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International Coalition of
SITES of CONSCIENCE



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Global Initiative for Justice,
Truth & Reconciliation

TRRC
**CHILD-FRIENDLY
REPORT**

TRRC

Child-friendly Report

About this book

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This publication was developed by Fantanka, with support from the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR) through the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. This Child-friendly version of the TRRC Report is a Summary of the TRRC's findings and recommendations, but also includes a short introduction to transitional justice, with particular focus on the Gambian context. With this Report Fantanka aims to compliment the work of the TRRC and the government of The Gambia in extending the reach of the TRRC's Report. Fantanka recognises the need to involve children and young people as active stakeholders in The Gambia's transitional process and this report is geared towards that objective. This child-friendly Report is not written by the TRRC.

01 Introduction

The Gambia was colonised by Britain until 1965 when it became independent. Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara became the Prime minister until 1970. In 1970 Jawara won the elections again to become the first president of The Gambia. He continued to be president until 1994 when he was removed by force by soldiers in The Gambia National Army.

Jawara's government respected human rights, although women and people with disabilities mostly did not enjoy equal rights. Gambians could join any political party they wanted, or any religion. They could also criticise the government or the president and could even protest in the streets without being beaten or arrested or killed.

Jawara was a peaceful man who did not use his power to force the Gambian people to do what he

wanted. In fact, Jawara was one of the people who made sure that African countries came together and signed an agreement to protect the human rights of all people in Africa. This important agreement is called the African Charter for Human and People's Rights. Because of Jawara's contribution, it also became known as the Banjul Charter.

People in The Gambia spoke different languages and belong to different ethnic groups. This means that we sometimes do things differently from other Gambians. We also believe in different religions. Some of us are Muslims or Christians and others believe in other faiths. People from different parts of the world also live in the Gambia. Some of them also came with their own traditions, religions and different ways of doing other things.



Things were not perfect during Jawara's Time however. Some people began to be unhappy with the government when food, clothes, healthcare, education and places to live started to become more expensive. Many people believed that people who had high government jobs were getting richer. They owned nice houses and expensive cars, and sent their children to university in Europe and America to get a better education while the rest of the people could not afford it. The Gambian people felt that instead of using the government's money to help the poor people, top government workers were using the money for their own benefit.

One group who were unhappy with the government was the Gambia National Army who believed that they were treated badly. In 1994, five young officers in the army, with Yahya Jammeh as their leader, decided to commit

treason by removing Jawara's government by force. These soldiers convinced many others to join their unlawful plan. On July 22nd 1994, they overthrew the government in a coup d'état. A coup d'état is when people use weapons and force to remove a government from power instead of elections. The five leaders of the coup – Yahya Jammeh, Sanna Sabally, Edward Singhatey, Yankuba Touray and Sadibou Hydara, became the rulers of the country, with Yahya Jammeh as their leader. They called themselves the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC).

In most cases, when soldiers became rulers, they become dictators. This means that they rule by force and cause a lot of fear among the people. In most cases, anyone who disagrees with them is treated very badly. They are either arrested,

beaten and tortured, or even killed. Sometimes they secretly kill people who they fear can remove them from power. When the AFPRC took over The Gambian government, they promised that they would not do such things. They promised to only rule for two years and then allow people to do an election to choose a new civilian president. They called themselves “soldiers with a difference” because they would not kill or harm anyone.

However, Jammeh and his group soon broke their promise. Just a few days after they took government, they started to arrest people and detain them. They removed many laws that they did not like in the constitution of the Gambia, which is the highest law and contains rules about how the Gambia should be ruled. Instead, the AFPRC made their own rules called Decrees and misused the laws. Jammeh and the AFPRC started to commit serious human rights violations which will be discussed later in the report.



Yahya Jammeh in 1994
Jammeh and four of his fellow soldiers illegally took over the government on 22nd July 1994



When they decided to organise elections in 1996, Jammeh and his colleagues did not give back the country to civilians. *Instead* they left the army and started a political party called the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC). Jammeh's party won the elections and he continued to rule, but many people said that he cheated in the elections. A new constitution was made, but whenever it did not allow him to do what he wanted, Jammeh made changes to it.

In the 22 years he ruled the Gambia, most Gambians were tired of living in fear and suffering at the hands of Jammeh and his government. Many Political parties had tried to remove Jammeh in elections, but they all failed. In 2016 the parties realised that if they really wanted Jammeh out, everyone had to work together. They had to put aside all their differences. Gambians in the Gambia and those outside the Gambia all encouraged the parties they supported to form a coalition. This is when

different political parties join together so that the votes they get in elections can be added together. Because of their unity, the parties that formed the coalition defeated Jammeh. Jammeh was forced to leave the Gambia because of the terrible things he did. He now lives in Equatorial Guinea.

When the different parties joined the coalition they promised that if they won the election, they would bring justice to the people who suffered human rights and improve their rights. So, in 2017 organised a big meeting to discuss what to do. International organisations, activists in the Gambia, people who were victims of Yahya Jammeh's government, and those whose family member disappeared were all invited. More than 100 people attended. It was decided that The Gambia should start processes that will investigate what happened and come up with solutions to make sure it never happens again.

REFLECTIONS

1. What are your thoughts about this part of Gambia's history?
2. What were some differences between the way the government was changed in 1994 and the way it was changed in 2016?
3. What do you think are some qualities of a "good" government?
4. Do you think that the government could have done anything to prevent the soldiers from the army taking over the government in 1994? If so, what do you think the government should have done?



08 | What is Transitional Justice

In times of peace, countries have courts where anyone whose human rights are abused can go and complain to get what they lost or their right back. However, when there is a war or a dictatorship in a country, the courts and other institutions which should make sure the law is obeyed cannot usually do their job properly. This can be because of many reasons. For example:

1. The people in charge of those institutions may be among the wrongdoers or they may be supporting the wrongdoers. Therefore they will not be fair.
2. Sometimes it is because the dictator has made sure that the institutions don't have the ability to do their work properly.
3. Sometimes it is because the people don't trust those institutions anymore.

Mostly, it is because the wrongdoers are so many that they cannot all be taken to court one by one.

For these reasons, countries where there was fighting or a dictator use transitional justice to deal with all the problems that took place. Transitional justice uses more ways to do this than the courts. Transitional justice does the following things:

1. **Truth telling:** The public usually don't know exactly how serious human rights violations were. It is important to know the truth about the violations so that we can find some solutions to prevent them happening in future and make sure everybody is safe including children.
2. **Reparations:** Whenever human rights violations happen, some victims are seriously injured, become disabled, or have mental problems because of the violations they suffered.

Others become poorer because their father or mother is killed or disappeared. Transitional justice tries to improve victim's lives and help them with their suffering.

