

PRESS RELEASE**ACTIVISTA THE GAMBIA CONDEMNS PRESIDENT ADAMA BARROW'S RECENT STATEMENT TO BAN POLITICAL PARTY ACTIVITIES**

On August 15 2021, The President of The Republic of The Gambia, Mr. Adama Barrow, vowed to stop all party-political activities if he wins the December 4, 2021 Presidential elections. Speaking, in Wollof, before a cross-section of the Serer community from New Jeshwang at the State House in Banjul, the President was quoted saying:

“since I became President in 2017, there are people who have been busy engaging in unending political activities. On a daily basis, these [the political parties] are in the streets engaging in merriments, obstructing public movement, and insulting people on social media platforms”.

He then vowed that if declared winner of the upcoming presidential elections on December 4, 2021, he will forthwith instruct the **Inspector General of Police (IGP)** to refuse to grant permit to anyone who seeks to engage in open political activities because he wants his government to continue what he refers to as his “development agenda.” The President added:

“All those such open political activities as meetings, they [political parties] are busy doing, and blocking streets do not benefit The Gambia. This cannot continue to happen.”

On the backdrop of this statement by the President, Activista The Gambia expresses concerns over the president’s unequivocal desire to stifle the country’s political and democratic landscape. It further shows an attempt to stifle political freedom and freedom to associate and assemble as enshrined in our Constitution.

Activista would like to remind the President of the republic that this country has come from a difficult past. As such, we are reminding the president that Gambians had learned enough lessons of living under a dictatorship and will therefore *fight tooth and nail* to prevent ourselves from sleepwalking into the rebirth of another dictatorship in the Country. In 2016, we fought so hard as people to free ourselves from the shackles of a long-standing dictatorship. And therefore, we will never trade off this victory for anything whatsoever.

Activista The Gambia, is a fervent believer of democracy as guided by the fundamental principles of freedom of movement, association, and assembly, as enshrined in **Section 25** of the 1997 Constitution of The Republic of The Gambia, and **Articles 10, 11, and 12** of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

Furthermore, with reference to the President's statement to instruct the IGP to deny issuance of permits to those who seek it after December 4, 2021, we are again reminding him that he, Mr. Barrow, does not have any legitimate powers whatsoever to give such instructions, and therefore he will be running a fool's errand in trying to do so. In fact, Activista wishes to reiterate its call that the Public Order Act which gives the Police (IGP) the power to grant or deny permit to public assembly is an archaic and draconian law which is blatantly unfit for use in a democratic and progressive society. The Act was a tool designed to curtail peoples' freedom as it leaves our rights and freedoms to assemble at the mercy of the state security apparatus. Thus, such obnoxious laws must be expunged from our statutes, as we try to consolidate our fledgling democracy.

Following wide public denouncement of the President's August 15th statement, the government, through its Spokesperson, released a Press Statement on August 17, 2021 trying to stamp out concerns and wittingly cover up the President's statement which the Release labelled "*as no intentions to curtail citizens' freedom, or to control or ban political activities*". This same statement went on to say that "*President Barrow envisages a more tolerant and diverse Gambia where citizens can openly debate over issues to agree and disagree amicably without resulting to insults and foul languages.*"

Sequel to this, Activista considers the government's August 17th Press Release as unapologetic and an insufficient way to address the President's statement. Therefore, we hereby urge the President to **(a) openly apologise to Gambians immediately and reassure us that henceforth he will not threaten to limit our fundamental rights and freedoms as a people and citizens (b) focus on delivering development to Gambians and desist from using the State House and its resources as ground to consolidate his party's political fan base (c) ensure that state apparatus including security forces desist from acting upon unlawful directives and act within the confines of the law**

While we look forward to seeing the President act accordingly, we remain firm in our stand to protect and promote our "Hard-Won" democracy.

Signed

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