



The National Human Rights Commission, The Gambia

PRESS RELEASE

Concerns About the Rising Religious Tension in The Country

May 3, 2023

The Commission is extremely concerned about the rising religious tension and intolerance within the country that has been making headline news over the past few weeks. The tense religious exchanges on social media, threats against individuals, intra-faith divisions, the attacks on two Churches in Tallingding and Bakau are stark reminders that we can no longer take our religious tolerance for granted.

We wish to remind everyone that The Gambia is a country of many faiths and as such religious diversity and tolerance should be a key feature of our public and social life. Each faith has played and continues to play a profound role in the development of the country and our collective identity and values. People of all faiths should live in peaceful co-existence and avoid inciting hatred between different religions and religious sects. It is therefore important that our diversity unites and not divides us and leads to collaboration and communal harmony.

Our 1997 Constitution guarantees to all persons in the country the right to freedom of religion and belief and the right to freedom from discrimination on the grounds of religion or other beliefs. The Gambia is also a signatory to several regional and international human rights treaties that also recognize and protect the right to practice and manifest any religion.

The growing religious intolerance, discrimination, social hostility and incitement to violence based on religion or belief is worrying. In this regard, the Commission urges the Government to take immediate steps towards diffusing the spread of intolerance and to guarantee protection of the rights of all faiths. We must all promote peaceful and sustainable co-existence amongst all people.

The Commission further urges the Government to continue to speak out against all forms of religious intolerance emanating from any sect or group and to expedite the implementation of recommendations on Religious Freedoms of the TRRC which the Government White Paper accepts **“to encourage and foster religious tolerance and social cohesion and establish an interfaith consultative body that will be mandated to carry out activities that will help strengthen religious tolerance and social cohesion”**.

Everyone, including the Government, CSOs, faith-based organisations and religious bodies, have a responsibility to build and maintain harmonious and positive relationships and to promote mutual respect and understanding.

The Commission is committed to work with the Government and all stakeholders to ensure religious tolerance and harmony prevails in the country and is hopeful that the Government will take constructive steps towards providing equal rights for all religions and religious groups in The Gambia.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jainaba Johm', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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Jainaba Johm
Vice Chairperson
National Human Rights Commission