

AI Index: AFR 27/005/2001

*Press Release from Amnesty International EU Office. Brussels, 24 October 2001.*

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*Urgent appeal to EU:*

*Arrest of Amnesty International official and opposition leader in Gambia*

*Amnesty International is issuing an urgent appeal to European Union leaders to exert their influence through the Cotonou Agreement, following the arrest yesterday of the head of Amnesty International in Gambia, Mr Lamine Sillah, and 13 others including Gambia's opposition leader Dr Moudou Manneh.*

*Amnesty International has learnt that the group is being held incommunicado at the headquarters of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) in the Gambian capital, Banjul. A delegation of human rights activists and lawyers who tried to visit the detainees today, was denied access.*

*The Cotonou Agreement between the EU and ACP countries (which includes Gambia) states the importance of respect for human rights and democratic principles. With EU Foreign Ministers due to meet next week, Amnesty International urges the EU to call on Gambia to honour the commitments it made under the Cotonou Agreement.*

*Although no official reason has been given, Amnesty International believes Mr Sillah's arrest is linked to an interview he gave to the BBC World Service two days ago calling for restraint by the Gambian security forces following the recent elections there.*

*For further comment/background and interviews:*

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