

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 27/02/97

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Further information on EXTRA 100/97 (27/01/97, 15 July 1997) - Death Penalty

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On 25 June 1997, the High Court of the Gambia sentenced to death the four men named above. They were found guilty of treason for trying to overthrow the government and for murder. The four men had been arrested after an attack by an armed group on the Farafenni military camp in eastern Gambia, the country 's second largest military camp, on 8 November 1996. During the attack, six soldiers died and five were injured.

In July, the prisoners appealed against their conviction. The court hearing on their case was adjourned several times.

On 2 October, the court of appeal quashed the convictions and sentences. The ruling suggested that a new trial should start and that the killing of soldiers should be qualified as murder.

Although the immediate threat of execution is banned, there is still a risk that the four men may be sentenced to death, as the precise charges are not yet known. No further appeals, however, should be sent now. Thank you for taking part in this Urgent Action.

This Urgent action seems to have contributed to the public discussion about the death penalty in the Gambia. The *Daily Observer* newspaper carried an article about AI's concern for the four men convicted to death. The newspaper also printed three letters to the editor opposing the death sentence (two from Australia and one from Germany), as well as a pro-death penalty statement by a reader.