

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/Incommunicado detention/  
possible prisoner of conscience

29 July 2002

**GAMBIA**

**Guy-Patrick Massoloka (m), journalist**

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Guy-Patrick Massoloka, a journalist for the Pan African News Agency (PANA). He was arrested in Banjul, the capital, on 19 July by agents of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), and has been detained incommunicado since then.

He is believed to be held at the NIA headquarters in Banjul, where there is a well-established pattern of incommunicado detention and ill-treatment. He has apparently not been given access to a lawyer.

Guy-Patrick Massoloka is a Congolese national who arrived in the Gambia about a month ago. He was reportedly arrested in his home by plainclothes agents of the NIA on 19 July. He is apparently accused of running an unregistered newspaper, although according to the Gambia Press Union (GPU), Guy-Patrick Massoloka is not known to have been engaged in the production of an unlicensed newspaper. He previously worked for the PANA, a well-respected news agency, in Dakar, Senegal.

It seems that he has been arrested purely on the grounds of his legitimate activities as a journalist, and is a possible prisoner of conscience. This fits with a pattern of harassment, intimidation, and detention without charge of journalists and media practitioners in the Gambia. Since President Jammeh came to power in 1994 several journalists have been expelled from the Gambia purely because of their journalistic activities.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Freedom of expression is severely curtailed in the Gambia and journalists and other media practitioners face frequent harassment, intimidation, detention without charge, expulsion or threat of violence by the security forces.

The legislation regarding media and freedom of expression is restrictive and has been made harsher recently. On 24 July, the Parliament adopted a bill creating a National Media Commission with judicial powers to fine and jail journalists if they refuse to be a witness or if they interrupt, insult or otherwise disobey the Commission.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Guy-Patrick Massoloka, arrested by the National Intelligence Agency on 19 July;
- asking the authorities to explain the reasons for his arrest and continued detention at NIA Headquarters;
- requesting the authorities to release him if he is not to be promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offence;
- asking the authorities to ensure that Guy Patrick Massoloka is not subject to any ill-treatment while he is detained;
- requesting that he is given access to a lawyer and any medical care he may need;
- expressing concern at what appears to be the latest example of a well-established pattern of harassment and intimidation of journalists and

urging the authorities to take steps to ensure that freedom of expression is guaranteed.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of the Interior

Ousmane Badjie  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of the Interior  
71 Dobson Street  
Banjul  
Republic of the Gambia

**Telegrams: Minister of the Interior, Banjul, Republic of the Gambia**

**Fax: + 220 201 320 (it may be difficult to get through, but please keep trying)**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Director of the NIA

Abdoulie Kujabi  
NIA Headquarters  
Banjul,  
Republic of the Gambia

**Telegrams: Director of the NIA, Banjul, Republic of the Gambia**

**Fax: + 220 225 562**

**Salutation: Dear Mr Kujabi**

Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Joseph Joof  
Ministry of Justice and Attorney General's Chambers  
Marina Parade  
Banjul  
Republic of the Gambia

**Telegrams: Minister of Justice, Banjul, Republic of the Gambia**

**Fax + 220 225 352**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Gambia Press Union,  
PO Box 1440,  
Banjul  
Republic of the Gambia

**Fax + 220 377 020**

**Email [gpu@quanet.gm](mailto:gpu@quanet.gm)**

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 9 September 2002.