3. Reconciliation: Also, when human rights violations happened there is anger between those who did the wrongs and the victims. Since a country cannot work well if one group of people are enemies with another group, transitional justice tries to fix the relationship between the wrong doers, who are called perpetrators, and the victims. This process is called reconciliation.

4. Reforms: Another reason human rights violations happen is because the laws and the institutions which should make sure the law is obeyed (eg the police and army) no

longer work properly. Transitional justice tries to make changes to the laws and institutions so that they work better and are respected again. This helps to avoid conflict or human rights violations from happening again. This work is called legal and institutional reforms.



Reforming the Security forces is usually necessary in Transitional justice because the mostly carry out most of the human rights violations by the State



Offering Kola nuts was used as a symbol of reconciliation by the TRRC
Kola nuts are important in Gambian culture. They are used when people want to apologise, reconciliation or make peace with others.

**The Truth Shall
Set You Free**



The TRRC was a truth commission. A truth commission is an institution formed and given a task to investigate human rights violations that took place over many years, such as the human rights violations that took place in the Gambia for 22 years under Yahya Jammeh.

How was the TRRC set up?

Before the government can do anything in the Gambia, the National Assembly must agree to make a law which allows it to happen. So, when the government decided to start the transitional justice process, they decided to make a law called the TRRC Act 2017 which told the TRRC what to do.

After that, the next thing was to find the right people who would do the work at the TRRC. 11 honest and trustworthy people were needed to be commissioners. The Commissioners would listen to all the stories of witnesses and decide what

the truth was and also recommend what government should do about what happened. With the help of different organisations, the commissioners were chosen from different regions of the Gambia. They included men, women, young and old people, as well as Muslims and Christians.

When the TRRC Act 2017 was made, it listed many things that the TRRC had to do. It includes the following:

1. Finding out the truth

the first task of the TRRC was to find out about all the human rights violations that happened when Yahya Jammeh was president. That included finding out who were victims, who did the human rights violations, as well as when and how they did it.

2. Giving reparations to victims

Victims of human rights violations lost many things. Some lost their loved ones who were killed, others have health problems because they were tortured and others have money problems and cannot feed their families or send their children to school.

Normally the court punishes perpetrators who are found guilty of a crime, but does not try to fix the problems faced by the victims. In transitional justice however, taking care of the problems of the victims is one of the most important things. What is given to victims is called reparations. The TRRC had to give reparations to the victims who came to tell their story to them. The United Nations, the European Union and the African Union all agree that it is important to give reparations to victims of human rights violations so that they can live in

dignity and for everyone to admit that what happened to them was wrong.

3. Promote reconciliation

Another task of the TRRC was to promote reconciliation. This means helping people or communities who wronged each other to make peace. They are encouraged to rebuild their relationships and to respect each other so that they can all live peacefully together. Reconciliation helps perpetrators to accept that what they did was wrong, and to ask for forgiveness from victims. After finding out the truth and getting reparations, victims are then encouraged to forgive the perpetrators or at least live with them without conflict. Reconciliation takes a long time to achieve. All Gambians should help to promote reconciliation and peace in the Gambia. That way we can live in harmony and what happened during Yahya Jammeh's time won't happen again.



4. Prosecute those who were the most responsible

After gathering the truth about what happened during Jammeh's 22 years, the TRRC also had to analyse the information and tell government to take those who committed the most serious violations to court. However, the TRRC itself cannot prosecute anyone, but it can tell the government to prosecute anyone they think deserves to be.

5. Why it is important to prosecute some people

To make sure other people don't try to repeat human rights violation in the Gambia, the law should punish those who are the most responsible for what happened. This way, people will understand that when you commit human rights violations, you will face the consequence. Victims also have a right to get justice for what happened to them and many victims want those who harmed them to be taken to court.

6. Recommend some perpetrators to be given amnesty

One of the problems after a conflict or dictatorship is that the perpetrators are too many. Taking them all to court would cost too much money. This is why sometimes the perpetrators who did lesser violations are pardoned or given lesser punishment in exchange for telling the court what the more serious perpetrators did. This helps the court to have enough evidence to imprison those who committed or ordered the worst violations. They may also be pardoned or given lesser punishment because they showed regret for what they did. This process of pardoning perpetrators is called amnesty. One of the TRRC's tasks was to suggest which perpetrators should be given amnesty. However, the government makes the final decision whether to give them amnesty or not.

7. Promote “never again” or non-recurrence

The TRRC also promoted non-recurrence. This means that part of the TRRC’s job was to encourage Gambians to make sure that human rights violations never happen in the Gambia again. The TRRC called this “Never Again”.

8. Recommend institutional reform

In order to make sure that the government does not repeat the human rights violations against the Gambian people, the TRRC also needed to look at what went wrong in the government institutions and recommend ways to fix them. The process of fixing the government institutions is called institutional reform.

9. Submit a report of its findings and make recommendations

At the end of its work, the TRRC was supposed to write a report about everything it found out about

human rights violations in the Gambia between July 1994 and January 2017.

REFLECTIONS

1. Out of the four goals of the TRRC – finding out the truth, meeting victims’ needs, recommending who should be brought to court for committing human rights violations, and suggesting how the government can ensure these things never happen again – which do you think is the most important? Why do you think so?



Community members crying during TRRC reconciliation event

17 Children's Participation in TJ in The Gambia

When the Gambia decided to start a transitional justice process, it was realised that young people in the Gambia must be involved in the decisions that should be made. This is because all the human rights violations that happened, even to adults, also affected the lives of young people. In addition, whatever was decided in the transitional justice process will affect the future and young people are going to be in charge of the Gambia in the future. Therefore, it was important that children understood what was happening in the transitional justice process, for two reasons:

1. For them to know what mistakes caused the human rights violations and to avoid making the same mistakes in future,
2. To Understand the importance of unity and peace by treating everyone in The Gambia respectfully.

On the 28th and 29th September 2018 the National Youth Council organized a Summit and invited young people from all the different regions of the Gambia to discuss how they could participate in the process.

After the TRRC started work, a Youth and Children's Network Unit was created, which visited more than 60 lower basic schools all around the Gambia to discuss young people the work of the TRRC.

The TRRC also organised a Children's Summit in Mansa Konko on the 29th and 30th of January 2019. Seventy children from all over the country met to talk about what was happening at the TRRC and why it is important to respect human rights.



The TRRC Youth and Children Unit talking to students during a school outreach trip



Students taking a picture with the Deputy lead Council Horejah Bala-Gaye after watching the TRRC hearings



Students at the TRRC Children's Summit in Mansa Konko in 2019



Panelists at the Youth Summit which took place before the TRRC began

19 | What the TRRC Found Out



The Chairman of the TRRC, Dr Lamin Sisé delivering the TRRC Report to President Adama Barrow

The TRRC finally completed its work in 2021 and gave its final report to the Government of The Gambia.

