

**DUBLIN**

Front Line Defenders – Head Office
First Floor, Avoca Court
Temple Road, Blackrock
Co. Dublin, A94 R7W3, Ireland

info@frontlinedefenders.org
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +353 1 212 3750
fax +353 1 212 1001

BRUSSELS

Front Line Defenders – EU Office
Square Marie-Louise 72
1000 Brussels
Belgium

euoffice@frontlinedefenders.org
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +32 2 230 9383
fax +32 2 230 0028

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Gambia: Human Rights Defender Madi Jobarteh arrested and kept in judicial custody

On 9 October 2023, human rights defender **Madi Jobarteh** was arrested by the Gambia Police Force (GPF) and placed in judicial custody at the Jabang anti-crime facility. He has been repeatedly targeted in reprisal for his peaceful campaign in support of accountability and respect of democratic laws within the government.

Madi Jobarteh is a human rights defender working to promote democracy, justice, good governance and human rights in The Gambia. He is the former executive director of the Association of Non-Governmental Organisations in The Gambia (TANGO), as well as a member of the Foundation for Legal Aid Research and Empowerment (FLARE). The human rights defender is currently serving as the country representative for the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

On 9 October 2023, human rights defender Madi Jobarteh was arrested by the Gambia Police Force (GPF) and placed in judicial custody at the Jabang anti-crime facility. He has been repeatedly targeted in reprisal/as punishment for his peaceful campaign in support of accountability and respect for democratic laws within the government.

On 6 October 2023, four officers from the State Intelligence Unit (SIU) and Criminal Intelligence Unit (CIU) went to the house of the human rights defender to question him on several posts he had allegedly published on Facebook, related to the promotion of democracy. However, as Madi Jobarteh was sick and given that he had not breached the law, the human right defender refused the officers' request of to accompany them to the police station. In the days following this, he was subjected to surveillance and acts of intimidation by police. These violations against the human rights defender seek to undermine and hinder the exercise of his right to defend human rights.

Madi Jobarteh has [previously](#) been targeted due to his human rights work. On 30 June 2020, the human rights defender was charged with "false information and broadcasting" after giving an interview to a media outlet during a Black Lives Matter demonstration which he had organised on 27 June 2020, in which he criticised the government. The charges brought against him were subsequently dropped on 14 July 2020.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the recent episodes of intimidation, harassment, surveillance and the alleged arrest and detention of human rights defender Madi Jobarteh. It strongly believes that the arrest of Madi Jobarteh is due to his legitimate and peaceful human rights work.

Front Line Defenders urges the relevant authorities in Gambia to:

1. Immediately release human rights defender Madi Jobarteh and drop all charges against him and cease persistent reprisals against the human rights defender;
2. Guarantee under all circumstances that Madi Jobarteh receives adequate treatment for his health conditions and is not subjected to torture or other forms or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment while in judicial custody, in accordance with international standards;

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that human rights defenders in Gambia are able to carry out their peaceful human rights work without any fear of reprisal.