



Truth, Reconciliation  
and Reparations  
Commission (TRRC)

# **INTERIM REPORT**

## **2018 - 2019**

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# Abbreviations

<b>AFPRC</b>	Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council
<b>APRC</b>	Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction
<b>CRR</b>	Central River Region
<b>CRS</b>	Catholic Relief Services
<b>GCVHRV</b>	Gambia Centre for Victims of Human Rights Violations
<b>GPA</b>	Gambia Ports Authority
<b>ICC</b>	International Criminal Court
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>ICTJ</b>	International Centre for Transitional Justice
<b>IDEA</b>	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
<b>IFIT</b>	Institute for Integrated Transitions
<b>JRR</b>	Justice Rapid Response
<b>LRR</b>	Lower River Region
<b>NABAM</b>	Network of Animal Breeders and Multipliers
<b>NBR</b>	North Bank Region
<b>NDLEA</b>	National Drug Law Enforcement Agency
<b>NDMA</b>	National Disaster Management Agency
<b>NIA</b>	National Intelligence Agency
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNOWAS</b>	United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
<b>UNTJP</b>	United Nations Transitional Justice Project
<b>URR</b>	Upper River Region
<b>YCNU</b>	Youth and Children's Network Unit
<b>RID</b>	Research and Investigations Directorate
<b>RSPs</b>	Regional Selection Panels
<b>SIS</b>	State Intelligence Services
<b>TANGO</b>	The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>TRRC</b>	Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission
<b>VSU</b>	Victim Support Unit
<b>WCR</b>	West Coast Region
<b>WILL</b>	Women in Liberation and Leadership

# Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission

## INTERIM REPORT, 2018 – 2019

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Legislative Mandate (Objectives and Interim Report)

1. The Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) was established by an Act of the National Assembly of the Republic of The Gambia in December 2017 (hereinafter referred to as Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Act, 2017).<sup>1</sup>
2. The main objectives of the TRRC, pursuant to Section 13 of the Act, are to:
  - a) create an impartial historical record of violations and abuses of human rights from July 1994 to January 2017, in order to –
    - (i) promote healing and reconciliation,
    - (ii) respond to the needs of the victims,
    - (iii) address impunity, and
    - (iv) prevent a repetition of the violations and abuses suffered by making recommendations for the establishment of appropriate preventive mechanisms including institutional and legal reforms;
  - b) establish and make known the fate or whereabouts of disappeared victims;
  - c) provide victims an opportunity to relate their own accounts of the violations and abuses suffered; and
  - d) grant reparations to victims in appropriate cases.
3. Section 14 (4) (a) of the Act provides that “after one year of its establishment, (the Commission) shall submit an interim report to the President detailing its activities.” The Commission, accordingly, submits herewith the present Interim Report.

#### Establishment and Commencement of Activities

4. The President of the Republic of The Gambia, on 15th October, 2018 appointed and swore in the 11 Commissioners of the TRRC. However, prior to the appointment of the Commissioners the following pre-establishment activities were undertaken:

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<sup>1</sup> Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, The Gambia, No. 9 of 2017

- a. Study tours by the Ministry of Justice to Sierra Leone and South Africa
  - b. National consultations across The Gambia
  - c. Appointment of the Executive Secretary of the Commission
  - d. Establishment of TRRC Secretariat units
  - e. Recruitment of the staff
5. The Minister of Justice appointed a Legal Team to assist the Commission in its work. The team is led by the Lead Counsel.
  6. Following the establishment of its subsidiary bodies as provided for under Section 18 of the Act (Committees on Human Rights Violations and Abuses, Amnesty, Reparations, Child Protection and Sexual and Gender-based Violence, and Reconciliation), and adoption of its provisional rules of procedure, the Commission, on 7th January 2019, began holding public hearings. It structured the public hearings on the general themes of its mandate, i.e. gross violations and abuses of human rights and enforced disappearances during the period under review (July 1994 – January 2017). The Commission appointed members of the various committees from among the Commissioners who would be assisted by members of the Legal Team and relevant units of the Secretariat. The Committees met to draw up their respective terms of reference and work programmes.
  7. The Commission made a number of visits to selected sites specifically mentioned by witnesses, mainly victims, as places of illegal detention and torture. These included the prisons at Mile Two, Jeshwang and Janjanbureh, a secret detention centre at Jeshwang, and the military barracks at Yundum and Fajara. Important findings were made during these visits that would form part of the Commission’s final report.
  8. The outreach activities undertaken by the units of the Secretariat include the following: (a) town hall meetings, (b) village dialogues, (c) women’s listening circles, (d) reconciliation activities, and (e) school outreach programme that visited over 57 schools across the country to encourage young people to be engaged in The Gambia’s transitional justice process and the Commission’s Never Again campaign. The Secretariat also continues to be actively engaged in other areas of the work of the Commission such as research and investigations, providing psychosocial support and assisting in the preparation of granting interim reparations to victims.
  9. As at the end of its first year of operations, the TRRC is well on its way to completing its work within the specified two-year mandate period.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### Pre-establishment and establishment of the TRRC

10. In December 2017, the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) was established by an Act of the National Assembly. The passage of the TRRC Act came after a short but rigorous process of both national and international consultations and study tours organized and coordinated by the Ministry of Justice of The Gambia. In August 2017, the Ministry, in collaboration with the Gambia office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Dakar-based Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNICEF, and some civil society organizations embarked on a ten day nationwide consultation process at which Gambians were invited and encouraged to express their opinions on the proposed TRRC process.
11. According to the report<sup>2</sup> subsequently released on this activity, “the objective of the consultations, which took place from the 14th to the 24th of August 2017, was to solicit the views and opinions of Gambians on a wide range of issues on the objectives and functions of the proposed TRRC.” Opinions and ideas shared at these national consultations informed the establishment by the Ministry of Justice of a technical committee of government and non-governmental institutions to actively work together on shaping the proposed TRRC. This technical committee held regular consultative and brainstorming sessions at the Ministry of Justice and contributed to the conceptualization and formulation of the TRRC Act and guidelines for the selection of commissioners which were widely publicized in the media.
12. Shortly thereafter, in September 2017, a team led by Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Mr. Abubacarr Tambadou embarked on a study tour to Sierra Leone and South Africa with a view to learning how their truth commission experiences could “inform Gambia’s policy, strategy and implementation of its transitional justice mechanisms.” The Gambian delegation hoped through information gathering and consultations, to share experiences on “challenges, lessons learned, and best practices in the establishment of a comprehensive transitional justice process” incorporating truth, justice, reconciliation, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence of human rights violations and abuses. Important lessons were learned on, among other things, victim and witness participation, witness protection, information management and communications strategies, women and gender mainstreaming, challenges of reconciliation and reparations, and the extent to which truth commissions have been able to guarantee non-recurrence of human rights violations. Lessons learned from these study tours were useful in the formulation of the TRRC Act and the setting up of the Commission itself in the following months.