The first thing that the TRRC found is that on 22nd July 1994, soldiers in The Gambia National Army, led by Lieutenant Yahya Jammeh, took over the government of The Gambia illegally and by force. They formed the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council to govern the country, and Yahya Jammeh became the head of state. One of the first things the soldiers did was arrest many politicians from the Jawara government, which they had just removed. They also arrested some of the senior members of the army and the police, as well as many other people who worked in the former government. The arrests were against the law, so the soldiers decided to make their own laws called Decrees, to replace the laws that they did not like. By making the decrees, they gave themselves power to anything they wanted, even if the law did not allow them to do it. For example, they made

decrees that prevented citizens, newspapers and journalists from saying anything against the government. They did everything to make people fear them.

Things got worse very quickly. One night in September 1994 Sanna Sabally, Edward Singhatey, Yankuba Touray, Sadibou Hydara and their assistants went to Mile 2 Prison where the people they arrested were being kept. In order to scare the prisoners, the soldiers took some of them away from the others and told them to say their last prayers. The prisoners thought that they were going to be killed. Then, the soldiers fired gunshots so that the other prisoners who were left in the cell would think that the others had been killed and that they would be next. Everyone was very scared. For the ones who were taken outside, the soldiers continued to scare them by placing pistols in their mouths and threatening to kill them. Some of the prisoners who were elderly and respected people were seriously beaten too.

21 The Unlawful Killing of Soldiers in November 11, 1994



Soon after July 22 1994, other soldiers began to feel that the AFPRC leaders were not ruling the country properly. In November 1994, some of them planned to remove the AFPRC, just like the AFPRC removed Jawara from government. However, the AFPRC found out about their plan.

When they tried to carry out their plan on 11th November, the AFPRC soldiers knew their plan and captured many of them. The captured soldiers were seriously tortured. All of them were stripped of their clothes and left with only their underwear. Their hands were tied. The leaders of the AFPRC group decided to kill the leaders among the captured soldiers. Sanna Sabally, who was the second person in charge after Jammeh, ordered his soldiers to line up their captives and shoot them. Some of them managed to escape the shooting but others were hit by bullets and later died. Killing captured soldiers like that is totally against the Geneva Convention.

The Geneva Convention is an agreement between all civilised countries to respectfully treat people who are arrested during fighting. The AFPRC soldiers broke this

agreement. They intentionally tortured and killed many other soldiers who were arrested for planning the attempted coup on November 11th 1994. Some of them were taken to the Forest in Brikama where they were shot and killed by the AFPRC soldiers. Killing soldiers who are already captured is illegal. According to the Constitution of The Gambia, no one should kill anyone in The Gambia unless the court has ordered for that person to be killed. However, the AFPRC soldiers broke that rule and decided to kill the captured soldiers without taking them to court. Therefore, they murdered those soldiers, and murder is one of the most serious crimes in Gambian law.

Soon after the killing of soldiers on November 11th 1994, the AFPRC started to disagree among themselves. In January 1995 Sanna Sabally and Sadibou Hydara were arrested by Jammeh and the remaining three AFPRC members. They were sent to Mile 2 prison where they were tortured so badly that Sadibu Hydara died in the prison. Yahya Jammeh wanted Sanna and Sadibou to say that they were trying to also carry out a coup, but Sanna and Sadibou refused to do that because it was not true.

Yahya Jammeh's government continued to commit more serious human rights violations. In 1995 Ousman Koro Ceesay, who was the Minister of Finance, was killed by government officials. The witnesses told the TRRC that the government wanted Koro Ceesay to help them hide some of the corrupt things they were doing, but he refused. He was an honest man and did not want to become corrupt too.

The AFPRC members Edward Singhatey, Yankuba Touray and some of their assistants invited Koro to Yankuba Touray's house, where they killed him in a brutal way. To hide what they did, they placed him in his car and drove it to the bush near a village called Jambur, and burned the car with Koro's body inside it. After that the government announced that Koro died in a car accident, although they knew very well that it was a lie.

Many people suspected that he was killed by the government, but no one knew what really

happened until some of the people who took part in the killing told the TRRC about it. The TRRC believes that although Jammeh did not take part in killing Koro, he knew what happened and did not do anything about it. Therefore, since he was the president, he is also responsible for Koro's death.



Even when members of the AFPRC travelled on the roads they committed human rights violations. This continued throughout Jammeh's rule. The members of the AFPRC always travelled with a convoy, that is, they travelled with many soldiers, cars and weapons. They also drove at very high speeds on the roads. They did not care about people's safety. Whenever someone did not get out of their way, that person would be shot by the soldiers, or they would beat him seriously. Sanna Sabally and Yahya Jammeh did this more than the other AFPRC members. Most people were terrified every time that the AFPRC members were travelling on the road. The TRRC found out that Yahya Jammeh's convoy killed at least four people.

Whenever their drivers caused an accident or killed someone on the road, Jammeh and the government did not do anything about it. The victims and their families did not receive any

apology or reparations from the government. Jammeh's drivers knew they would get away with whatever they did.

In addition, when Jammeh was passing anywhere, people had to stand up and cheer. People who did not do so were beaten seriously by his soldiers. Jammeh also used to throw packets of biscuits, T-shirts and sometimes money while his convoy was travelling at high speed. When people rushed to get these things, they were sometimes hit by the cars.

To ensure this type of violation doesn't happen again, the TRRC recommended that members of Jammeh's convoys be prosecuted, and that Parliament pass laws that limiting the powers of convoys, including the President's convoy.



27 Attacks on Political Opponents



In 1996 when the AFPRC announced that elections would take place, Jammeh, Edward Singhatey and Yankuba Touray resigned from the army and formed a political party so that they can continue to rule. They named their party Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC). In order to win the election at any cost, they also created a group of young people which they called the 22nd July Movement or the Green Boys and Girls. Jammeh and his people used these young people to attack members of the other parties and their supporters. The young people were given total freedom and encouraged to abuse people who did not support APRC. Jammeh also used the police and Ministry of Justice to abuse some of the other party leaders by accusing them of crimes they did not do, then used some of the judges in the courts to make sure that they judged cases the way he wished them to.

Jammeh continued to do these things every time elections came. In 1996 Edward Singhatey and

Yankuba Touray led some Green Boys and Girls and soldiers to attack the United Democratic Party (UDP) supporters at Denton Bridge in Banjul. The UDP supporters were seriously beaten and injured. In 1997 officers from the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) arrested also some UDP supporters and tortured them. One of the arrested supporters suffered sexual violence. Sexual violence when someone does anything with another person's private parts which that person did not want and did not give permission for. Also, if anyone does anything to the private parts of anyone who is less than 18 years old, it is a crime of sexual violence.

