



PRESS RELEASE

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CRPD Condemns President Adama Barrow's Threat to Limit Party Political Activities Post-December 4th Presidential Election

The President of the Republic of The Gambia, Adama Barrow, has, on 15th August 2021, revealed his desire to stop all party-political activities in the country if he were to win the 4th December 2021 Presidential Election. Speaking at State House, during a meeting with the Serer Community from Jeshwang Ndagen, President Barrow stated in unequivocal terms, that if re-elected in December, the never-ending political activities, prevalent in the country since he assumed office in 2017, must be stamped out, to give way to what he called "development work". While speaking in Wolof, the President said:..." **We will give instruction to the Inspector General of Police and anyone who applies for a permit will not get a permit. Because we want to continue working. The meeting you're having, blocking roads does not benefit the country in anyway.**"

In recent months, President Barrow has used the State House grounds to make inconsiderate and ill-advised remarks that are not only exacerbating social tensions in the country but also threatening to undermine the democratic gains made so far. Some readers would recall that on 28th July 2021, President Barrow was streamed live by the Barrow Media Empowerment during which the President revealed how he was part of a group that buried amulets and fetishes locally called *Jujus* under the head of dead bodies in graveyards, in order to spiritually expedite the release of UDP leader Ousainou Darboe, Barrow's political godfather at the time, who was languishing in jail in 2016. As the Presidential Election gets closer, President Barrow has been inviting to State House members of the various ethno-linguistic groups in the county to rally support for his bid for re-election. And most of President Barrow's political rhetoric and rants have been directed at his former Party, United Democratic Party (UDP).

Reacting to President Barrow's threat to curtail democratic freedoms in the country if re-elected in the December 2021 Presidential race, the Center for Research and Policy Development (CRPD) has released the following statement:

"The CRPD is dismayed and also troubled by President Barrow's statement and therefore, calling on him to adhere to democratic principles and the rule of law. President Barrow must be reminded that among other things, he was elected on the basis of ending self-perpetuating rule and to return this country to a functioning democratic state. Consequently, his latest threat to restrict and regulate the democratic space after the forthcoming Presidential Election is undemocratic and against the very principle under which he was elected in 2016. President Barrow's remarks are regrettable as they pose



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a risk for Gambia's fledgling democracy. Therefore, we call on President Barrow to be mindful of his seemingly populist statements and instead focus on bridging the social divide in the country. His latest statement will undoubtedly further exacerbate the political polarization and divisions in the country, ahead of the December Presidential Election”.

As a civil society organization, the CRPD states that it is ever ready to defend, through civic actions and legal means, the democratic space in the Gambia against any threat that has the potential to undermine or compromise the Gambia's democratic process.

In the same vein, the CRPD has also called on the Gambia Police Force to distance itself from such reckless remarks and unlawful directives. We urged the Police to remain in the service of the nation following the dictates of the law and constitution. The participation of political parties and citizenry in the political process, CRPD adds, is central to democracy and therefore, any attempt to limit or control this participation would undermine Gambia's democratic consolidation. According to CRPD, “members of the Police are expected to protect life and property and should not, in anyway, allow themselves to be an impediment to the growth of democracy in the country. It is also time for The Gambia Police Force to unequivocally conduct itself as professional, a pro-democracy rule of law institution that respects and upholds the rule of law.”

-The End-

About CRPD

The Center for Research and Policy Development is an independent, non-profit and non-partisan social research, advocacy and capacity building organization committed to promoting inclusive democratic governance in The Gambia. CRPD works with grassroots, national and international actors to address the Gambia's development challenges by generating and communicating research-based knowledge to help inform policies and interventions. The Center also aims to trigger local dialogues to contextualize universally relevant ideals of inclusive democratic governance, promote efficiency, transparency and accountability for a secure and an economically prosperous Gambia.



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