

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALISTS' CASE TO BE DECIDED ON 3 NOVEMBER
Gambian journalists Musa Sheriff and Sainey M.K. Marenah will have their case decided by a magistrate on 3 November. They could be jailed for up to two years for the legitimate exercise of their right to freedom of expression. They would be prisoners of conscience.

A magistrate will rule on 3 November on the case of journalists **Musa Sheriff** and **Sainey M.K. Marenah**, who are now free on bail but still facing charges of "publication of false news with intent to cause fear and alarm to the public" and "conspiracy to commit felony". These charges are often used to target journalists.

The men's court sessions have been cancelled repeatedly, distressing them and their families, and causing them financial hardship. They have had to take days off work to attend court sessions, which have been cancelled only after they have arrived. Since the trial began, several companies have stopped placing advertisements in the privately-owned newspaper *The Voice*, for which Musa Sheriff and Sainey M.K. Marenah both write.

Musa Sheriff and Sainey M.K. Marenah were arrested on 13 January in the town of Serekunda over an article published in *The Voice* on 9 December 2013. The article reported on the defection of youth supporters of the ruling party, the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), to the opposition United Democratic Party (UDP). The APRC contested the story, and *The Voice* later published a response.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to drop the charges against Musa Sheriff and Sainey M.K. Marenah since they are related solely to the legitimate exercise of their right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to respect and protect the rights to freedom of expression and ensure that journalists are able to carry out their work without hindrance, intimidation or harassment;
- Urging them to remove unlawful restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly from the Gambia's legislation.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 DECEMBER 2014 TO:

Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Basirou Mahoney
 Ministry of Justice
 Marina Parade
 Banjul
 The Gambia
 Fax: +220 422 9908
 Email: info@moj.gov.gm

Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Interior and NGO Affairs

Ousman Sonko
 Ministry of Interior and NGO Affairs
 No.5 J.R. Forster Street (Ex. Fitzgerald
 Street)
 Banjul
 The Gambia
 Fax: +220 420 1320

Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs
 Bala Garba-Jahumpa
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International
 Cooperation and Gambians Abroad
 4, Marina Parade
 Banjul
 The Gambia
 Email: info@mofa.gov.gm

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 10/14. Further information:
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR27/003/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Journalists, human rights activists and political opponents in the Gambia are routinely subjected to human rights violations such as unlawful arrest and detention, torture, unfair trial, harassment, assault and death threats, making it extremely difficult for them to do their work.

In July 2013, the Gambian government passed a law which limits freedom of expression on the internet, one of the few remaining public spaces for dissent. The "Information and Communication (Amendment) Act 2013", allows the government to impose penalties of up to 15 years imprisonment and hefty fines for criticising government officials online. It targets people who spread "false news" about the government or public officials; caricature or make derogatory statements against public officials; and incite dissatisfaction or instigate violence against the government.

Three months earlier the Gambia's National Assembly had unanimously passed the "Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, 2013", also known as "The Principal Act", which broadens definitions of offences and places harsher punishments on the following: acts of public disorder, such as "hurling abusive insults" or "singing abusive songs"; giving false information to a public servant; and it criminalizes people's expression through their choice of clothing. The Principal Act contains vague definitions which leave room for interpretation and application that do not comply with international human rights law.

Names: Musa Sheriff, Sainey M.K. Marenah

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 10/14 Index: AFR 27/013/2014 Issue Date: 30 October 2014