



For immediate release – 18 June 2009

### PRESS RELEASE

## **The Gambia: Journalists and Gambia Press Union Executive Members Detained**

**Seven journalists and members of the Gambia Press Union (GPU) Executive have been held without charge by the Gambian National Intelligence Agency (NIA) since being called for questioning on 15 June 2009**

The arrests are believed to be in connection with a statement by the GPU on 11 June 2009, criticising comments made by President Yahya Jammeh during a television interview where he made what they describe as inappropriate comments about the murder in December 2004 of the editor of *The Point* newspaper, Deyda Hydara, and the status of Freedom of Expression in the country.

Those detained are: the, Sarata Jabbi, First Vice President of the GPU, Emil Touray GPU Secretary General, Pa Modou Faal, GPU Treasurer, Pap Saine and Ebrima Sawaneh, Editor and Deputy Editor of *The Point* newspaper, Sam Sarr and Abubacarr Saidykhan, Editor-in-Chief and reporter for the *Foroyaa* newspaper.

The arrests come only weeks after the 45<sup>th</sup> session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) held in May in the Gambia, where ARTICLE 19 urged the Gambian authorities to comply with their international obligations on freedom of expression and to allow journalists to work freely.

Media workers and those defending free expression in the Gambia operate in a climate of fear. ARTICLE 19 is gravely concerned that despite many recommendations and resolutions of the ACHPR, the Gambian government and its security agents continue to intimidate and harass media workers on a regular basis.

*“We reaffirm our solidarity and support to the GPU and call on the Gambian authorities to immediately release those detained and to cease the intimidation and harassment of journalists”* said Dr Agnes Callamard, Executive Director of ARTICLE 19.

### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

- For more information please contact: Fatou Jagne Senghore, Africa Programme, [fatouj@article19.org](mailto:fatouj@article19.org) + 221 3 3820 0337
- ARTICLE 19s recent statement on freedom of expression in Gambia is at: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/conferences/gambia-freedom-of-information-and-access-to-information.pdf>

- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.