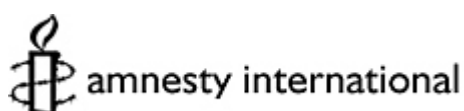


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Amnesty International Annual Report 2011 - Gambia

Head of state and government: **Yahya Jammeh**

Death penalty: **abolitionist in practice**

Population: **1.8 million**

Life expectancy: **56.6 years**

Under-5 mortality (m/f): **123/109 per 1,000**

Adult literacy: **45.3 per cent**

The government continued to restrict political freedom, stifle freedom of expression and commit human rights violations with impunity. Members of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), army, police, and shadowy militias close to the President – known as ninjas, drug boys and jugglers – arbitrarily arrested and detained government opponents, human rights defenders, journalists and former security personnel. Torture and other ill-treatment in custody were reported. A second wave of mass arrests took place, culminating in the treason trial of eight prominent men, who were sentenced to death after a grossly unfair trial.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

In a wave of arrests in March, which followed an earlier wave in November 2009, former government officials were accused of treason or attempts to destabilize the government. In all, several hundred former officials, military officers and civilians were detained. The detainees were overwhelmingly denied access to lawyers and relatives and held in conditions so harsh that they amounted to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

The police, NIA and army continued to unlawfully arrest and detain people in violation of national law. Detainees were held in overcrowded and insanitary conditions in official places of detention such as the Mile 2 Central Prison, the NIA headquarters and police detention centres. They were also held in secret detention centres, including military barracks, secret quarters in police stations, police stations in remote areas and warehouses.

Death penalty

At least 20 people were believed to be on death row at the end of the year. No executions were reported; the last known execution was in the 1980s. In October the authorities increased the penalty for possession of more than 250g of cocaine or heroin to the death penalty.

Eight of the men arrested in March were convicted of treason and sentenced to death in July after a grossly unfair trial during which indictees and witnesses were tortured. The men were accused of procuring arms, ammunitions, equipment and mercenaries from Guinea to stage a coup. They included: former army chief Lang Tombong Tamba; former intelligence chief Lamin Bo Badjie; former deputy chief of police Modou Gaye; Brigadier General Omar Bun Mbaye; former NIA agent and then deputy Gambian Ambassador to Guinea-Bissau Gibril Ngorr Secka; former Kanilai Camp Commander Lieutenant Colonel Kawsu Camara; and two civilians – Abdoulie Joof and Yousef Ezziden.

Freedom of expression – journalists

Freedom of expression continued to be severely limited. Journalists faced threats and harassment if they wrote stories deemed unfavourable to the authorities or if they were believed to have provided such information to media outlets.

- The regional ECOWAS Community Court in Abuja, Nigeria, heard the case of Musa Saidykhan, former editor-in-chief of *The Independent*, a Banjul-based newspaper which was banned in 2006. Musa Saidykhan alleged that he was tortured after state security agents raided the newspaper in 2006, shut it down and imprisoned its staff. After his release, Musa Saidykhan fled to Senegal. In 2009, the Court had ruled against the Gambian government's objection to it hearing the case.
- Journalist Ebrima Manneh of the *Daily Observer*, who was arrested in 2006, remained subjected to enforced disappearance despite a 2008 ruling by the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice demanding his release and damages for his family. The government and police officials continued to deny that he is in custody.

Human rights defenders

The climate of fear generated by the President's threats against human rights defenders in 2009 persisted.

- Nigerian Edwin Nebolisa Nwakaeme, director of a Gambian human rights organization, Africa in Democracy and Good Governance, was arrested on 22 February by the Immigration Department, released three days later, then rearrested on 1 March. He was taken to court in March and charged with giving "false information". In September he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labour.
- Two women, Dr Isatou Touray and Amie Bojang Sissoho, were arrested on Monday 11 October 2010 by Gambian security personnel, charged with theft, and sent to Mile 2 Central Prison, notorious for its ill-treatment of inmates and appalling prison conditions. Both women work for the Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (GAMCOTRAP), and their organization has faced harassment in the past.

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