

AI Index: PRE 01/336/2013
05 July 2013

The Gambia: New bill stifles online dissent

A new bill in the Gambia which could impose lengthy prison sentences and hefty fines for criticising government officials on the internet is an outrageous attack on freedom of expression, Amnesty International said.

“By attempting to repress dissent even on the internet, the new bill takes the restriction of freedom of expression in the Gambia to a shocking new level.” said Lucy Freeman, Africa Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

The Information and Communication (Amendment) Act 2013, means that a simple cartoon or satirical comedy could carry up to 15 years in jail and a fine of up to of three million Dalasis (approx £54,500).

While the bill imposes penalties for “Instigating violence against the government or public officials”, it also targets individuals who “caricature or make derogatory statements against officials” or “impersonate public officials”.

“The authorities in the Gambia have done everything in their power to stop people from openly criticising them, including shutting down radio stations and newspapers, expelling foreign journalists and imprisoning activists. Now they have come for the internet.”