In 1998 Lamin Waa Juwara, a famous opposition party supporter, was arrested and imprisoned for two weeks in Mile 2 Prison. While being taken to Mile 2 Prison, Wa Juwara was seriously beaten by the Green Boys and Girls. In 2011 the police arrested a member of Parliament, Hon. Ousman Touray, and sixty other opposition party supporters and imprisoned them in bad

conditions. There were six pregnant women among them. One of the women even had a miscarriage because of the difficulties they suffered.

In 2016, UDP party members protested about the arrest of their party leaders. The police beat and arrested many of them. Some of the women were also sexually abused by paramilitary officers. In some cases, when family members looked for their arrested relatives, the police and NIA lied that they did not know where they were, even though they were the ones who arrested and detained those people. In fact, the NIA tortured and killed Solo Sandeng, which made Gambians more determined to remove Jammeh.

To address these crimes and ensure they don't happen again, one of the TRRC's recommendations was that people with different political beliefs should be encouraged to get along peacefully, and laws should be passed to criminalize hate speech against any ethnic group.



Solo sandeng who was Killed by the NIA for protesting with other UDP supporters, against Jammeh's government.

30 Killing of Students on April 10th and 11th, 2000

Even young people were not safe from the human rights violations committed by Jammeh and his government. In the year 2000, a student called Ebrima Barry was seriously tortured by some Gambia Fire Service officers and he died. The government did not do anything about it. Then another student, a girl, was raped by a police or military officer. Again the government did not do anything about it. Members of the Gambia Students' Union decided to protest and demand that the government must investigate these crimes. Instead of listening to the students or trying to discuss the problem with them, Yahya Jammeh was very angry that the students decided to protest for government to do the right thing.

He ordered that the protest must be stopped by any means. The Police Intervention Unit (PIU) and the Army were sent to stop the students. Instead of protecting the students, they opened

fire on them and beat and arrested others. Fourteen students were killed, as well as two children and one Red Cross volunteer. One of the children they killed was just three years old. Many of the students arrested were tortured, and some were even raped. Some of the arrested students were taken all the way to Janjangbureh prison and locked up for months without being taken to court, and their families could not know what happened to them.

The violent treatment of the students happened both in the Greater Banjul area and in the rural areas. Two of the students were killed in Brikama Ba. Some students from Brikama Ba and Armitage Senior Secondary Schools were also arrested, tortured and sent to prison. Some students were injured but did not die. These students suffered for almost 20 years without getting proper treatment. Some of them cannot walk or do anything for themselves, and most of

them had no choice but to leave school. The TRRC helped some of these students by sending them to get treatment abroad. Although Jammeh's government pretended to investigate what happened, the TRRC has found out that many officers in the police and army lied in that investigation to hide the wrong things they did.

The TRRC has recommended the government should prosecute some of those responsible for what happened to the students in April 2000. The TRRC has also recommended that other officers who are still working in the police or army, and even those retired, should be banned from working in the government. The government should also train security forces on peaceful ways to control crowds, and schools should set up ways to meet with students to peacefully discuss students' concerns.





Just as he tried to control everyone in The Gambia, Yahya Jammeh also tried to control religion in The Gambia. He knew how important religion was to Gambian people. When he became president, he started to take away the religious freedom that everyone in The Gambia used to enjoy. He began to build a relationship with the Supreme Islamic Council. This helped him to convince Gambians that he was a very religious Muslim. The Supreme Islamic Council even made Jammeh an honorary member of the Supreme Islamic Council. This means that even though he was not qualified to be a member of the council, they made him a member out of respect.

Jammeh pretended to have a lot of Islamic knowledge. He carried a Quran everywhere he went and even said that he could speak to jinns and spirits. Because of this, many people feared or respected him. But it is unlawful for the president to be a member of any religious

organisation. The president was supposed to treat all Gambians equally, but Jammeh gave the members of the Supreme Islamic Council powers to do things that the law did not allow them to do. Soon all Muslim preachers in The Gambia had to get a license from the Supreme Islamic Council before they could preach on radio or TV.

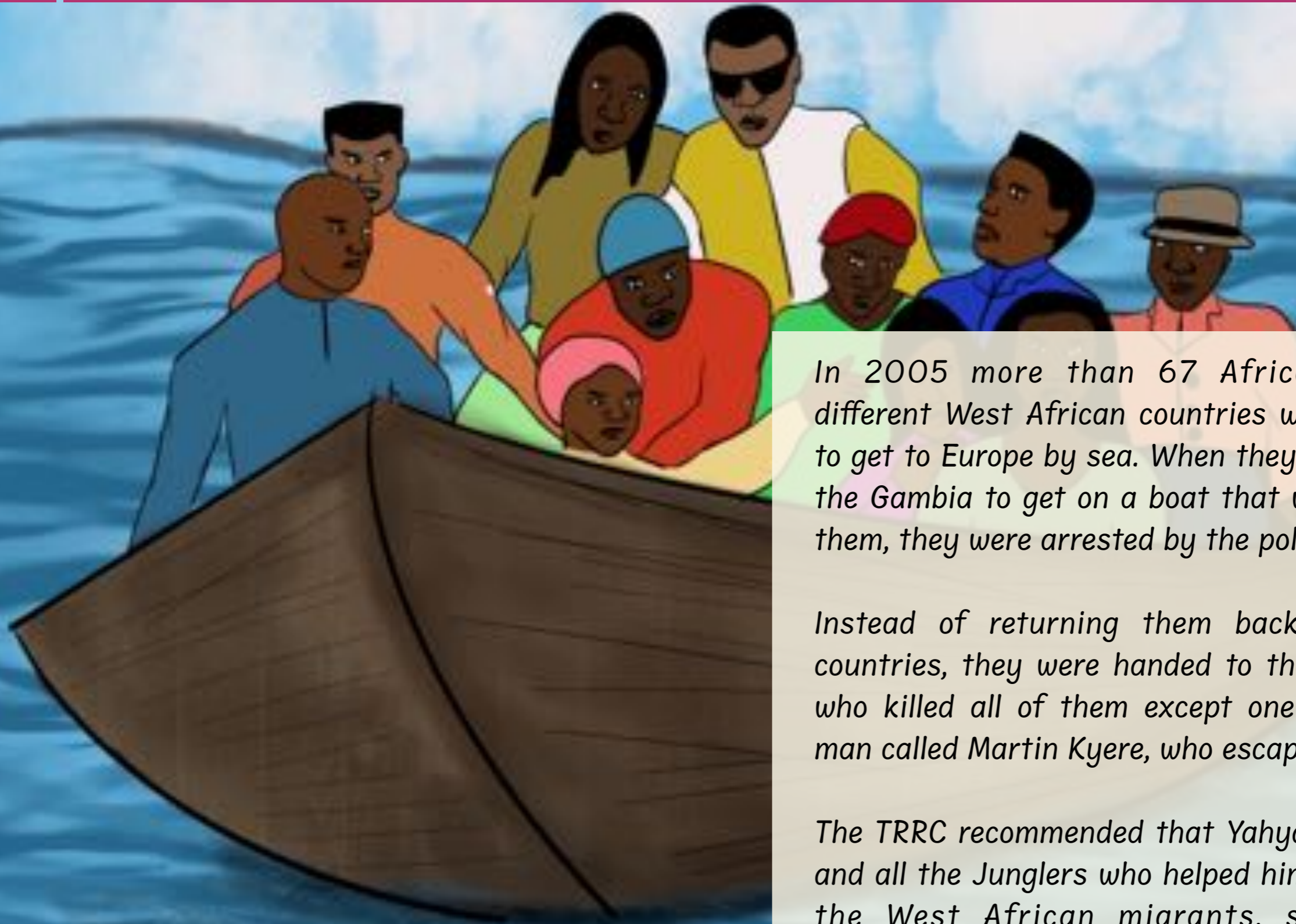
Jammeh also announced that he owned The Gambia, so all Muslims must do their Eid festival only on the day that he agrees with, or they would be arrested. The NIA and Police began to arrest and torture some of the imams and other religious leaders who refused to obey Jammeh. Some Arab countries believed that Jammeh was a very pious Muslim leader. Jammeh used that to get money from those countries. Around 2015 Jammeh announced that The Gambia was now an Islamic state. This was against the constitution and the laws of the Gambia.

