

## Gambia lifts ban on radio station, newspaper

BANJUL, THE GAMBIA: Gambian President Yahya Jammeh has lifted a ban on one of the country's leading newspapers and a radio station "as a goodwill gesture for the New Year", according to his office.



Image: Rod Baker)

Officials from the feared National Intelligence Agency (NIA) stormed the premises of community station Teranga FM and private daily The Standard ordered them shut down in August and September 2012.

"The office of the president is pleased to inform the general public that the ban on Standard newspaper and Teranga FM has been lifted with immediate effect as a goodwill gesture for the New Year," the presidency said in a statement released late on Tuesday.

Established in 2009, Teranga had been carrying pick-ups from local newspapers in the main Gambian local languages, generating a lot of attention from the mainly illiterate public.

The Standard was accused of criticising the president.

"They are free to operate but the two institutions are urged to operate within the framework of the laws governing the media in this country.

"We wish all media houses and the general public a happy new year," the statement added.

The authoritarian Jammeh, a former military officer who seized power in a 1994 coup, brooks no dissent in his country often blasted by rights bodies for abuses.

After his re-election in November 2011, Jammeh said journalists were "free to write what you like, but you should be ready to be accountable.

"Somebody said that this country is a hell for journalists, well there are freedoms and there are responsibilities. Being a journalist does not mean licence to kill. Character assassination will not be accepted."

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge