

# Press Statement of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on the events of 14 and 16 April 2016, in the Islamic Republic of The Gambia

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Commission) is deeply concerned by the reports of events that took place on 14 and 16 April 2016 in the Islamic Republic of The Gambia.

The Commission has received reports regarding demonstrations which took place on Thursday 14 April 2016 and on Saturday 16 April 2016, in parts of the capital city of Banjul, calling for electoral reform in the country. It is reported that during the demonstrations a number of people were arrested, including Mr. Ousainou Darboe, the leader of the United Democratic Party (UDP). Further reports received by the Commission allege the death in custody of the UDP organizing secretary Mr. Solo Sandeng. It is alleged that Mr. Sandeng died shortly after detention of unknown causes.

The Commission is equally concerned about reports that **Ms. Fatoumatta Jawara**, the Female Youth President, and **Ms. Nogui Njie**, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President of the Women's Wing, were arrested, and seriously injured after they were beaten during the demonstration. Additionally, it was reported that **Ms. Fatou Camara**, a Constituency Women's Leader and **Mr. Lang Marong**, Deputy Campaign Manager, were also arrested and imprisoned. Without in any way reaching conclusions on the above allegations, the Commission is concerned that if the allegations are true they will amount to violations of **Articles 4, 7, 9 and 11** of the **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights** (the African Charter).

Regarding these allegations, the Chairperson of the Commission, Honourable Commissioner Pansy Tlakula, discussed the situation with the Attorney General and Minister of Justice of the Islamic Republic of The Gambia, Honourable Justice Mama Fatima Singhateh.

In response, Honourable Justice Singhateh noted that unlawful assemblies were held during the weekend of 14 April 2016. The Attorney General and Minister of Justice further noted that the security forces tried to manage the situation, and a number of people were arrested. The Minister stated that investigations were ongoing, following which the Ministry of Justice

would give a response to the Commission when available.

In view of the above, the Commission calls on the Government of the Islamic Republic of The Gambia, as the primary guarantor of human rights within its national borders, to:

- Investigate the reports of the death in custody and alleged beating of demonstrators, and, if true, ensure prompt arrest and prosecution of the perpetrators;
- Ensure the speedy release of all persons arrested, if the allegations of their arrest and detention are true; and
- Uphold its obligations under the various regional and international human rights treaties to which it is a party, in particular the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Additionally, the Commission calls on leaders of the opposition parties, their members and stakeholders to refrain from all acts of violence during demonstrations.

The Commission will remain actively seized of the matter.

**Banjul, 19 April 2016**

See the link: <http://www.achpr.org/press/2016/04/d298/>