PRESS RELEASE

26th August 2019, Banjul

Following reports that on Saturday 10th August, four members of Yahya Jammeh’s hit squad known as the “Junglers” (Malick Jatta, Omar A. Jallow, Amadou Badjie and Pa Ousman Sanneh) were released from detention on the recommendations by Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Abubacarr Tambadou; direct victims Ya Mamie Ceesay, Sirra Ndow, Baba Hydara, Nana-Jo N’dow, Zainab Lowe, Abdul Aziz
Barrow, Olay Ceesay, Ayesha Harun Jammeh and Sarjo Cham have requested the Truth, Reconciliation, Reparations Commission (TRRC) to report to the Ministry of Justice the self-confessed killers Malick Jatta and Omar A. Jallow for committing perjury.

On 30th July 2019, the Minister of Justice in a press conference defended the decision to release the men in what appears to be a reward for testifying before the TRRC regarding the crimes against humanity they committed against civilians and security personnel during the Jammeh era. Minister Tambadou claimed that although Malick Jatta and Omar A. Jallow had committed heinous crimes, it was only fair to release the men as they had assisted the TRRC to establish the truth.

We contend that the Minister's statement is misleading as during their testimony in July, Malick Jatta and Omar A. Jallow provided untruthful testimonies regarding the execution of the West African migrants in 2005. Malick Jatta claimed that he killed only one migrant in 2005, while Omar A. Jallow assured the TRRC that this was a lie as Jatta had killed several people and that nobody had escaped on that occasion. Their testimonies also differ from the credible report published by TRIAL International and Human Rights Watch in May 2018 in several aspects.

As per the TRRC Act, “a person who intentionally provides misleading or false information to the Commission shall be deemed to be in contempt of court and may be referred to the High Court for trial and punishment”. The Commission and the Minister of Justice have also on several occasions declared that lying before the Commission has consequences, which led to the arrest of Lamin Senghore, a.k.a “The Assassin” and was subsequently charged with perjury.
Another argument made by the Minister to justify his flawed decision was that the men who had been detained for two and a half years by the Military Police “could not be charged with any crimes at this moment because the TRRC has been mandated to identify for prosecution only those who bear the greatest responsibility for the human rights violations and abuses”. He added that the work of the TRRC could not be pre-empted by taking action against anyone at this stage. This is in clear contradiction of actions taken by the Ministry of Justice himself, as since the beginning of the TRRC hearings three individuals that appeared before the Commission have been charged with murder (Lamin Senghore, John Charles Mendy and Yankuba Touray).

We take this opportunity to call on the International Community who is supporting The Gambia in its democratic transition to hold accountable the Minister of Justice whose reasoning is dangerous, and ensure the generous funding is appropriately used and does not validate actions that result in impunity in The Gambia. The Transitional Justice process in The Gambia should not occur at the expense of the Victims’ rights.

See attached for French version.

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#Junglers2Justice No Reconciliation Without Justice