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2 Ministry of Justice, The Gambia: Report on the National Consultations for the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, 14<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2017

13. The first part of 2018 saw the appointment of an executive secretary and the drafting of guidelines for the selection and appointment of commissioners of the TRRC. According to these guidelines, calls for nominations of commissioners from the urban areas, the Gambian Diaspora and all five regions of the country were issued and widely publicized in local media. One commissioner was to be appointed from each of the five regions following widespread consultations in each district of each region. Coordinated by the regional governors, the selection of regional commissioners was overseen by seven-member Regional Selection Panels (RSPs) made up of representatives of youth and women's groups, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations working in the field of human rights, religious and community leaders in each of the country's five regions. RSP members did not have any known affiliations with political parties.
14. Nomination criteria for Commissioners included personal integrity, high moral character, no criminal record, not known to be actively involved in a political party, residency in the region and Gambian nationality.
15. The president was given the prerogative to call for general nominations and appoint six additional commissioners from the urban areas, and the Gambian Diaspora.
16. The process for the nomination of regional commissioners across the country started on Wednesday 20th June, 2018 with advance community radio sensitization programmes conducted by each governor assisted by two chiefs from their respective regions. A one-hour programme per day in two to three community radio stations in each region were conducted in local languages on Wednesday 20th June, Thursday 21st June and Friday, 22nd June. During these programmes, the governors and chiefs explained to their communities the context, purpose, and expected nature and outcomes of the nomination process at the district and regional levels. These radio sensitization programmes highlighted the importance of local communities' understanding the guidelines and criteria for the selection of regional commissioners, the neutral and coordinating role of the governors, and community participation in the process.
17. These community radio engagements were followed on Monday, 25th June by meetings at governors' offices where the seven members of the RSP for each region were selected. Representatives from all districts in every region converged at the regional headquarters to participate in the selection of RSP members. Follow-up meetings between each governor and their RSPs were held on Wednesday, 27th June. At these meetings the governors discussed with the RSPs their terms of reference and went over the guidelines for the selection of regional commissioners. The actual district level consultation and nomination process by the RSP in each region ran from 28th June – 9th July, 2018. During that period, each RSP travelled to and held meetings with inhabitants of every district in their region to secure two nominations from each district, one male and one female. Once they had nominations from all districts, the RSPs met to determine the three finalists from among their pool of nominees for onward submission to the governors.



18. On 16th July the governors submitted their lists of three final candidates from each region to the Ministry of Justice. The names were accompanied by reports identifying members of the RSPs and certifying that the nomination process complied with the guidelines for the nomination and appointment of Commissioners. The list of three nominees from each region contained each candidate's full name and current address, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, educational background, occupation, employment history, and short notes of no more than 500 words (type-written) stating the reasons for the person's suitability for appointment as commissioner of the TRRC.
19. After receipt of all nominations from all regions and the presidential nominees, the Ministry of Justice selected 11 names for appointment as commissioners. These names were submitted for vetting by the Technical Committee on Transitional Justice and after that, they were published in the media and the general public given ten days to voice their objections to the Ministry. Guidelines on how to submit objections were provided. All serious objections backed by compelling evidence were to be seriously considered with a view to revisiting a person's suitability to serve as a commissioner for the TRRC. After ten days, no serious objections were received and the list of 11 finalists were submitted to the president for appointment as TRRC commissioners. Before appointing them, the president consulted several civil society organizations as required by the TRRC Act.
20. On 15th October, 2018 the 11 Commissioners were sworn in and the TRRC officially launched by President Adama Barrow at a formal ceremony at the Commission's new headquarters at Dunes Resort, Kololi.
21. Shortly after its launching, Commissioners met in plenary to develop provisional rules of procedure and produce a thematic work plan for the duration of its mandate. Both tasks were successfully completed and the provisional rules adopted in time for the start of the public hearings.
22. The TRRC held its first public hearing on 7th January, 2019.

## II MANDATE

### Objectives of the Commission

23. The objectives of the TRRC are “to create an impartial historical record of violations and abuses of human rights from July 1994 to January 2017, in order to promote healing and reconciliation, respond to the needs of the victims, address impunity, prevent a repetition of the violations and abuses suffered by making recommendations for the establishment of appropriate preventive mechanisms including institutional and legal reforms, establish and make known the fate or whereabouts of disappeared victims, provide victims an opportunity to relate their own accounts of the violations and abuses suffered, and grant reparations to victims in appropriate cases.” (TRRC Act, Section 13)
24. Section 14 (4) of the Act provides that the TRRC shall “after one year of its establishment, submit an interim report to the President detailing its activities; after the end of its mandate, prepare a comprehensive report which sets out its activities and findings based on factual and objective information and evidence collected, received by it or placed at its disposal; and make recommendations to the President with regard to the creation of institutions conducive to the development of a stable and democratic society as well as the institutional, administrative and legislative measures which should be taken in order to prevent the commission of violations and abuses of human rights.”

### III. METHODOLOGY

The ultimate rationale for the creation of truth commissions and other transitional justice mechanisms is to help prevent recurrence of past human rights violations and abuses which gave rise to their establishment. While institutional, administrative and legislative reforms may be key to preventing recurrence, significant recognition, in the Gambian context, must be given to certain other reforms. A primary reform in this regard would be the country's political culture and the concomitant popular attitude regarding leaders and leadership in society. In addressing this, the TRRC adopts a work strategy / methodology that allows it to operate both as a quasi-judicial truth-seeking mechanism and as an institution for civic education and popular empowerment.