He also announced that all women who worked in the government should cover their heads in the Muslim way. After this he began to promise that he was going to change the law to Sharia law. This made Gambians who were not Muslims very worried. Luckily, in 2016, Jammeh lost the election before he could do more damage.

In addition to recommending that Jammeh and others who are responsible for these crimes be prosecuted, the TRRC recommended that the government should establish civic education in all educational institutions in The Gambia to teach the importance of religious tolerance and social cohesion.



35 Killing of West African Migrants



In 2005 more than 67 Africans from different West African countries were trying to get to Europe by sea. When they arrived in the Gambia to get on a boat that would take them, they were arrested by the police.

Instead of returning them back to their countries, they were handed to the Junglers who killed all of them except one Ghanaian man called Martin Kyere, who escaped.

The TRRC recommended that Yahya Jammeh, and all the Junglers who helped him in killing the West African migrants, should be prosecuted.

In a democratic country, people who work in the media provide information to the people through newspapers, radio, television, online websites, and more. They help us know and understand what goes on in the country. Jammeh realised that if people knew about the things his government was secretly doing, they would not like it. Because of that, his government did not give people in the media freedom to tell Gambians what was really happening.

Soon after he became head of state in The Gambia, Jammeh started to arrest journalists, sending them to jail, threatening and torturing them. Some journalists were even killed. Others were arrested and disappeared, and no one knows where they are. Other journalists had to flee and hide in other countries. Jammeh also changed the law to prevent journalists from saying certain things against the government.

The NIA and Jammeh's group of killers, called the Junglers, burned down some newspaper

companies who wrote things Jammeh did not like. For example, a radio station called Radio 1 FM, as well as the office of the Independent Newspaper, were burned down. Jammeh also sent some journalists out of the country because they wrote or said things he didn't like.

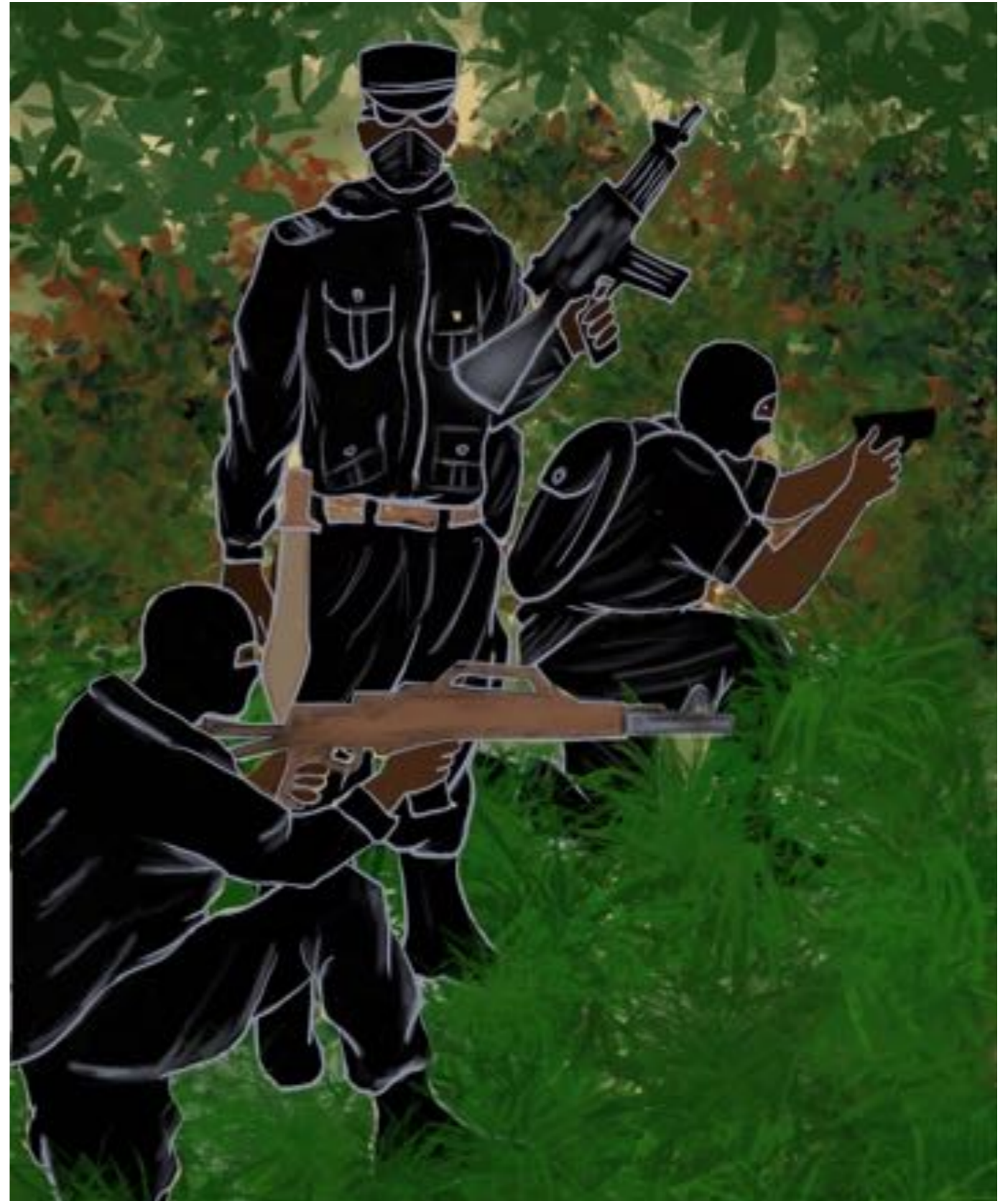
One of the journalists is Ebrima Chief Manneh. Since he was arrested by the government officials, until today no one knows where he is. Even the TRRC could not find out what happened to him. But the most serious case was when Yahya Jammeh ordered his killers, the Junglers, to kill Deyda Hydara. Deyda Hydara was a journalist who used to criticise some of the things that Jammeh did. That made Jammeh angry and in 2004 he ordered that Deyda Hydara should be killed. One day, while Deyda was on his way going home, the Junglers came to his car and shot him. Some of those who took part in killing Deyda Hydara told the TRRC that it was Yahya Jammeh who told them to kill Deyda.



