made to other claimants or amounts retained by US authorities, and confirmation as to whether the US\$2.5 million represents the complete and final amount due to The Gambia. This information should be provided by or obtained from the US authorities.



The Gambian people, and victims in particular have a right to know how an asset purchased with their resources for approximately US\$3.5 million yielded only US\$2.5 million after sixteen years. Legitimate expenses may have been incurred, but they must be fully disclosed and justified both the US and Gambian authorities. The country must not be allowed to lose approximately US\$1 million, or potentially more, without a clear and credible public explanation.

While commending the Reparations Commission for its work since inception, EFSCRJ urges the Commission to strengthen transparency as the foundation of the reparations process. Therefore, subject to the protection of victims' privacy and informed consent, EFSCRJ urges the Commission to regularly publish the total number and categories of recognized victims, the number of victims who have received reparations, the types and amounts of reparations provided, the total funds received, committed and disbursed, the administrative costs charged to the Reparations Fund, and periodic independently audited financial reports.

Victims must remain at the centre of this process. Every dalasi recovered from Jammeh's stolen assets must be protected, properly accounted for, and used to provide them with meaningful, timely and adequate reparations.

For the victims, there must be justice. For public funds, there must be full accountability.

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