

Gambia: Agency threatens to close radio station

According to journalists, a Gambian state security agency has forced Taranga FM to drop its news and current affairs programs for the second time this year. The National Intelligence Agency (NIA) threatens to close the community station southwest of the capital, Banjul, if the broadcast does not drop its daily news programs in Wolof and Mandinka.

Gambia has an adult literacy rate below 50%, according to UNESCO statistics, and the programs on which government and private newspapers were read in local languages are essential sources of information for significant portion of the population. The censorship threat came barely a week after Gambian Foreign Affairs Minister Momodou Tangara declared at a public media forum sponsored by the Commonwealth, of which Gambia is a member state, that the government was "committed" to press reform, according to new reports.

"We condemn the illegal act of political censorship to silence Taranga FM ahead of the November presidential elections," said CPJ Africa Advocacy co-ordinator Mohamed Keita. "We call on President Yahya Jammeh to make the rule of law a reality in Gambia. Taranga FM should be allowed to carry out its duties of informing the public about current affairs without government interference."

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) found that the NIA had forced the station off air for 32 days earlier this year over the same news programs.

In a letter to the station in February, H.M Tamberdou, Secretary General of the Office of Gambian President Yahya Jammeh, "authorised" Taranga FM to return to the air with the condition that it not review "oppositor newspapers, independent publications such as *Foroyaa*, *Daily News*, and *The Point* according to Ghana-based press freedom group Media Foundation of West Africa.

Source: [Committee to Protect Journalists](#)