

EXTERNAL

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Fear of ill-treatment / Legal concern

23 October 1995

**GAMBIA**      Alhaji Omar Amadou Jallow, former Minister of Agriculture  
Mamadou Cadicham, former government official  
Alhaji Omar Sey, former Minister of External Affairs  
Yaya Ceesay, former Minister of Local Government and Lands  
Hussainu Njai, former bank director and member of parliament  
Oussainu Darboe, vice-president of the Gambian Lawyers'  
Association  

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and at least 34 others

At least 40 people, arrested since 12 October 1995, are being held incommunicado in various places in or near the Gambian capital, Banjul. Amnesty International is concerned for their well-being while held incommunicado, as such detention does not provide them with legal safeguards against torture, ill-treatment and medical neglect. Furthermore, the organization believes that they may be prisoners of conscience, arrested solely for the non-violent expression of their political opinions.

At least 34 people, alleged by the government to be supporters of the banned People's Progressive Party (PPP), former President Dawda Jawara's party, were arrested on or around 12 October 1995. A further six men - those named above - were arrested in the days that followed, and are being held incommunicado at the Bakau military barracks near Banjul.

The arrests come at a time of increasing political tension in Gambia and follow a gathering by critics of the government on 10 October to deliver a letter to foreign diplomats. The authorities have given no official response to the gathering but have stated that those arrested had been planning a demonstration in support of a return to power of former President Jawara. None of the detainees are known to have been charged.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

A bloodless military coup in July 1994 brought an end to the rule of President Jawara, Gambia's president since independence, and brought the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC) to power. The AFPRC, led by Lieutenant (now Captain) Yahya Jammeh, pledged to eradicate corruption and set up a number of commissions of inquiries to investigate past government practice. Although the new government also pledged to defend human rights, it passed a series of decrees undermining fundamental freedoms and removing human rights safeguards: political activities have been banned, journalists have been harassed or expelled and the National Intelligence Agency has been given wide-ranging powers which limit freedom of expression. On 12 August 1995 the AFPRC issued a decree reinstating the death penalty which had been abolished in April 1993.

On 3 June 1995 former Minister of Interior, Captain Sadibou Haidara, aged 31, died in prison. It appears his death may have been the result of medical neglect. He had been arrested on 27 January 1995 after an alleged coup attempt. According to a post-mortem examination carried out at the Royal Victoria Hospital, he had been suffering from a long-standing high blood pressure condition which had given rise to complications affecting

his kidneys and lungs. The post mortem result was disputed by his family. No official inquiry is believed to have been held into his death.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/telexes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:**

- seeking assurances that the detainees, arrested on or around 12 October, are being treated humanely in accordance with international standards for conditions of detention;
- urging that they be given full access to their lawyers, doctors and families;
- seeking clarification of their legal status, and urging that their places of detention be made public;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release if, as it appears, they have been arrested solely for the non-violent expression of their political opinions;
- if they are to be charged with recognizably criminal offences, urging that they be promptly and fairly tried according to international standards.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency  
Captain Yahya Jammeh  
Chairman of the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council and Head of State  
Office of the President  
State House  
Banjul  
Republic of Gambia  
**Telegrams: Captain Jammeh, State House, Banjul, Gambia**  
**Faxes: +220 227 034**  
**Telexes: 2204**  
**Salutation: Dear Captain Jammeh**

Captain Lamin Bajo  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of the Interior  
71 Dobson Street  
Banjul  
Republic of Gambia  
**Telegrams: Captain Bajo, Interior Ministry, Banjul, Gambia**  
**Salutation: Dear Captain Lamin Bajo**

Mr Mustapha Marong  
Minister of Justice and Attorney General  
Ministry of Justice and Attorney General's Chambers  
Marina Parade  
Banjul  
Republic of Gambia  
**Telegrams: Justice Minister Marong, Banjul, Gambia**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

The Editor, The Daily Observer, PMB 131, Banjul, Gambia  
The Editor, The Gambia Daily, 14 Hagan Street, Banjul, Gambia  
The Editor, The Point, 1A Hagan Street, Banjul, Gambia

The Editor, The Nation, People's Press, 3 Boxbar Road, POB 334, Banjul,  
Gambia

and to diplomatic representatives of GAMBIA accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 7 December 1995.