



**The National Human Rights Commission, The Gambia**

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**12<sup>th</sup> February -2021.**

RHP58/154/01(LF-02)

**The National Human Rights Commission @ 2: Modest Gains, Big Dreams  
for A Culture of Human Rights**

“The establishment of the NHRC may not be a panacea to all the current problems of the Gambia but it is no doubt an important institution that can and will contribute to strengthening rule of law and guaranteeing the fundamental rights and freedoms of its people.....” Inaugural Statement of Chairperson Emmanuel Joof at the swearing-in ceremony of the Commissioners.

It was two years ago, when on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Adama Barrow, swore into office five Commissioners of the National Human Rights Commission: Commissioners Emmanuel Daniel Joof (Chair), Jainaba Johm (Vice Chair), Njundu Drammeh, Imam Baba Leigh and Dr Agnes Adama Campbell. The NHRC is a permanent State organ created by the National Human Rights Commission Act 2017 with the mandate to promote and protect human rights in The Gambia. At the swearing-in ceremony, the President of the Republic applauded the appointment of the Commissioners and reiterated his Government’s commitment to ‘rendering the necessary assistance to the Commission for the realization of its objectives’.

The establishment of the Commission is part of the country’s reform process and transition to democracy after about 22 years of dictatorship which also witnessed impunity and gross violations of human rights and human dignity. Thus, the establishment of the Commission, as said by the President of the Republic, is a ‘historic milestone in the fulfilment of our human rights obligations’.

While the Commission is still in its infancy, it appreciates the enormity of its work, the unenviable past the country has emerged from, the huge expectations of the public and the very reasons of its establishment or existence. It is evident that creating a culture of respect for human rights requires that all parts of the society are galvanized and motivated to be promoters and defenders of human rights, and the State committed to its obligations under national, regional and international legal instruments.

With a fully functional Secretariat with the appropriate Directorates, the necessary policy documents and tools developed and in use, a functioning website, a database system and a strategic plan, the Commission is well poised to contributing to the strengthening of democracy, good governance, accountability and human rights standards in the country. Thus, the Commission would continue to raise awareness of the public on human rights, seek appropriate redress on behalf of victims of human rights violations, recommend appropriate remedial actions to the Government, enhance the professional capacity of duty bearers and rule of law institutions to strengthen respect for and protection of human rights, and support the Government in the formulation of policies and laws to better guarantee and protect the human rights of all the people.

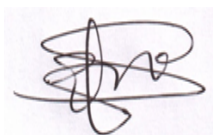
Our recent history is too fresh in our minds for us to have a nonchalant attitude towards human rights. Those who govern us (the Executive and its agents), those who are governed (the public) and those who aspire to govern us (political parties and their supporters) must believe in the principles of human rights and not just pay lip service to its ideals. We must condemn injustices wherever and whenever they occur and not be selective in our condemnation of human rights violations. We have a duty to exercise impartiality and objectivity in condemning all forms of discrimination based on religion, tribe, caste, race, gender, sex and/or social status.

To consolidate the gains the country has already made in its onward march towards democracy and good governance, every citizen and resident must be ready and willing to be a protector and defender of human rights while placing himself or herself under the law.

We urge the Government to expedite the governance reform initiatives, especially the security sector reform and the establishment of the anti-corruption Commission; adopt programmes and measures to ameliorate the effects of Covid-19 on the population, in particular persons with disabilities, the elderly and vulnerable women and children; expand the space for civil society engagement and continue to guarantee the human rights of the people.

As a public institution, the Commission renews its unflinching commitment to fulfil its mandate and functions as stipulated in the National Human Rights Commission Act 2017, safeguard its independence and integrity, place the best interests of victims of human rights violations at the heart of its work and live by its motto 'let justice guide our actions'. In this regard, the Commission is ever ready to be held accountable by the public for the work that it does and the services it provides.

We wish to take this opportunity to express our profound gratitude to the Government for the continued support and to all our development partners and the civil society organisations for accompanying us in this journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emmanuel D. Joof', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and somewhat abstract, with overlapping loops and lines.

**Signed: Emmanuel D. Joof**  
**Chairperson**