25. In line with this methodology, the TRRC's work is conducted via two parallel processes: Hearings and Outreach Activities. While the Commission's hearings are ongoing, various units of the Secretariat are engaged in outreach activities across the country with a view to involving all Gambians in the Commission's work through a national conversation on the country's past, its political culture, what happened, why it happened, and how best to prevent recurrence in a post-transitional Gambia.
26. Soon after its launching, the Commission met several times in plenary to produce a thematic investigation and work plan for the duration of its two-year mandate period. In attendance at these meetings and helping facilitate the discussions were staff of the Legal Team and the Research and Investigations Unit. Over the next several weeks, the Commission finalized a thematic work and investigation plan covering the following themes:
  - (i) Overview/General context of the human rights violations and abuses in The Gambia, July 1994 to January 2017
  - (ii) Background to and causes of the 1994 Coup d'etat that brought in the dictatorial regime of President Jammeh
  - (iii) Demonstrating power - attacks on road users or persons perceived as obstructing the convoys of the president and other senior officials
  - (iv) The 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1994 coup
  - (v) Fallout of the collaborators - The Arrest and detention of Sana Sabally and Sadibou Haidara over alleged attempt on the life of Jammeh on 27th January, 1995
  - (vi) The 22nd June, 1995 murder of Finance Minister Ousman Koro Ceesay

- (vii) Attacks on Journalists and Freedom of Expression and of the press
- (viii) Imprisonment /Unlawful detentions as a tool to silence dissenters or opponents of the regime (non-journalists)
- (ix) Creation of instruments and institutions of oppression (NIA, NDEA, etc.)
- (x) The Junglers
- (xi) Other Unlawful killings (of journalists, security personnel, civilians)
- (xii) Mysterious deaths of Jammeh associates - Cover ups
- (xiii) Policy of no demonstrations (Attacks on freedom of assembly) – 10th and 11th April, 2000; 14th April, 2016
- (xiv) Policy of no demonstrations (Attacks on freedom of assembly) – 10th and 11th April, 2000; 14th April, 2016
- (xv) Secret Detention Centres
- (xvi) Paranoia (killing of West African migrants)
- (xvii) Killing of the killers (Manlafi Corr, Daba Marenah etc.)
- (xviii) Sexual and Gender-based violence
- (xix) Killing of the killers (Manlafi Corr, Daba Marenah etc.)
- (xx) Claims of Supremacy/consolidation of a dictatorship
- (xxi) Presidential Alternative Treatment Programme (HIV/AIDS, Infertility, etc.)
- (xxii) Enforced disappearances (Chief Manneh, Kanyiba Kanyi, etc.)
- (xxiii) Hunting of alleged witches, 2009
- (xxiv) Arrest and detention of opposition leaders
- (xxv) Unlawful Killings of death row inmates (appeals not exhausted)
- (xxvi) Unlawful killing of 30th December, 2014 alleged coupists

## IV. ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION

As indicated in the section on Methodology above, the TRRC's activities fall under two main categories namely, public hearings and outreach activities.

### A. PUBLIC HEARINGS

27. The TRRC held its first public hearing on 7th January, 2019 and concluded its tenth three-week session of hearings on 5th December, 2019. As at that date, 188 witnesses had testified before the Commission, including 51 women and 23 members of the Gambian Diaspora who testified by video link. Of these 188 witnesses, 35 were alleged perpetrators who willingly came forward to testify. The majority of the other witnesses were victims. Four others were professional witnesses: doctors, social workers, civil servants, retired security personnel who testified because they knew something about the subject of the public hearing. One hearing was a closed session and three were of protected witnesses whose identities were not disclosed to the public.
28. The public hearings of the Commission were streamed live by QTV, Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS), other private television stations, radio stations and Facebook. For this reason, the TRRC has been described as “the most accessible truth commission in history” (Julie Turkewitz, *The New York Times*, 31 August, 2019)

#### **Themes covered**

29. Themes covered in the Commission's public hearings as at December 2019 included the 22nd July, 1994 coup, the November 11, 1994 incident in which a number of soldiers were killed, the January 1995 arrest and incarceration of the two members of the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council, the June 1995 murder of former Finance minister Ousman Koro Ceesay, the 1996 Denton Bridge incident involving security forces and members of the opposition United Democratic Party, violations of press freedom and the rights of journalists, the activities of the former president's death squad, The Junglers, the 10th and 11th April, 2000 student demonstrations during which security forces shot and killed over 14 school children and one Red Cross volunteer, and wounded several others, sexual and gender-based violence, and Yahya Jammeh's 2009 witch hunting exercise in the Greater Banjul Area, West Coast Region, and North Bank Region. This last session saw the Commission's first regional hearings at TRRC headquarters for the Greater Banjul Area, and Jambur, Sibanon and Essau in the West Coast and North Bank Regions respectively.

### **Upcoming themes**

30. In 2020, the Commission will continue its public hearings and will consider the following themes: the Jammeh presidential AIDS and other illnesses treatment programs, the 2005 murder of at least 56 West African nationals, including 44 Ghanaians, Institutional Hearings on the Judiciary, the State Intelligence Services (formerly NIA) and prisons, enforced disappearances, the April 2016 incident during which several people were arrested and tortured, resulting in at least one death, as well as some of the other themes outlined in its work plan for 2020. The Commission also hopes to hear testimony from other Junglers and victims of sexual and gender-based violence during 2020.
31. The Commission plans to conclude its regular public hearings in October 2020, and the rest of the year would be devoted to preparing its final report. As and when required, ad hoc hearings may be convened.

## **B. ESTABLISHMENT AND WORK OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE COMMISSION**

32. Section 18 of the TRRC Act, 2017 provides that “The Commission may establish such committees as it considers necessary or expedient for the efficient performance of its functions. The committees established by the Commission shall include a Committee on (a) Human Rights Violations or abuses; (b) Amnesty; (c) Reparations; and (d) Child Protection and Sexual and Gender based violence.”
33. In fulfilment of this provision, the Commission on December 16, 2019, established the four committees referred to above as well as a Committee on Reconciliation.
34. The Commission decided that the Committees, with regard to their procedures and conduct of business, shall apply the rules of procedure of the Commission *mutatis mutandis*.

