

The Gambia

The **Wayamo Foundation** and **Konrad Adenauer Stiftung** retrace the key events in the search for accountability for the crimes committed by the regime of former president of the Gambia Yahya Jammeh.



JULY
1994



President Dawda Jawara loses power in a bloodless coup

Yahya Jammeh, a 29-year-old officer in the National Army charged with commanding the Military Police, leads a bloodless coup against Jawara who served as Prime Minister from 1962 to 1970, and then as the first President of the Gambia from 1970 to 1994. Jammeh installs himself as de facto national leader in the role of chairman of the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council.

President Dawda Jawara © 1979, Fernando Pereira Anefo - Nationaal Archief

NOV.
1996



Yahya Jammeh elected president of the Gambia

Over the next twenty-one years, his rule would become increasingly authoritarian and characterised by grave human rights abuses.

Yahya Jammeh in the White House
© 2014, Amanda Lucidon
White House, Public Domain

JULY 2005

Massacre of African migrants

Gambia security forces arrest migrants bound for Europe after their boat lands in the Gambia, on suspicion of involvement in a coup attempt. Over the next 10 days, almost all including about 44 Ghanaians, 9 Nigerians, 2 Togolese, and nationals of Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal, plus 1 Gambian, are killed in Gambia or taken across the border into Senegal and shot and their bodies dumped in wells.

2009

UN & ECOWAS investigate murder of African migrants

The United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) complete a joint investigate team report into the alleged massacre of 52 African migrants by security forces in the Gambia. The report concludes that "rogue" elements of the security services "acted on their own". The full report was never made public.

2009

Ghana and the Gambia sign a Memorandum of Understanding

Ghana and the Gambia sign a pledge to use "all available means" to prosecute those responsible for the death of the African migrants. No arrests were ever made. The memorandum states that the Gambian government was not complicit in the deaths, but would pay compensation to the families. Each of the 27 families received approximately USD 6,800. Only six bodies were returned.

1
DEC.
2016



Yahya Jammeh loses presidential election to Adama Barrow

The victory is secured thanks, in large part, to civil society and youth-led activism.

Adama Barrow, President, Republic of the Gambia
© Chatham House

9 DECEMBER 2016

Jammeh announces intentions to reject the outcome of the election

Citing "serious and unacceptable abnormalities" Jammeh turns to the Supreme Court, an institution he considered under control, to affirm the allegations. The following day Jammeh deploys the military throughout the capital region and occupied the election commission. Attempts by ECOWAS and the AU to negotiate a resolution fail.

19
JAN.
2017



Military intervention

A military coalition of Senegal, Nigeria and Ghana under the auspices of ECOWAS enters the Gambia, finally forcing Jammeh to relinquish power and flee into exile in Equatorial Guinea two days later.

Adama Barrow sworn in as president

Ghanian ECOWAS Troops during training exercise
© Sgt. William Gore, U.S. Army Africa

JANUARY 2017

Ousman Sonko investigated under Universal Jurisdiction

Former Gambian Minister of Interior, Ousman Sonko is arrested in Switzerland and an investigation is opened. He is currently in pre-trial custody.

FEBRUARY 2017

"Junglers" arrested

Following Jammeh's exile, key members of his "Junglers", an elite security unit who served as his personal hitmen, either fled the country or were arrested by Gambia's military chief. Those arrested include Pa Ousman Sanneh, Malick Jatta, Omar Jallow, Amadou Badgie, Alieu Jeng and Ismaila Jammeh.

MAR.
2017

NIA9 case opens and Justice Minister commits to no more trials until capacity improved

The first case involving alleged crimes of Jammeh's associates is opened against nine former National Intelligence Agency (NIA) agents accused of involvement in the killing of Solo Sandeng, a political activist who died in detention in April 2016. Despite some progress, the case has moved slowly and is stalled by delay tactics from the defense. Justice Minister Tambadou criticises the police for arresting the accused Junglers, saying this forced a rushed an investigation and trial process. Tambadou declares that "no new criminal cases involving crimes allegedly committed by the former government will be handled" until the capacity of the justice sector is strengthened. 6,800. Only six bodies were returned.

JUNE 2017

Jammeh Commission established

The Commission of Inquiry into the Financial Activities of Public Bodies, Enterprises and Offices, known as the Jammeh Commission, is established as a first step in an effort to recover ill-gained assets from members of the former regime and its business partners. The commission released its report March 2019, accompanied by a government 'whitepaper' outlining an intended policy of enacting the report's recommendations.

13 DECEMBER 2017

National truth commission established

The Truth Reconciliation and Reparation Commission Act is passed by the National Assembly. The Act places responsibility on the TRRC to identify and investigate those most responsible for the crime of the Jammeh regime, and to recommend those individuals for amnesty or prosecution.

MARCH 2018

Former prison director released

David Colley, the former Director of the Mile 2 prison charged with murder of Baba Jobe and abuse of office in March 2018, is released after a brief time in detention. Later, in July 2020, he testified for three days before the TRRC.

MAY 2018

Civil societies call for Jammeh to face trial in Ghana

A coalition of national and international civil society actors known as Jammeh2Justice see some progress towards the goal of securing an extradition of Jammeh to Ghana to face trial for the murder of 52 African migrants, the majority of them from Ghana. In May 2018, the Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Attorney-General's Department commit to studying the legal and diplomatic implications of a possible case.

29 AUGUST 2018

Four members of Jammeh's elite security unit released

Four of suspected "Junglers" released from detention without facing charges. The army chief who detained them claims "extensive interrogations" reveal no evidence tying them to wrongdoing.

28 OCTOBER 2018

Charges against NIA officials withdrawn

The Ministry of Justice announced the withdrawal of charges against several officials from the NIA, who had been accused of participating burying political activist Solo Sandeng.

3 JANUARY 2019

Solider accused of murdering colleague released

Former soldier Malick Boye was accused of killing a female soldier in 2011 on orders of former President Jammeh. The media reports that his alleged role in the death was not investigated.

7
JAN.
2019

TRRC holds first public hearings

8 JANUARY 2019

Investigation into 2018 protest deaths ends

President Barrow announces that he will discontinue the prosecution of police officers responsible for the death of demonstrators in the village of Faraba Banta in June 2018.

JULY - AUGUST 2019

"Junglers" testify at the TRRC

Members of elite unit confess to acts of murder, torture and other grave wrongdoing. Following testimony, Pa Ousman Sanneh, Malick Jatta, Omar Jallow and Amadou Bargie are released from prison. Two other "Junglers" remain in prison after the Minister of Justice deems their testimony to the TRRC untruthful.

SEPTEMBER 2020

National Assembly rejects New Constitution

Members of President Barrow's political party are instrumental in turning down new constitution. Among its new provisions, the rejected draft constitution included presidential term limits.



Arch 22 on the road into Banjul in the Gambia
© Hannu Sääskilähti, Wikimedia

11
JUNE
2020

"Jungler" faces torture charges in the United States

United States indicts Michael Sang Correa under an anti-torture "federal extraterritorial jurisdiction" law granting US courts authority to try public officials accused of torture, regardless of where the acts were committed or the nationality of those involved. The US District Court of Colorado alleges that Correa is responsible for the torture of at least six people in 2006.

JULY 2021

Projected date for the release of the TRRC's final report