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O/R.: 642/2011/SG/RB

Your Excellency,

Condemnation of attacks and accusations against Gambian journalists

The African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa), with its mission of protecting the rights of peoples and workers on the continent, strongly condemns the on-going abusive acts in Gambia against Journalists. The growing number of attacks and false accusations against Journalists greatly violates the freedom of expression, and as such, the rule of law of the country.

News reaching us states that Ndey Tapha Sosseh, treasurer of the Federation of African Journalists (FAJ) and also former President of the Gambian Press Union (GPU) has been charged with treason and sedition by the State prosecutor's office.

It is alleged that Sosseh along with three other people including, Matthew K Jallow, Famara Demba and the already detained former Minister, Amadou Scattered Janneh, sometime in May, conspired to overthrow the Government of The Gambia by unlawful means and thereby committed an offense.

These reported violations which obviously have the aim of suppressing the rights of Journalists have clearly exceeded the limit.

The question we ask is, where does democracy lie if journalists who serve as a medium of news and information to the public and also have the role as agents of agenda setting for the polity are being intimidated and cannot freely express their views on civic, political and human rights issues?

The ITUC - Africa strongly condemns these false accusations against Journalists in The Gambia as these charges are without bases. The incumbent Gambian government must demonstrate capacity to entertain dissent and be broad minded to accommodate constructive criticism. It is strongly advised to refrain from jumping to conclusions that persons holding different views and opinions are enemies of the state and thus should be put into detention and rail-roaded to incarceration on rump-up charges.

We therefore ask that these charges be dropped accordingly and immediately without conditions.

We further ask that the government of President Jammeh accord journalists and activists the space and freedom to carry out their mandates to the public and society in liberty and full freedom. The culture and the practice of free press and speech are ingredients for promoting and deepening democracy, civil liberties, rule of law and freedom. Journalists and the media have proved to be efficient custodians and promoters of these virtues, which Africa and Africans desire to addressing its development challenges.

We look forward to a positive response on dropping the charges against Journalist Ndey Tapha Sosseh.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. A. S.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kwasi Adu-Amankwah

General Secretary