### **(i) Commencement of work of the Committees**

35. While at the beginning phase of the work of the Commission focus has been on public hearings and outreach activities, the Committees began establishing the institutional framework within which they would undertake their respective functions. These include adopting their terms of reference, programme of work, policy guidelines and formulation of recommendations to the Commission. The following sections highlight the work undertaken by some of the Committees as of December 2019.

**(ii) Committee on Human Rights Violations and Abuses**

- <sup>36.</sup> The work of the Committee on Human Rights Violations or abuses is closely related to the themes of the public hearings of the Commission. In considering its terms of reference, the Committee was mindful of not duplicating the work of the plenary meetings of the Commission.
- <sup>37.</sup> However, in addition to matters referred to it by the Commission for more detailed examination, the Committee will discuss and review human rights violations and abuses resulting from torture, unlawful killings, sexual and gender based violence, enforced disappearances of persons, inhumane and degrading treatment as well as arbitrary arrest and detention without trial. The Committee plans, where necessary, to invite to its meetings experts and specialists as resource persons with a view to informing on matters before the Committee.

**(iii) Committee on Reparations**

- <sup>38.</sup> The Reparations Committee developed a Reparations Policy which was shared widely with partners at the national and international levels and was adopted by the Commission as the document that will guide the development of the Reparations Regulations. Grant of reparations will be made in accordance with the Reparations Regulations.
- <sup>39.</sup> The Reparations Regulations are in the process of being finalized. To this end the Africa and West Asia Programme of International IDEA (AWA IDEA), in partnership with the TRRC, the Ministry of Justice of The Gambia and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the United Nations Development Programme - The Gambia organized a two-day Experts Meeting on the TRRC's Reparations Regulations on 9th and 10th December 2019 in Banjul. The Experts Meeting drew on comparative experiences of African and other countries, to contribute to the finalization of the draft TRRC Reparations Regulations document. The draft document will go through various stages of validation including a stakeholders' workshop before being submitted to the Ministry of Justice for review and publication.
- <sup>40.</sup> Urgent Interim Measures are being applied in respect of urgent cases that warrant immediate remedial action. Health care is provided for victims and education support is also provided for children of victims. Psycho-social support is provided for both victims and perpetrators and their families. The invaluable supportive role played by the Medical Board in reviewing cases and providing medical care to victims during the past year has greatly reduced the pain of some of the victims and given hope to those who have been identified for further medical treatment abroad. Four of the identified patients traveled to Turkey on Monday the 16th December, 2019, for their medical treatment under the framework of the Bilateral Agreement between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of The Gambia (2014).

41. In living up to its responsibility for the grant of reparations to victims, the Government of The Gambia through the Ministry of Justice disbursed an initial sum of 50 million Dalasis for the Victims Support Fund.
42. The TRRC appreciates and acknowledges the support in cash and in kind given by Gambians in the Diaspora and at the national level to victims who have testified before the Commission.

**(iv) Committee on Reconciliation**

43. The Reconciliation Committee, assisted by the Reconciliation Unit of the TRRC Secretariat, conducted one major reconciliation activity during the period under review.
44. On the 23rd October, 2019 former AFPRC vice chairmen Sanna Sabally and Edward Singhateh requested the TRRC to facilitate at its premises a reconciliation meeting between the two of them. Mr. Sabally had testified before the commission several months earlier and Mr. Singhateh had just concluded his testimony a day or two before the event. The Reconciliation Committee hosted the event at the Commission's main hearing hall in the presence of some Commissioners and staff of the TRRC as well as the media.
45. The Reconciliation Committee also participated in a series of engagements with religious communities – both Muslim and Christian – organized by the Secretariat's Reconciliation Unit earlier in the year (April, May, and July 2019).

**(v) Committees**

46. The two other committees, on Amnesty, and Child Protection and Sexual and Gender-based Violence are yet to engage in any substantive activities. They are both working on finalizing their terms of reference.

**OUTREACH ACTIVITIES: THE NEVER AGAIN CAMPAIGN**

47. The various units of the Secretariat engaged in outreach activities even as the public hearings went on regularly at Dunes Resort. The objectives of these outreach activities include sensitizing the public on the mandate and work of the Commission; promoting reconciliation and healing; making sure women and children are engaged in the Commission's work; and encouraging and empowering witnesses - both victims and alleged perpetrators - to come forward and give statements or testify. The TRRC launched the **Never Again** campaign to foster a national conversation on what went wrong; why it went wrong; and how best to prevent a recurrence of human rights violations and abuses in The Gambia.
48. Community outreach programmes promoting the campaign were conducted by the various units namely, the Youth and Children's Network Unit (YCNU), the Communications Unit and the Reconciliation Unit. These included engaging local and religious communities - both Christian and Muslim - holding town hall meetings and village dialogues,



organizing listening circles, as well as visiting schools and engaging students at all levels of our education system. “Our Nation Our Voice” a National Youth Caravan was organised in February 2019 in collaboration with the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ). The caravan used music, art, poetry and sports to engage communities in the national conversation on the Never Again campaign.

49. The TRRC’s Never Again campaign received a boost following the donation of a collection of photographs that were handed over to the Commission by the British High Commissioner in Banjul. Called the “Portraits for Positive Change” Exhibition, it was first mounted at the grounds of the British High Commission in Banjul hosted by Sharon Wardle, British High Commissioner. Held under the theme: “Never Again!” the objective is “to promote dialogue and positive change by bringing the human face and personal testimonies of victims into the greater public arena.” Two photographers, Jason Florio and Helen Jones-Florio, embarked on “an ongoing collection of photographs and video testimonies” under a project aiming “to give victims and resisters a visual platform to share their stories, both nationally and internationally.” The photographs have since been mounted for display and public viewing at the main hall of the TRRC, where public hearings are held. The TRRC uses the photos during outreach activities in its campaign to promote national healing and reconciliation.
50. A second set of the portraits was donated to the National Centre for Arts and Culture in Banjul to be mounted “as a permanent exhibition and as a historical record for future generations of Gambians.”
51. Jason Florio is a photojournalists and film-maker based in London who frequently travels to The Gambia since 1998. Helen Jones-Florio is a photography producer, photographer and writer who has also been travelling to The Gambia for 20 years and has produced many photography assignments in the region.

