



**Gambia-Helfernetz**

# **Statement of German supporters of Gambian refugees in Germany**

Stuttgart, Germany  
June 1, 2019

**Intended for the President of the Republic of The  
Gambia;**

**Submitted for the attention of the Vice-President, the  
Ministers and the Speaker of the National Assembly of  
the Republic of The Gambia;**

**Submitted for the attention of the media and the  
people of The Gambia.**

**His Excellency  
Mr. Adama Barrow,  
President of the Republic Of The Gambia  
State House,  
Banjul.  
The Gambia, West Africa.**

**1<sup>st</sup> June, 2019.**

Your Excellency,

**Statement of German supporters  
of Gambian refugees in Germany**

It's with great respect that we, the undersigned, address this statement of concern to you in your capacity as the President of the Republic of The Gambia. We've decided to turn to you on the issue of Gambian migrants / refugees in Germany and we would be very grateful if you could grant this statement a worthy attention.

We thought it imperative to draft this statement of concern because of a problem that affects both the Republic of The Gambia and Germany, specifically the deportation of Gambian nationals from Germany. We would like to bring to your attention the views of those in Germany who work with, support and employ Gambians in Germany.

We comprise the Refugee Council Baden-Württemberg, a non-profit organization that advises refugees and advocates for their rights; the 'Gambia Helfernetz' (Gambia Helpers Network), an information platform for full-time and honorary supporters of Gambian refugees with over 500 participants; employers and other private individuals who are concerned about refugee issues.

We observe with great concern that the German authorities have deported more than 100 Gambian refugees to The Gambia between November 2018 and March 2019. We are worried that German politicians are determine to send back at least another 2400 Gambians. This does not mean that only criminals will be deported to The Gambia, as it is wrongly assumed and claimed. People are also deported who have been living in Germany for several years, they have a steady job, earn their own living and pay taxes to the German State. They learned the difficult German language and went to schools. They do good work in German companies, they successfully play in German football clubs, get involved in sports and cultural clubs and have German friends. Most of them did not get into conflict with the law and were not to be blamed for anything. Even after the Gambian government placed moratorium on deportation of Gambian migrants following the last mass deportation of Gambian refugees from Germany through chartered flights, at least 12 people were reported deported to The Gambia through other means.

You will find a list of examples in the appendix to this statement. These people are personally acquainted with members and participants of our organizations. Many of these Gambians were picked up by the police from the factories where they worked and schools, put on a plane and deported to The Gambia. Some of these people had to leave their children behind in Germany, some were about to get married. And also good relations and friendship between Gambians and Germans have been destroyed as a result of these unexpected mass deportations.

Despite The Gambia being a tiny West African, its name became more popular here in Europe especially Germany due to the high presence of its citizens who sought refuge here from 2015 onwards. Through the Gambian refugees we learned about the reign of terror of former president Yahya Jammeh; about poverty; and the difficult living conditions in your country. We have met people who have courageously left their country to help their country and their families, and who tell with pride and love about their people and their homeland. Every Gambian is a representative of his/her country. Some have not taken this role seriously. But many have won the hearts of Germans because we



have met friendly, hard-working and highly motivated people. They built bridges through which we got to know and understand Africa's problems better.

It is worth mentioning that several of the members and participants of our organizations have visited your country in the meantime. We especially appreciate the peaceful co-existence and the friendliness that characterize The Gambia. We see the enormous challenges of training all your youthful population and offering them employment and a good future in The Gambia. Some of us still have contacts with some deportees and we further realized that people who were having a good livelihood in Germany are now faced with nothing in Gambia and join the large number of unemployed young people without very good future prospects.

The acceleration of deportations in recent months has led many Gambians in Germany to live in fear. This is because, it can affect anyone, and no one knows who is next. Some go into hiding in order not to be deported, and sometimes we don't know whether they are well. Even the companies that employ Gambians live with the fear that a Gambian employee may not come to work overnight or can even be arrested in the company like a criminal to be deported back to the Gambia. Despite the fact that these Gambian employees are often highly motivated and work to the satisfaction of their bosses and colleagues and the companies urgently need these employees. The German economy is currently very strong and cannot find enough employees in some industries because there are far fewer young people and young professionals in Germany than in other countries, and German companies will continue to depend on recruiting employees from non-EU countries.

The German politicians who are now pushing for deportations pretend to have no other choice. However, we know that it would be possible, in accordance with our laws, to allow hard-working and motivated employees in the companies and well-integrated refugees to stay in our country, even if their application for asylum was rejected. This is already

the case for refugees who are undergoing vocational training. They are not deported.

