

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

GMB 001 / 0211 / OBS 015

Intimidation / Fear for physical integrity

The Gambia

February 9, 2011

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in **The Gambia**.

Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about threats against *Daily News* journalist **Saikou Ceesay**.

According to the information received, on February 3, 2011 at 11 p.m., as Mr. Saikou Ceesay was approaching the door of his house he was stopped by Mr. Dinesh Shukla, President of the American International University for West Africa, and two other men. Mr. Shukla acted in a threatening and aggressive manner. Mr. Saikou Ceesay successfully escaped and entered his house. He has been on hiding since then.

On February 8, 2011, Mr. Saikou Ceesay filed a complaint at the Brusubi police station. The police opened an investigation.

On January 3, 2011, Mr. Saikou Ceesay had published an article on the *Daily News* to denounce the opening of a scam private university in the Gambia which aimed at swindling money from prospective students.

The Observatory is concerned about the safety of Saikou Ceesay and requests the authorities to promptly investigate into these facts and meanwhile ensure the protection of Mr. Saikou Ceesay.

Actions requested:

The Observatory urges the authorities of The Gambia to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Saikou Ceesay, as well as all human rights defenders in The Gambia;
- ii. Ensure in all circumstances that Mr. Saikou Ceesay be able to carry out his work without hindrances;
- iii. Comply with all the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, in particular with
 - Article 1, which provides that "everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels",
 - Article 6 which provides that "everyone has the right, individually and in association with others (a) To know, seek, obtain, receive and hold information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including having access to information as to how those rights and freedoms are given effect in domestic legislative, judicial or administrative systems; (b) As provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all

human rights and fundamental freedoms; (c) To study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters”,

- as well as with Article 12.2 which provides that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, *de facto* or *de jure* adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”).

iv. More generally, ensure in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international and regional human rights instruments ratified by the Gambia.

Addresses:

•Captain (retd.) Alhaji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh , President and Minister of Defence, Office of the President, State House, Banjul, Republic of The Gambia. Fax: +220 4227 034. mail: info@statehouse.gm.

•Ms. Edward Tony Gomiz, Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Department of State for Justice, Marina Parade, Banjul, Republic of The Gambia. Fax: +220 4225 352

•Mr. Ousman Sonko, Secretary of State for the Interior, Office of the President, State House, Banjul, Republic of The Gambia. Fax: +220 4223 718

•Ambassador Mr. Moses Benjamin Jallow, Permanent Mission of The Gambia to the United Nations in Geneva, c/o Embassy of the Republic of the Gambia, 117, rue Saint Lazare, 75008 Paris, France. Fax: +33 1 53 04 05 99. Email: ambgambia_france117@hotmail.com

Please also write to the diplomatic mission or embassy of The Gambia in your respective country.

Paris-Geneva, February 9, 2011

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory, a FIDH and OMCT venture, is dedicated to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

E-mail: Appeals@fidh-omct.org

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