38 The Junglers

To make sure he continued to rule the country as a dictator, Yahya Jammeh used all of the government institutions to help him violate the rights of Gambians. He selected some soldiers from the Gambia National Army to kill people for him and do other serious human rights violations like torturing people. Some people called this group of soldiers the Black Black because of the colour of their uniforms. Everyone in The Gambia was afraid of the Junglers. Even the heads of the army, police and other institutions were afraid of them. The Junglers only took orders from Yahya Jammeh, and their base was at State House.

Yahya Jammeh ordered the Junglers to kill many people for many reasons. Some were killed because Jammeh believed that they might try to remove him from power, others were killed because they criticised Jammeh, and others were people who used to do business with him.





Jammeh until they had a disagreement with him. Jammeh even ordered the Junglers to kill his brother and sister, Haruna Jammeh and Merci Jammeh, as well as one of his relatives, Jasaja Kujabi.

The TRRC found out that it was the Junglers who killed Deyda Hydara. The Junglers also tried to kill a respected lawyer Ousman Sillah but luckily, they only injured him. In 2006 the Junglers killed many soldiers who Jammeh suspected were trying to remove him. They killed many other Gambians after that. Sometimes they made it look like the people they killed died from accidents. Other times they took their victims to faraway places in the bushes, where they killed them and hid their bodies. The TRRC has recommended that all the Junglers and Yahya Jammeh should be prosecuted for what they did.

40 | The National Intelligence Service

The NIA was also used by Jammeh to arrest, torture and detain anyone he wanted. When Jammeh suspected that someone was against him, the NIA would arrest and torture the person to force him/her to accept what he was accused of, even if he/she did not do it. They used such evidence to convince the court that someone was guilty when it was not true. The NIA even arrested and tortured government workers from the Drug Law Enforcement Agency, the army and even workers of the National Water and Electricity Company (NAWEC).

The NIA also set up a team of officers to investigate people they arrested. This team worked with the Junglers to force people to confess about crimes they did not do. When victims did not give the answer the NIA wanted, they would let the Junglers torture the victim seriously. Like the Junglers, the NIA were under the control of Jammeh so they did anything that Jammeh wanted them to do. The TRRC also found out that after the change of government in 2016, the NIA destroyed all the things that they were torturing people during Jammeh's time, so that there would be no evidence of what they had done.



41 | The Gambia Prisons Service

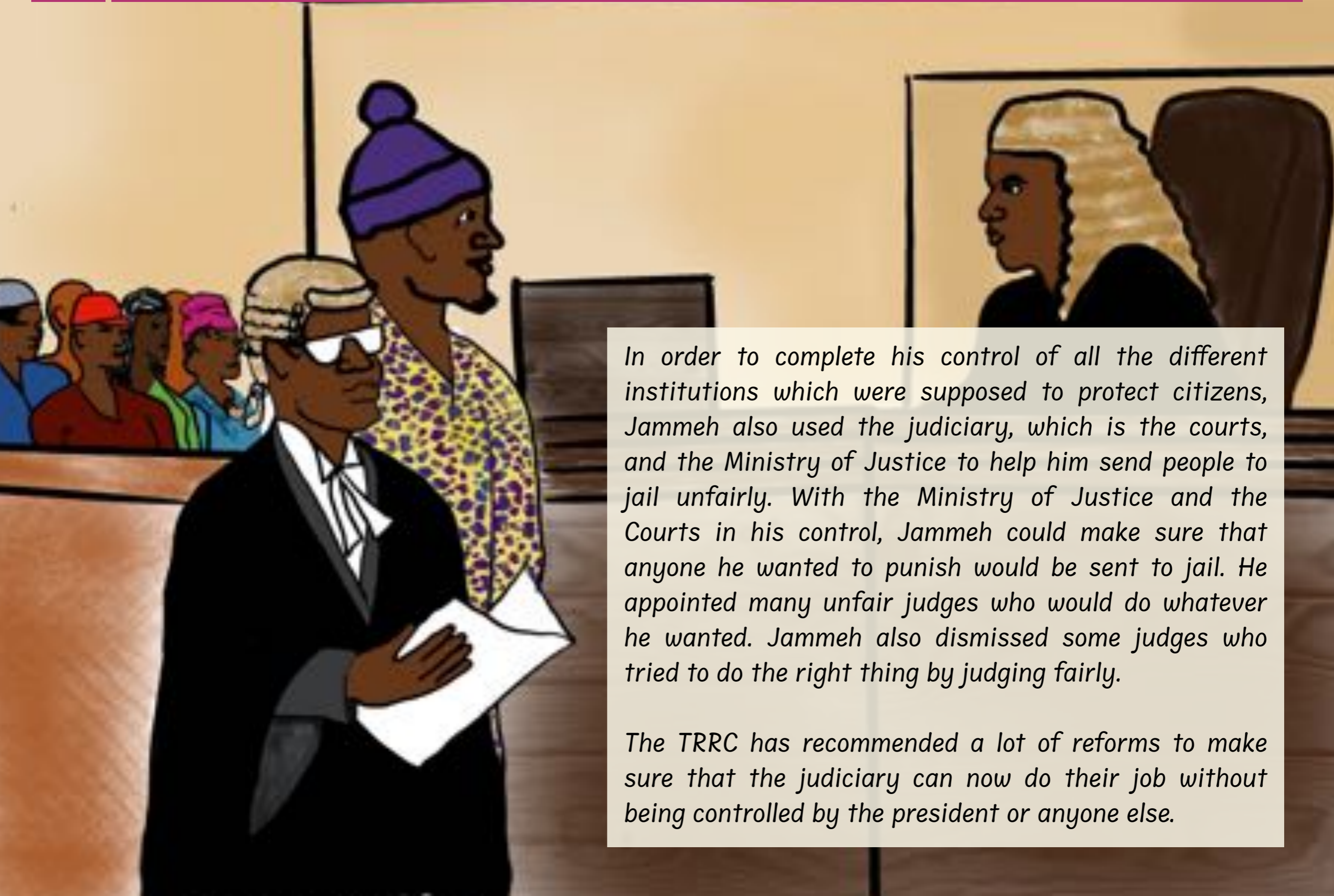
The prisons in the Gambia were also used by Jammeh to torture and abuse many people including even some of the prison officers who worked there. Some of the female officers were raped and some of the male officers tortured or detained unlawfully.