(i) **School Outreach**

52. The TRRC’s Youth and Children’s Network Coordination Unit (YCNU) was specifically created to mainstream the active involvement of youths and children in the work of the Commission. The Commission’s thinking is that building a future capable of resisting dictatorship and a culture of responsible citizenship and civic awareness inevitably requires vigorous sensitization of our young people.
53. At least 50 outreach activities targeting young adults and school children in communities and schools across the country were conducted by the YCNU during the period under review. From September 2018 up to the end of July 2019, the TRRC visited 55 schools and engaged an estimated 45, 000 students in conversation on the mandate of the Commission, the causes and consequences of dictatorship, and how everyone can contribute to the prevention of recurrence in The Gambia.
54. Since its inception, the YCNU has brought 95 young people, including students from secondary schools, the University of The Gambia, the Gambia Technical Training Institute,

the Management Development Institute and other institutions in the Greater Banjul area to attend public hearings. Students from selected educational institutions were brought to the TRRC to see first-hand the work of the Commission. This was the Commission's way of getting them involved in the process, getting their feedback on our work and their experience. The TRRC also invited non-school going youths for conversation at the Commission's headquarters.

**(ii) Women's Listening Circles**

55. The TRRC's Women's Affairs Unit was created to make sure that the voices and actions of women are mainstreamed in the Commission's work. During the year under review, the Unit held listening circles for women across the country, the first of which was held on 19th September, 2018 at the Alliance Francaise. These listening circles were designed to provide a safe space for women to share their experiences of human rights violations, especially sexual and gender-based violence.
56. In March 2019, the four female TRRC Commissioners participated in the Women's Community Dialogues organised by the Unit in the Central River and Lower River regions respectively. The activities were supported by the UNDP-Gambia Transitional Justice Project and the Gambia Centre for Victims of Human Rights Violations. They entailed discussions on the work of the TRRC and the need for women who were direct or indirect victims to participate in the process.
57. The TRRC encourages women, especially victims of witch hunts and sexual and gender-based violence to reach out and share their stories with the Commission. Women are advised that they may choose to testify either publicly or in camera, or just submit statements that will be part of the Commission's record. The Women's Affairs Unit conducted at least a dozen listening circles across the country for the period under review.

**(i) Town Hall Meetings and Village Dialogues**

58. Town hall meetings and village dialogues were key features of the Commission's outreach activities over the year. The first town hall meeting was held in September 2018 at the Father Farrell Hall in Kanifing. Three units of the TRRC namely, the Reconciliation Unit, Women's Affairs Unit and Communications Unit jointly organized and conducted several town hall meetings and village dialogues across the country in 2019.

**(ii) Promoting Reconciliation and Healing**

59. Several Muslim communities around the Greater Banjul area were engaged during the month of Ramadan in (April/May) 2019. The conversations conducted over *Iftar* (daily breaking of the fast) focused on the work of the Commission and the need for forgiveness, reconciliation and healing.

60. In July 2019, the TRRC also visited several churches in Banjul and the Kanifing Municipality and engaged Christian communities in conversation about the Commission's mandate, and how to promote justice, healing and reconciliation in the country.

(iii) **Site Visits**

61. The TRRC kicked off 2019 with a visit by the Chair and the Executive Secretary to the Medical Board on 2nd January. The visit enabled the Commission to extend its regards to the Board members for the undertaken they had made and the great service they had already rendered to victims who needed medical attention. The duo were privileged to have a brief meeting with Board Chair Dr. Charles Roberts and some of his colleagues.
62. A month later on 2nd February, 2019 all 11 Commissioners, members of the Legal Team and some staff of the TRRC paid a surprise visit to the headquarters of the State Intelligence Services (SIS, formerly NIA) in Banjul. The delegation was led on a conducted tour of the premises by Mr. Ousman Sowe, Director General of the SIS.
63. The Commission's visit to the State Intelligence Services was followed by subsequent site visits to Mile Two Central Prisons on 18th January, Fajara Barracks on 2nd April, Old Jeshwang Prisons and a secret detention center of the National Intelligence Agency on 3rd April, Janjanbureh Prisons on 4th April, and Yundum Barracks on 18th April. At each of these sites, Commissioners and staff were taken on conducted tours to examine the various places and, where appropriate, instruments of detention and torture mentioned in several witness testimonies. The visits provided Commissioners with information that will be very useful in drafting recommendations especially on institutional reforms.

(iv) **Diaspora Outreach**

64. In furtherance of its outreach agenda and with the assistance of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of The Gambia and the joint UNDP-OHCHR Transitional Justice and Human Rights Project (TJHR Project), the TRRC carried out two Diaspora Engagement missions. The U.S. tour took place from 28th August to 8th September, 2019 and the team visited Seattle, District of Columbia, New York and Atlanta. The Europe tour took place from 4th – 15th September 2019 and the team visited London, Birmingham & Manchester in the U.K., then Sweden and Norway.
65. The teams consisted of Commissioners, members of the legal team and technical and support staff from the units that were relevant to the attainment of the Diaspora engagement objectives and a representative of the UN Transitional Justice Project monitoring on behalf of the TJHR Project on each team.
66. The Diaspora engagement missions were motivated by a number of objectives namely:
- a. to encourage victims and witnesses of the systematic human rights violations in The Gambia who are currently residing in the diaspora to come forward and share their stories;

- b. to solicit the financial assistance of members of the diaspora to raise funds for the TRRC's Victims' Reparations Fund;
- c. to engage members of the diaspora and seek their input and ideas on reforms to be recommended by the Commission; and
- d. to better explain the process, mandate and objectives of the TRRC to the diaspora in order to facilitate more meaningful participation by them in the TRRC process.

