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IIJD Call for Action
April/May 2007

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Freedom of Speech Tried in Gambia, an Update

On March 29, 2007 the high court of The Gambia ruled for a trial to take place to discern whether Fatou Jaw Manneh was guilty of the three charges of sedition. The head magistrate Buba Jawo was convinced by the chief prosecutor, Emmanuel Fagbenle's argument to hold the main proceedings in a closed court. This ruling means that neither any members of the media, nor any non-involved members of the trial are to be allowed in court. Manneh was arrested by the Gambian government for articles that she wrote for a U.S.-based online news source. Her articles reflected her dissatisfaction for the present Gambia ruler, Yahya Jammeh, stating that he is "tearing our beloved country to shreds" as well as calling him "a bundle of terror." This case highlights the need for complete freedom of the press and expression in all countries, but especially in a country which constitutionally claims such freedoms. It is up to the prosecution to prove that Manneh wrote her article with the intention of a state revolt against the government, which will be difficult to accurately prove. Though, without a camera in the court it will be harder to monitor the trial proceedings to ensure fair and just results.

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