The prisons were extremely dirty and unhealthy. The food that was given to prisoners was also terrible and many of them could not eat it. Some of those who ate it got very sick and some people even died. Prisoners were so full that some prisoners could not even find a space to sleep. Many had to sleep on the floor and prisoners had to use a bucket as a toilet, and that bucket was kept in the cell where they slept, making the place smell really bad. When prisoners got sick the prison officers sometimes refused to take them to hospital because Yahya Jammeh would not be happy if they did.

Mile 2 Prison is the main prison in the Gambia and was also the worst prison. Jammeh call Mile 2 his five-star hotel even though he knew how bad it was. He always threatened to send people who he did not like to his five-star hotel, meaning the prison.



42 The Courts and the Ministry of Justice



In order to complete his control of all the different institutions which were supposed to protect citizens, Jammeh also used the judiciary, which is the courts, and the Ministry of Justice to help him send people to jail unfairly. With the Ministry of Justice and the Courts in his control, Jammeh could make sure that anyone he wanted to punish would be sent to jail. He appointed many unfair judges who would do whatever he wanted. Jammeh also dismissed some judges who tried to do the right thing by judging fairly.

The TRRC has recommended a lot of reforms to make sure that the judiciary can now do their job without being controlled by the president or anyone else.

Yahya Jammeh continued to pretend that he had spiritual powers. In 2008 and 2009 he caused more fear and human rights violations by bringing witch-hunters from other countries to different villages and in government offices in The Gambia. Jammeh sent some soldiers and members of the Green Boys and Girls to help the witch-hunters terrorize villages. The witch hunters captured many people and accused them of being witches. They forced the captured people to drink herbal medicines made from a plant called "Kubejara". This plant is known to be a hallucinogen and also poisonous. That means that when someone drinks it, their mind is confused and they see imaginary things that are not really there.

Many of the people captured by Jammeh's witch-hunters were old people although there were a few young people also. People who refused to be taken by the witch-hunters were tortured. The TRRC found out that about 41 of them died because of the poisonous things they were forced to drink, the beatings, and the embarrassing way they were treated. Many of the victims were also taken to work on Jammeh's farms without any pay. Forcing people to work without pay is known as forced labour which is like slavery.



44 Jammeh's Fake HIV Treatment



In 2007 Yahya Jammeh lied and told everyone that God gave him the knowledge and task to cure HIV/AIDS by making a medicine from seven plants that he said are named in the Quran. Jammeh opened a fake treatment centre where he brought people with HIV/AIDS and promised to cure them in a few days. However, once they came to his clinic, there they were not allowed to leave even if they did not want to be there. He did not ask them whether they wanted to take his medicine or not. This is not right because doctors should not force patients to do anything, they should allow patients to choose whether to take medicine or not.

Another thing is that Jammeh had no medical training, and he also did not have any training in using herbs for medicine. Because of his lies and pretending, some patients were tricked into believing that his claim to cure HIV was true. Jammeh continued to trick HIV patients by

making those he treated announced on television that they were healed, even though they were not. He also made them stop using the real medicines that they used to take, which made their illness worse eventually. Many HIV patients who came to his treatment program died soon afterwards.

In addition, Jammeh made patients take off their clothes and showed them on television. That is a violation of the patients' human right to privacy. The TRRC also learned that Jammeh used to rub the medicine all over patients' bodies, even on their private parts. That is sexual violence. Jammeh was helped by other people who are trained doctors and nurses. The TRRC recommends that some of those people should also be prosecuted with Jammeh, and that people who are living with HIV and AIDS should get better healthcare so they can better manage their condition.



Yahya Jammeh and some of the people close to him also committed sexual and gender-based violence. Anything done to a person's private parts without his permission is sexual violence. Gender-based violence is any harm done to a person because they are a man or because they are a woman. For example, some men were forced to wear women's clothes in prison. This is gender-based violence because the soldiers know that in the Gambia, wearing women's clothes will embarrass men. They knew that forcing a man to wear women's clothes will make him feel bad about themselves. Men in the army and other security forces also committed gender-based violence by touching the breasts of women officers. They did this because the victims were women.

Yahya Jammeh sponsored a beauty pageant for young girls whom he promised to give scholarships to get higher education. Instead, he used the pageant to target girls to sexually abuse or rape. Female officers from the security

forces were also sexually abused or raped by some of Jammeh's ministers and heads of other important institutions in his government.

Sadly, in the Gambia people often blame victims of sexual and gender-based violence for what was done to them, even though it is not the victims' fault. Because of this, victims are afraid to report when it happens to them. Many SGBV victims did not tell the TRRC what happened to them because of that.

The TRRC recommended that Yahya Jammeh and those who committed sexual and gender-based violations including rape, should be prosecuted. They also recommended that others who helped commit SGBV should be banned from working for the government for 10 years because they cannot be trusted to do the right thing. The TRRC also advised government to make reforms that can help SGBV victims to heal and stop others from committing SGBV.