67. Town hall meetings were held in the in the different states in the USA (Seattle, District of Columbia, New York and Atlanta) and in the UK (London, Birmingham and Manchester) with the support of the Gambian embassies in the US and the UK as well as various Gambian associations. Targeting the leaders and influencers working on the ground added great value to the town hall meetings.
68. During these meetings presentations were made relating to the TRRC's mandate, process, procedures and policies as well as work done in providing support and services to victims and witnesses so far in the process. These presentations were followed by interactive question and answer sessions which provided platforms for the teams to engage and entertain questions from participants, to explain and clarify issues of concern to the diaspora, as well as receive some recommendations.
69. The USA team were able to record the statements of five victims during the mission and the European team a total of 11 statements, three of which were deemed to be very strong and pertinent to TRRC's efforts at establishing the truth. It is anticipated that other victims/witnesses from the Diaspora will contact the TRRC to share their stories as a result of these missions.
70. Fundraising: In line with the second objective referred to in paragraph 64 above, fundraising activities were carried out in all the town hall venues. Prepared materials were made available to the public who were encouraged to donate towards the TRRC Victims Support Fund for which they were given some of the materials in return. The USA team was very successful in mobilizing a substantial amount of funds from this exercise collecting approximately \$20,000. The European team were able to raise almost £2,000 in the UK. A further 5,700 Swedish Krona and 3,200 Norwegian Krona was raised during the mission with a follow-up donation of D100, 000 from the Gambian Association in Oslo.
71. Besides the engagements with the Diaspora, the European team also took the opportunity to hold the following bilateral meetings.
- a. On 6th September the team met with staff of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London.
  - b. On 12th September the team held a meeting with staff of the Stockholm Municipal Council and were received by the Deputy Mayor.

- c. On 13th September the team held a meeting with officials of the Norwegian Foreign Affairs Ministry.
- d. On 14th September the team met with staff of the Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue.

<sup>72</sup>. There were a few challenges such as the limited level of publicity on the ground prior to the trips as well as lack of proper means of documenting the activities.

<sup>73</sup>. However, overall the missions succeeded in all of their objectives. The enthusiasm and interest with which the teams were received and the warm hospitality as well as the attendance at all the events demonstrated a keen desire and interest by the diaspora in the TRRC process. Furthermore, the generosity and enthusiasm shown in helping raise funds showed a willingness to participate fully in the process. The engagements, however, highlighted a lack of proper understanding of the TRRC process beyond the public hearings. This pointed to an obvious need for more outreach targeting the diaspora in order to clarify and demystify the workings and processes of the TRRC for many members of the diaspora. The following lessons were learned during the Diaspora Engagements:

- a. International Interest in Gambian Transitional Justice – important government agencies and international organizations have keen interest in the transitional justice processes in the Gambia. This implies that Gambia is not alone in this and that substantial support and collaboration could be maximized.
- b. Diaspora's interest in owning the process – many Gambians continue to participate in online debates, following proceedings, donations and sponsors for victims and survivors.
- c. Victims and Survivors in the diaspora hiding due to fear and stigma and in some cases lack of interest
- d. The polarized nature of Gambia's politics is also evident in the diaspora. For any peace building initiative, efforts must be made to reduce the tensions among political parties and ethnicities.

<sup>74</sup>. Recommendations from Diaspora communities

- a. That more information about key aspects of the TRRC process (such as reparations, when and how recommendations will be made, the Commission's ability to recommend prosecution or amnesty) should be developed and made available to Gambians in the diaspora.
- b. That the TRRC should prioritize victim support and make its work in this area better known.

- c. That more outreach efforts should be made to encourage the many potential victims/ witnesses in the diaspora who may contribute significantly to the truth-seeking mandate of the TRRC.
- d. That issues relating to justice (retributive/corrective justice) in relation to the TRRC process should be better explained as many participants believed that justice is not apparent in the process due to the release of adversely mentioned persons and alleged perpetrators still working in the system.
- e. Never Again and civic education should be integrated into the school curriculum after the TRRC mandate is over.

## V. RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATIONS

<sup>75.</sup> The Research and Investigations Directorate (RID) is made up of 40 staff which includes a Director and Deputy Director, a Lead Research Assistant, five Research Assistants and three interns, two Chief Investigators and eight Investigators, two Lead Statement Takers and seventeen Statement Takers. In addition, RID is also in charge of security matters at the TRRC with guidance and assistance from officers of the Gambia Police Force.

### (i) **Investigations Section**

<sup>76.</sup> The RID began its investigations in December 2018 and worked according to a thematic plan provided by the Legal Team that covered the 22nd July Coup, the 11th November, incident, the death of Ousman Koro Ceesay, the detention and torture of Sanna Sabally, attacks on the media, attacks on political opponents, the activities of The Junglars, the 10th and 11th April, 2000 incident, sexual and gender-based violence, and the 2009 witch hunts. By the end of 2019, investigations had been initiated into the Presidential Alternative Treatment Program and the National Intelligence Agency (now SIS).

### (ii) **Exhumations**

<sup>77.</sup> The TRRC served an exhumation warrant on the Command of The Gambia National Army after it received testimony that some Gambian soldiers were killed and buried at Yundum Barracks. The Research and Investigations Directorate supported by the Communications Unit and Victim Support Unit began the exhumation process after family members of those suspected to be buried there were contacted, and their consent obtained. A communications focal person, victim support coordinator and a security detail were added to the team. Soren Blau, an expert on the roster of Justice Rapid Response visited The Gambia for a period of one week as an advisor to the team and helped in setting up the initial plan as well as other logistical requirements. The National Disaster Management office provided an excavator and driver to help with the excavation.

<sup>78.</sup> The exhumations began on the 5th April, 2019 and after several attempts, the team was able to recover the remains of what is believed to be seven individuals on the 19th April, 2019. The team also recovered seven undergarments and seven cords that were presumably used to tie the hands of those buried there. After collecting the remains, the exhumation team worked with the coroner's office at Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital to secure the remains. Meanwhile, efforts are underway to positively identify the remains through DNA so they can be returned to their families.

<sup>79.</sup> The TRRC also received testimonies that more victims are buried at Yundum Barracks, but there is no consensus on where these other remains may be. One of the areas identified to be a burial site has a building sitting on top of it. There are also reports of other

burial sites in various areas in The Gambia and one particular location which is in Senegal (said to contain the remains of the West African migrants). The TRRC is working on identifying these locations and starting the process of finding any remains that may be buried there. Testimonial evidence from a source notes that the source has witnessed or participated in the burial of at least a hundred individuals. The TRRC will therefore focus on searching for these burial sites and recovering the remains in order to positively identify who they are and returning them to their families. This would be in pursuance of the Commission's mandate to make known the fate and whereabouts of missing persons.