We know that the strong supporters of deportations among German politicians are particularly concerned about the interests of rich Germany and Europe. The poorer countries of Africa do not have them in mind. This is the only way to explain why in 2016, before Yahya Jammeh's election defeat, when nobody expected that the dictator would have to vacate his place, the Minister of the Interior of Baden-Württemberg, Mr. Thomas Strobl, suggested for Gambia to be declared a "safe country of origin". "Safe country of origin" means that in this country no one is persecuted by the state and the state protects them from all other persecutions. The German state then assumes that the observance of human rights is guaranteed and that applicants for asylum can be deported without hesitation. This minister, who is still responsible today for the deportation of Gambians, completely ignored the torture and the trouble that many missing and persecuted persons in The Gambia continue to face.

We would like to emphasise that we want nothing more than for the Gambian youth to have a future in The Gambia. We are not happy to see people who took the dangerous road (the backway) and could have died in the desert, or were abused in Libyan prisons and camps, and risked their lives in the Mediterranean Sea.

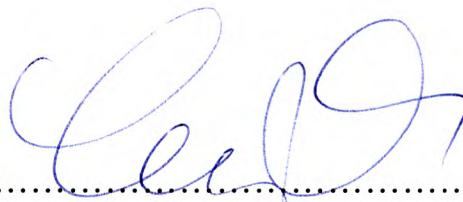
For this, however, the countries in Europe must assume a responsibility towards the poorer countries in the world. With The Gambian situation, we would be happy to see German taking responsibility in handling the complicated deportation issue wisely to ensure that they don't overload Gambia with a lot of deportees that could later pose a threat to the prevailing peace and stability in that country. They must ensure that deportations do not lead to social conflicts and instability in countries such as The Gambia with a young and unstable democracy. We know that even the returnees from Libya pose enormous challenges to the IOM which can hardly be overcome at the moment. In our view, the deportations from Germany only aggravate the situation.



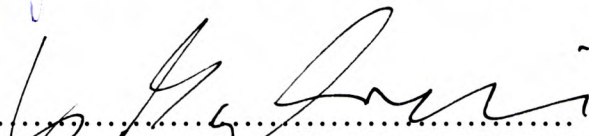
We would like to ask you once again, with all due respect, to take note of our point of view. We are well aware that the Republic of The Gambia must make concessions to the European Union and to Germany in order to receive aid from the EU. But just as our politicians have room for maneuver, perhaps the Gambian representatives, politicians and authorities also have the opportunity to influence certain procedures.

We assure you that we have the utmost respect for the Gambian representatives and institutions and their decisions, and we would be very pleased if our statement could meet your kind considerations. We would also be pleased if you could find good ways to solve the problems for The Gambia, the Gambian population, the Gambian refugees in Germany, but also for us the full-time and honorary helpers and supporters of Gambians and the German companies that employ Gambian refugees.

**Yours Faithfully,**



.....  
Lucia Braß, 1st Chairwoman of the Refugee Council of Baden-Württemberg



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Birgit Hummler, Kay Bochmann-Riess, Coordinators of the Gambia helper network

**CC:**

**HE The Vice President,  
Office of the Vice President, Banjul, Republic of The Gambia**

**Hon. Minister,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Banjul, Republic of The Gambia**

**Hon. Minister,  
Ministry of Interior (MOI), Bertil Harding Highway, Kotu, Republic of The Gambia**

**Hon. Minister,  
Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS), Banjul, Republic of The Gambia**

**Hon. Minister,  
Ministry of Information, Communication and Infrastructure (MOICI), MDI Road,  
GRTS Building, Kanifing, Republic of The Gambia**

**Hon. Minister,  
Ministry of Trade, Industries and Employment (MOTIE),  
Banjul, Republic of The Gambia**

**Hon. Minister,  
Ministry of Justice and Attorney General Chambers (MOJ+AG), Marina Parade,  
Banjul,  
Republic of The Gambia**

**Hon. Minister,  
Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science & Technology (MOHERST),  
Kotu, Republic of The Gambia**

**Hon. Minister,  
Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MOBSE), Banjul, Republic of The Gambia**

**Hon. Speaker,  
National Assembly, Banjul, Republic of The Gambia**

## **The senders and bearers of the statement**

The "Flüchtlingsrat Baden-Württemberg" e. V. is a non-profit organisation that advises refugees and campaigns for their rights. It supports local work for refugees by providing comprehensive information on the social and legal situation in Baden-Württemberg, on refugee policy and on the situation in the countries of origin. Through targeted public relations work and discussions with politicians and social groups, the Refugee Council works for the rights of refugees and for a humane refugee policy in Baden-Württemberg. There are refugee councils in Germany in all federal states.

The "Gambia-Helfernetz" is an information platform for full-time and volunteer supporters of Gambian refugees with over 500 participants, mainly from the federal state of Baden-Württemberg. The network especially monitors the situation of Gambians in Germany, informs Gambian refugees and their supporters about their rights and informs about the situation in The Gambia.

Both organizations are based in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg, in the south-west of Germany. The vast majority of Gambians live in this federal state of Germany - more than 11,000 Gambian citizens. Migrants from The Gambia were mainly accommodated in this federal state for administrative reasons. Apart from a few exceptions, all those who have been deported to The Gambia in recent months have been living in this state.

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