48 Enforced Disappearances

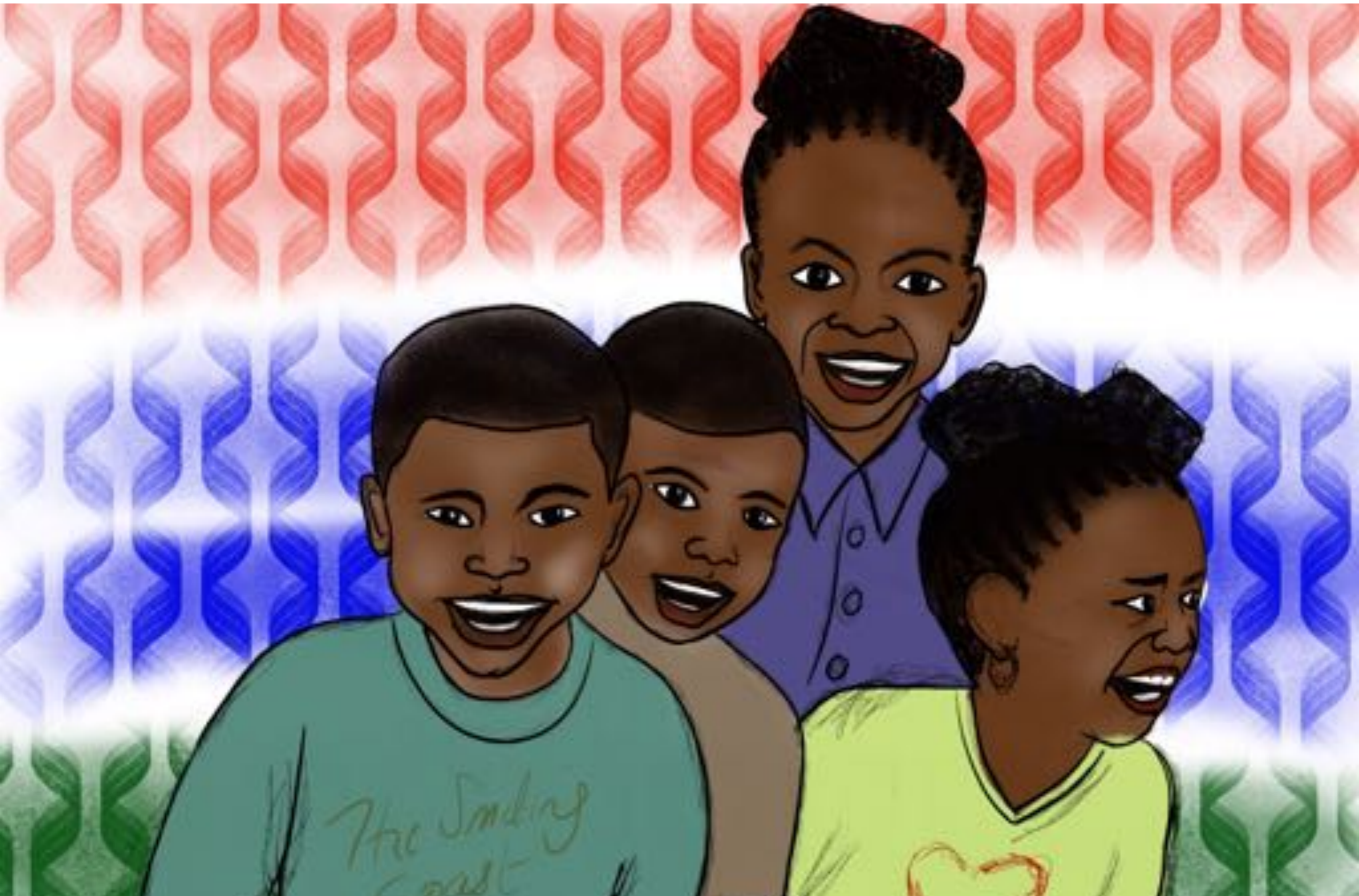


Throughout Jammeh's time as president, another serious human right violation that happened a lot was enforced disappearances. This is when government forces like the police or the army arrest people who are never seen ever again after that. Jammeh's government "disappeared" to many people who criticized him. These people were arrested but their families were not told why or where they were being taken. It was the last time anyone ever saw them. Their families cannot be sure whether their loved ones are dead or not. That causes them a lot of mental stress and sadness. Enforced disappearances are serious crimes that even the United Nations takes very seriously.

Finding out what happened to the people who were disappeared by Jammeh's government was one of the jobs of the TRRC. The TRRC was able to find out what happened to some of them but could not find out what happened to four people.

These are Modou Lamin Nyassi, Buba Sanyang, Kanyiba Kanyi, and Ebrima Chief Manneh. The TRRC has therefore recommended that the government should continue trying to find what happened to these four people.

The TRRC has also recommended that Yahya Jammeh and his Junglers should be prosecuted for disappearing people. Some of the witnesses at the TRRC said that some of the disappeared people were killed and their bodies thrown into Jammeh's crocodile pool in Kanilai. The TRRC has suggested that the government should check the crocodile pond to find out if that is true.



The TRRC finished its work and gave its report to the government of the Gambia in November 2021. The Report contained 265 recommendations.

According to the TRRC Act 2017, once the report was given to the government, the government was supposed to write a White Paper to explain what they are going to do with the TRRC Report. A white paper is usually written by the government to explain to the public how it going to do a certain task. In this case the white paper talks about how the government is going to implement the TRRC's recommendations. On the 25th of May 2022, the government brought out their white paper. The white paper accepted all the recommendations in the TRRC report except a few. Some of the most important ones that the Gambian government has committed to include:

Prosecuting Yahya Jammeh for being the perpetrator most responsible perpetrator for the violations that the TRRC investigated.

Setting up a Peace and Reconciliation Commission to help reunite Gambians.

Renaming the Arch 22 in Banjul to Never Again Memorial Arch in honor of victims who suffered human rights violations during Jammeh's rule.

Setting up another organisation that will be responsible for the welfare of victims and to give them reparations.

Reform all the government workplaces to make sure what happened never happens again.

Train and change the security forces so that no leader will use them again to commit human rights violations.

How can the recommendations be fulfilled and whose job is it to fulfil them?

The government of The Gambia is mainly responsible to implement the recommendations of the TRRC. The Ministry of Justice is leading this work. However, government needs a lot of help from different organisations and the public in order to do a good job implementing the TRRC recommendations. As a result, many CSOs have come together and are working with the Ministry of Justice to make sure the recommendations are implemented properly.

What role can children play in building the future we want for the Gambia?

After all the human rights violations that Yahya Jammeh and his government committed against Gambians, it is important to change The Gambia into a peaceful and democratic country where such violations will never happen again.

Now that the recommendations are supposed to be implemented, children have an important role to play. As children today will grow up to become future presidents, ministers, judges, soldiers, etc. of The Gambia, it is important for them to have respect for each other, their neighbours, schoolmates and everyone in the Gambia. As children you must also learn about democracy, human rights and justice and why they are so important. That way, when you are in charge of the country, you will make sure it is a real democracy and the human rights of everyone are respected. If you do all of these things, The Gambia will be so nice that it will be called the Smiling Coast of Africa again.

1. How do you feel after having learned more about Gambia's recent history and the TRRC?
2. What was most surprising to you about what you just learned?
3. What can you do to help make sure Gambia stays a peaceful country, and that these terrible things never happen again?
4. What questions do you still have about the TRRC and what it found out about Gambia's history?

Where to go and who to ask if you have more questions

If you have any more questions about transitional justice, TRRC or anything else you have just read, you can ask your teachers to help you do find more information. For example, you can find all the stories told at the TRRC on Youtube. If you live near Banjul, you can also visit Memory House, which is a museum that tells the stories of different victims of Jammeh.

You can also ask your parents about their experience during Yahya Jammeh's government.