(i) **Forensic activities**

- <sup>80</sup>. In view of previous efforts by the U.S. to establish and make known the whereabouts of two Gambian-Americans who disappeared in The Gambia in May 2013, the Embassy of the United States engaged The Gambia Government to offer assistance on the investigations into the disappearances of Alagie Ceesay and Ebou Jobe. Officials of the U.S. Government have since visited the suspected burial sites of the missing individuals and efforts are underway to continue work on these sites. The TRRC Research and Investigations Directorate will continue to work with law enforcement officials on this and other related matters that are of concern to both the U.S. and the TRRC.
- <sup>81</sup>. Staff members of the TRRC have also benefitted from training opportunities outside of The Gambia that were arranged by the Embassy of the USA. The U.S. Embassy has also provided some logistical support to the Research and Investigations Directorate and continue to support the efforts of the TRRC focusing on investigations.

**BURIAL SITES**

<u>SITE</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
Yundum Barracks	There are still about two potential burial sites to be excavated
Siffoe	Suspected; yet to be excavated
Jamburr	Two suspected burial sites; yet to be excavated
Baboon Island	Suspected; yet to be excavated
Barra	Suspected; yet to be excavated

(v) **Statement-Taking Section**

82. Statement Takers take statements in the form of narrative interviews from victims, witnesses and perpetrators of human rights violations through walk-in victims, telephone calls and outreach activities. During the period under review, the section obtained four hundred and sixty-two statements (462) from victims and witnesses of human right violations on different themes.



83. The section also took part in some outreach activities and obtained statements from witnesses where they reside. The communities visited were Sintet, Brikama, Gunjur, Bussumbala, Jambur and Kitty. They also participated alongside staff from other units on various outreach activities including outreach to West Coast and Lower River Regions, Essau, Kerewan Village, Kuntaur, Basse, Bansang, Koina, and Nyakoi to explain the mandate of the commission and the operational structure of the various Commission. Plans to conduct more statement-taking exercises in the North Bank, Upper River, Lower River and Central River regions during the first quarter of 2020 were being implemented as at the time of closing the Commission due to the Corona virus crisis on 18th March, 2020.

**(vi) Research Section**

The Research section is responsible for research into human rights violations that occurred from 1994 to 2017. Generally, this team is responsible for conducting research by mapping human rights violations that took place during the period under review using documentary evidence, witness testimonies, open source information and available research databases. The team carried out the following activities:

- a. Drafted the standard operating procedure (SOP) for research assistants. The SOP bears important guidelines relevant to the implementation of duties material to research assistants.
- b. In collaboration with the leadership, developed the TRRC statement taking form for witnesses that suffered, witnessed or perpetrated violations.
- c. Gathered online human rights reports published by national media outlets and international bodies such as Freedom Newspaper, Fatu Network, Amnesty International, US State Department, Human Rights Watch, etc.
- d. Prepared a report on the detention register provided by the State Intelligence Services. This register was used by research assistants to determine the number of detainees that were detained over 72 hours. The final report indicates that out of **571** individuals recorded as being in detention from 1994 to 2017, **295** were held past 72 hours. The remaining **276** had no information available to determine their detention lengths and conditions. The registers are also missing some years which the SIS does not have any data on.
- e. Used the thematic investigation plan of the TRRC Legal Team to conduct research and write comprehensive reports to guide investigations on certain thematic areas. These included research on the 11th November, 1994 incident, Death of Ousman Koro Ceesay, 22nd July Pageantry (ongoing), Institutional Research on the NIA/SIS, Army (ongoing), Police, Prisons, NDEA, Ministry of Justice and the Judiciary.

84. Since their appointment on 1st February 2019, the interns of the unit have embarked on

media review of human rights violations and have been able to map violations that occurred from 1994 to 2005 with scanned copies of newspaper clippings for evidence and record keeping.

85. One of the responsibilities of research assistants is to organize and store information for use by the Commission. Therefore, the unit is keeping track of all witnesses that have testified before the Commission since the commencement of public hearings.
86. One of the main successes of the unit is the establishment of a research database facilitated by the UNDP which is meant for storing and retrieving all statements and evidence of the Commission. The system was launched on 11th June 2019. User accounts have been created for Commission staff with various access rights reflecting the nature of each department's roles and responsibilities. The system is running and currently being used to input witness statements and evidence.
87. The recently appointed interns are also conducting a media review on sexual and gender-based violence.

## VI. VICTIM SUPPORT

- <sup>88</sup>. The TRRC Act, Section 13 (a) (ii) requires the Commission “to respond to the needs of victims.” To this end a Victim’s Support Unit (VSU) was set up within which a Psychosocial Unit was established to provide all necessary support services that will enable active participation and inclusion of all victims of human rights violations and abuses. Support services provided to victims included medical and psychosocial support, support in livelihood and wellbeing, personal security, safety and protection, logistics and daily management of issues related to the participation of victims in TRRC processes.
- <sup>89</sup>. As at the end of 2019, the VSU had registered 941 victims of various kinds of human rights violations and abuses. The Unit also took several initial actions to sort out emergency and prioritized needs of victims known to the TRRC. These initial actions were basically on health needs, education and sustainable livelihood support.
- <sup>90</sup>. The psycho social unit focuses on providing holistic therapy support to individuals, groups and families within the TRRC process. The objectives of the unit include ensuring that:
- a. Registered TRRC complainants (men, women, boys and girls) have access to responsive victim-centered support services in their engagement with the TRRC leading to emotional preparation, participation and coping throughout the process.
  - b. Relevant TRRC personnel working with affected individuals, families and communities are supported in effective implementation and quality delivery of support services.
- <sup>91</sup>. During 2019, the psycho social unit supported 156 victims/witnesses including perpetrators. Some of the witnesses (4) declined to have psycho-social support.
- <sup>92</sup>. As the TRRC uses a victim-centered approach to increase public participation in its processes, it is important that adequate resources, as well as timely and quality support services are provided to victims, their families, witnesses and informants. To facilitate this process the UNDP is supporting the Victim Participation Support Fund through its project to “Support the capacity of the Government and national stakeholders to establish credible transitional justice processes and mechanisms that promote reconciliation and sustainable peace in The Gambia” (UN TJ Project).
- <sup>95</sup>. Under this fund TRRC statement-givers were/are provided with transport refund, refreshments (food and water) and/or daily subsistence allowances. Such services and welfare are provided subject to the availability of funds. Where there are insufficient funds available and competing needs arising, support to direct victims is given priority, followed by those that accompany statement-givers, then witnesses and other informants and finally, alleged perpetrators. There are policy guidelines regulating the type and quantity of payments.
- <sup>96</sup>. After consultations with the Ministry of Health, a Medical Board was set up in November

2018. This Board provides reviews of cases, medicals (emergency and routine checks), drug prescriptions and one-off procurement of medical equipment of gadgets. The Board makes recommendations to the TRRC for victims needing local or overseas treatment. Between its establishment and the end of 2019, the Medical Board consisting of doctors from the public and private sector with different specializations including a specialist on sexual and gender-based violence saw 50 victims referred to them by the TRRC. Out of the 50 patients that have been reviewed by the Medical Board 8 were recommended for overseas treatment.

