

# Freedom on the Net 2025 - The Gambia



## Key Developments, June 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025

Internet freedom in The Gambia was stable during the coverage period. Digital journalists reported on sensitive issues but faced criminal charges and pressure to retract stories about powerful actors.

- In March 2025 the National Assembly passed the Criminal Offense and Procedure Bill, which replaced two colonial-era laws.<sup>1</sup> The measure contains provisions on false publication and broadcasting that the Gambia Press Union has described as potentially harmful to the work of journalists and media workers, including those working for digital platforms.<sup>2</sup> Individuals found guilty of publishing false information can face up to one year in prison, while those convicted of insulting the president and other public officers can be imprisoned for up to six months (C2).<sup>3</sup>
- Digital news outlets faced pressure to retract claims in their reporting. In June 2024, for instance, a lawyer for the minister of the environment demanded that online news site Akamba Times, which had published an article about the minister’s alleged involvement in corruption, publicly apologize for the piece or face a lawsuit.<sup>4</sup> The minister followed through on the threat after the outlet refused to comply, filing a suit in September 2024 against the story’s author alleging libel and slander (C3 and C7).<sup>5</sup>
- Online users continued to be subjected to arrest and criminal charges. In June 2024, an opposition member was arrested and charged with sedition, reportedly for an audio message he recorded on WhatsApp that allegedly referred to President Barrow as “know[ing] nothing” (C3).<sup>6</sup>

## Political Overview

After over two decades of restrictive rule under President Yahya Jammeh, respect for political rights and civil liberties has improved under the administration of Adama Barrow, who took office following a surprise electoral victory in 2016. However, his administration has faced criticism for continued corruption, and journalists, civil society groups, and others continue to face some pressure. LGBT+ people face severe discrimination, and violence against women remains a serious problem.

This report has been abridged for Freedom on the Net 2025 due to [ongoing budget constraints](#). Please consider making a [donation](#) to support future editions of this vital resource.

For additional background information, see last year's [full report](#).

## A Obstacles to Access

A1 0-6 pts

<b>Do infrastructural limitations restrict access to the internet or the speed and quality of internet connections?</b>	2 / 6
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A2 0-3 pts

<b>Is access to the internet prohibitively expensive or beyond the reach of certain segments of the population for geographical, social, or other reasons?</b>	1 / 3
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A3 0-6 pts

<b>Does the government exercise technical or legal control over internet infrastructure for the purposes of restricting connectivity?</b>	5 / 6
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A4 0-6 pts

<b>Are there legal, regulatory, or economic obstacles that restrict the diversity of service providers?</b>	4 / 6
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A5 0-4 pts

<b>Do national regulatory bodies that oversee service providers and digital technology fail to operate in a free, fair, and independent manner?</b>	1 / 4
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## B Limits on Content

B1 0-6 pts

<b>Does the state block or filter, or compel service providers to block or filter, internet content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards?</b>	6 / 6
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B2 0-4 pts

<b>Do state or nonstate actors employ legal, administrative, or other means to force publishers, content hosts, or digital platforms to delete content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards?</b>	2 / 4
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B3 0-4 pts

**Do restrictions on the internet and digital content lack transparency, proportionality to the stated aims, or an independent appeals process?** | 2 / 4

**B4 0-4 pts**

**Do online journalists, commentators, and ordinary users practice self-censorship?** | 3 / 4

**B5 0-4 pts**

**Are online sources of information controlled or manipulated by the government or other powerful actors to advance a particular political interest?** | 2 / 4

**B6 0-3 pts**

**Are there economic or regulatory constraints that negatively affect users' ability to publish content online?** | 2 / 3

**B7 0-4 pts**

**Does the online information landscape lack diversity and reliability?** | 3 / 4

**B8 0-6 pts**

**Do conditions impede users' ability to mobilize, form communities, and campaign, particularly on political and social issues?** | 5 / 6

## **C Violations of User Rights**

**C1 0-6 pts**

**Do the constitution or other laws fail to protect rights such as freedom of expression, access to information, and press freedom, including on the internet, and are they enforced by a judiciary that lacks independence?** | 3 / 6

**C2 0-4 pts**

**Are there laws that assign criminal penalties or civil liability for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?** | 2 / 4

**C3 0-6 pts**

**Are individuals penalized for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?** | 3 / 6

**C4 0-4 pts**

**Does the government place restrictions on anonymous communication or encryption?** | 2 / 4

**C5 0-6 pts**

**C6 0-6 pts**

Does monitoring and collection of user data by service providers and other technology companies infringe on users' right to privacy? | 1 / 6

**C7 0-5 pts**

Are individuals subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor in relation to their online activities? | 3 / 5

**C8 0-3 pts**

Are websites, governmental and private entities, service providers, or individual users subject to widespread hacking and other forms of cyberattack? | 2 / 3

**Footnotes**

- 1“EFSCRJ Raises Issues and Concerns About the Criminal Offenses Act 2025,” ARPS Media, June 12, 2025, <https://arpsmedia.com/efscrj-raises-issues-and-concerns-about-the-crimi...>; Binta Jaiteh, “National Assembly Concludes 1st Ordinary Session of 2025,” The Voice, April 02, 2025, <https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/04/02/national-assembly-concludes-1st-...>; Salieu Njie, “Gambia: Criminal Procedure and Offence Bills 2020 Passed Consideration,” Askani Gambia, March 25, 2025, <https://askanigambia.com/gambia-criminal-procedure-and-offence-bills-20...>; Patience Mama Loum, “Gambia’s Parliament Passes Landmark Criminal Justice Reforms Amid Controversy,” The Gambia Journal, March 29, 2025, <https://gambij.com/gambias-parliament-passes-landmark-criminal-justice....>
- 2Adama Makasuba, “GPU Presents Position Paper on the Criminal Offences Bill 2022,” Gambiana, February 14, 2023, <https://gambiana.com/gpu-presents-position-paper-on-the-criminal-offenc...>; “Criminal Offences Act, 2025,” March 2025, <https://moj.gov.gm/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Assent-Copy-Criminal-Offe....>
- 3“EFSCRJ Raises Issues and Concerns about the Criminal Offenses Act 2025,” ARPS Media, June 12, 2025, <https://arpsmedia.com/efscrj-raises-issues-and-concerns-about-the-crimi...>
- 4Media Foundation for West Africa, “Environment Minister, Former LRR Governor Threaten Journalist with Lawsuit,” June 22, 2024, <https://mfwa.org/country-highlights/environment-minister-former-lrr-gov...>
- 5Media Foundation for West Africa, “Gambia’s Environment Minister Hastily Sues Journalist Over Story in Spite of Ongoing Investigations,” September 11, 2024, <https://mfwa.org/country-highlights/gambia-environment-minister-hastily....>
- 6Paradigm Initiative, “Digital Rights and Inclusion in Africa Report 2024,” April 2025, <https://paradigmhq.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Londa-2024-2.pdf>.