



The National Human Rights Commission, The Gambia

PRESS RELEASE

Prevailing Intense Political Situation in the Run Up to The Mayoral And Chairpersonship Elections

May 4, 2023

The Commission is deeply concerned by the tense political situation in the country as it enters the Mayoral and Chairpersonship elections which will mark the end of the 2016-2023 electoral cycle. Political party supporters are releasing WhatsApp audios and messages which incite violence, physical assault and threats to the lives and properties of certain public figures, political leaders and Government officials. These audios and messages constitute hate speech and a threat to a peaceful society, which the Commission strongly condemns.

While the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia promotes and recognises freedom of expression and speech as a fundamental human right which the Commission will always protect and safeguard, incitement to violence and uttering threats with the aim to bully and silence are illegal and go against every value we stand for as a people.

The Commission has taken note of allegations of vote buying, voter inducement and attacks on campaign caravans, which are a cause for concern, as these pose a threat to the peaceful conduct of free and fair elections, which are fundamental to democracy and respect for human rights. The Commission in this regard wishes to remind all the leaders of the various political parties as primary duty bearers in the electoral process to reiterate to their supporters that respect and protection of the fundamental right to vote and be elected, is based on the conduct of genuine elections which is core in every democratic society.

The Commission further reminds all political party leaders of their obligations as clearly stated in the IEC Code on Election Campaign Ethics, Inter-Party Committee's Memorandum of Understanding and Code of Conduct and the Political Party Leaders Peace Accord 2021 (Janjangbureh Peace Accord). All stakeholders are particularly reminded to uphold the electoral laws, conduct their elections peacefully, advance political tolerance, be law abiding, foster national unity, and avoid conduct and behaviours which would endanger the political stability and security of The Gambia.

The Commission strongly reiterates that the conduct of peaceful, free and fair elections is integral to the country's transitional justice process and any actions or utterances that hamper this will crucially jeopardise our much-anticipated democratic consolidation.

The Commission also calls on all political party leaders to ensure that their party militants, members and supporters to conduct all political affairs in accordance with the electoral laws and guidelines. It is prudent that they conduct campaigns in the most peaceful manner, protect the peace and sanctity of the country, desist from and condemn all forms of hate speeches and incitement to violence and recognise the rights of everyone to participate in public affairs in accordance with the laws.



.....

Jainaba Johm

Vice Chairperson

National Human Rights Commission