97. This category of patients represent a major challenge for the TRRC in terms of placements and costs. A major opportunity presented itself under the “Agreement on Cooperation in the Fields of Health and Medical Sciences between The Governments of the Republics of Turkey and the Gambia, 2014.” In December 2019, four victims traveled to Turkey for free medical treatment under the auspices of the TRRC. These victims were Yusupha Mbye, Oumie Jagne and Abdou Karim Jammeh, survivors gun-shot wounds during the 10th/11th April, 2000 student massacre and Nogui Njie, a victim of the 14th April, 2016 protest for electoral reforms led by the late Ebrima Solo Sandeng. The Gambia Ports Authority (GPA) and Papa Njie of Unique Solutions donated three and two air tickets respectively while the TRRC provided two tickets and US\$31,500 (about GMD 1.5 million dalasis) as allowances for the victims. The amount was paid from the \$1 million (50 million dalasi) given by the Government as initial payment towards the reparations fund.
98. Regular review meetings were held between the VSU and the Medical Board to assess the way forward and to see how best to improve on services taking into consideration the busy schedules of the doctors and the limited resources available to provide honoraria for them.
99. Educational support is an integral part of the TRRC’s interim reparations programme. Second chance educational opportunities were provided for children who had to drop out of school for financial and other reasons. In 2019 the TRRC managed to return one girl victim back to school and with the support of partners such as Anya’s Wish, Unique Solutions MOKI AID and Majula Dabo, other victims are benefitting from sponsorship in their chosen areas of study. So far four children are supported by the above mentioned partners in collaboration with the TRRC.
100. The Network of Animal Breeders and Multipliers (NABAM) offered to train identified victims and set them up in small ruminant production. So far two victims are benefitting from this pilot support which is expected to continue after a needs assessment study is completed.
101. The VSU is documenting initial TRRC interventions in support of victims (registered complainants) and as part of the Commission’s interim reparations programme with the intention of informing the Commission’s reparations planning and initiatives. New beneficiaries are periodically referred and engaged.
102. Meanwhile, the TRRC’s Victim Support Unit continues to offer medical assistance and psychosocial support to several victims and other witnesses in The Gambia. It is anticipated that more victims will benefit from both local and overseas medical treatment in the coming year.

## **VII. COOPERATION WITH NATIONAL NGOs, CSOs AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

103. During its first year of operations, the TRRC had a series of meetings and engagements with important stakeholders in Gambian society. Commissioners and staff of the Secretariat held consultative meetings and engagements with, among other partners, Imams from several parts of the country, Executive members of the Gambia Christian Council, school principals across the country on how to develop and expand the Children's Network on Transitional Justice, members of the IFIT Brain Trust – The Gambia, and members of the newly formed Civil Society Organizations Transitional Justice Working Group.
104. The Commission co-sponsored with the Ministry of Justice and the PBSO through the UNDP Gambia Office, a highly successful two-day sensitization workshop for religious and traditional community leaders which brought together chiefs, imams, pastors, traditional communicators, youths, and representatives of NGOs and CSOs, including women's organizations to discuss the whats, hows and whys of the TRRC and map out strategies for effective engagement. The Commission also engaged representatives of the Transitional Justice Gender Action Network, one of whose primary objectives is to ensure the mainstreaming and active involvement and participation of women in the TRRC process. Some consultations and activities were conducted in association with the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO), the Catholic Relief Services, Women in Leadership and Liberation (WILL), and the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies.
105. The international community were and continue to be extremely supportive of the Commission's work. The TRRC received and continues receiving invaluable support and encouragement from the United Nations Peace Building Support Office through UNDP-Gambia, the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the African Union, the Embassies of the United Kingdom, the United States, Holland, Belgium, France, Canada, Qatar, the European Union and Turkey. As mentioned above, in December 2019, the Turkish Embassy facilitated the travel to Turkey of four victims of human rights violations and abuses for free medical treatment. The Commission also had fruitful collaborations with and received varying levels of technical assistance from the South Africa-based Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVr), the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the Institute for Integrated Transitions (IFIT), and Article XIX. The Commission also received technical assistance from Justice Rapid Response (JRR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on work related to missing persons and exhumations. We are also in contact with the Victims and Witnesses Section of the International Criminal Court on developing a witness protection program for the TRRC and hopefully, a program on locating missing persons across the country.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

106. The gross violations and abuses of human rights during the dictatorship and authoritarian rule of the former President Yahya Jammeh ( July 1994 to January 2017) shocked the conscience of Gambians in particular and humanity at large. The violations and abuses committed were massive, horrifying and varied. They ranged, inter alia, from torture, unlawful killings, gender-based violence, including rape, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detention to blatant denial of fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Laws of The Gambia and in international law and international humanitarian law. The violations and abuses constituted the gravest crimes which the TRRC is mandated to create an impartial record of during the period under review. The revelations by both victims and perpetrators of these crimes before the Commission shocked and even traumatized Gambians as they never imagined such atrocities could be committed in their country and culture whose people are known for their gentility and tolerance. It is hard not to conclude from the testimonies so far heard from witnesses that the dictator and authoritarian ruler during twenty-two years instilled in the people tremendous fear and insecurity and used his greed and ambition to wicked ends.
107. The Commission, pursuant to its mandate, has embarked on the task of establishing the truth of what happened and subsequently making recommendations to prevent the violations and abuses from reoccurring.
108. At this halfway point in its mandate period of two years, the Commission will continue its work on the activities summarized in the work plan referred to above in this Interim Report.