



The National Human Rights Commission, The Gambia

PRESS RELEASE

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**Concerns of the National Human Rights Commission on Matters Affecting Public
Order**

Banjul - The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) ushers in the New Year with a renewed commitment to promote and protect human rights in The Gambia. Several issues relating to and affecting human rights have been and continue to be monitored by the NHRC. Key concerns include civil society engagement with law enforcement and respect for the rights guaranteed by the constitution, such as the right to assembly, freedom of expression and rule of law.

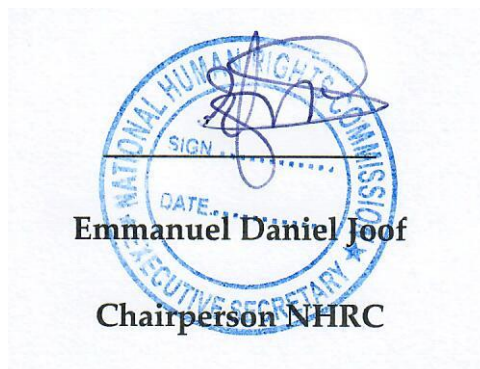
As our country transitions to a more democratic society, our law enforcement agencies will be faced with situations which would oblige them to uphold standards that do not compromise human rights and freedoms, while maintaining order, security and peace.

The NHRC is aware of interactions between The Gambia Police Force and 3 Years Jotna Concerned Citizens which, if not properly addressed, may lead to misunderstanding and disruption of public order. Consequently, on Wednesday 8th January 2020, the Commission initiated a separate dialogue with both the Inspector General of Police and Executive members of the 3 Years Jotna Concerned Citizens. The meetings were neither supportive, nor dismissive of the demands and concerns of 3 Years Jotna Concerned Citizens, or convened to castigate or admonish the police. It was a dialogue to hear the concerns of the parties, encourage the nurturing of peace and order, and emphasize respect for and protection of constitutional and fundamental human rights by all and sundry.

Protests, among other forms of civil engagement, are fundamental features of a functioning democracy. The Gambia Police Force performs the critical and challenging role of creating both a conducive environment, while maintaining order, and the protection of people and properties. It should be emphasized that the State, however, bears the primary obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the fundamental rights of everyone living within its jurisdiction without discrimination or any other considerations. Civil society organisations are encouraged to employ avenues that are governed by the laws of The Gambia and to act responsibly in their engagements and exercise of fundamental human rights.

The NHRC urges the Government and the populace to draw lessons from the revelations of the ongoing Truth Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) to build a society that is founded on fundamental rights and freedoms, the rule of law, constitutionalism and due process.

The National Human Rights Commission is an independent institution established by an Act of National Assembly in 2017 to protect and promote human rights in The Gambia. The Commission is open to the general public and can receive, investigate and provide human rights redress to complainants.



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