

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

1 August 2013

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Gambia: treatment of members and supporters of the National Reconciliation Party (NRP) by the authorities and other groups (2012-July 2013)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information on the treatment of members and supporters of the National Reconciliation Party (NRP) in Gambia was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

The NRP is directed by Hamat Bah (*Foroyaa Newspaper* 12 Apr. 2013; IPS 3 Apr. 2013). According to the media, the NRP was the only opposition party to participate in municipal elections in April 2013, as other opposition parties opted to boycott these elections (*Foroyaa Newspaper* 12 Apr. 2013; Jollofnews 8 Apr. 2013; IPS 2 Apr. 2013). According to the Inter Press Service (IPS), the NRP held one seat in Parliament before the April 2013 elections (*ibid.*). Jollofnews, an online news site that promotes African unity (Jollofnews 6 Jan. 2010), states that the NRP ran candidates in 10 ridings for these elections, but that none of the candidates won seat (Jollofnews 8 Apr. 2013).

According to *Freedom Newspaper*, an online newspaper that reports on Gambian news and is headquartered in the United States (US) with reporters in Gambia (*Freedom Newspaper* n.d.), some people accused Hamat Bah of being on the Gambian president's payroll and spying on opposition parties; the NRP's "detractors" also accused the party of undermining the opposition by refusing to join the other opposition parties in boycotting the 2012 legislative elections (*ibid.* 8 March 2012). Hamat Bah denied these allegations and affirmed his solidarity with the other opposition parties, despite their disagreement regarding the boycott of the election (*ibid.*). In 2013, Hamat Bah reiterated that he wanted to maintain solidarity with the other opposition parties (*Foroyaa Newspaper* 12 Apr. 2013). He stated that he agreed with them on the need for democratic reform in the country (*Foroyaa Newspaper* 12 Apr. 2013; IPS 2 Apr. 2013).

According to Hamat Bah's comments to the media, NRP candidates were intimidated during the 2013 municipal elections (*Foroyaa*

Newspaper 12 Apr. 2013; IPS 2 Apr. 2013). The leader of the party also told Inter Press Service that the NRP was not able to field as many candidates as they wanted for the election because most people were not prepared to go head-to-head with the regime in power and because some potential candidates had allegedly been "intimidated" (ibid.). According to the *Foroyaa Newspaper*, a Gambian newspaper started in 1987 by an opposition party to "break the monopoly enjoyed by the ruling party in shaping public opinion" (*Foroyaa Newspaper* n.d.), Hamat Bah stated at a press conference held after the elections that one of his party's candidates in the city of Farafenni was intimidated and that NRP supporters were threatened with arrest (12 Apr. 2013). However, Hamat Bah added that there were fewer cases of intimidation than in previous elections (ibid.).

Information corroborating Hamat Bah's statements regarding the treatment of NRP members and supporters could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, sources indicate that Gambian opposition parties are subject to intimidation (US 19 Apr. 2013, 1; Freedom House 2013) and persecution (ibid.).

Another *Foroyaa Newspaper* article indicates that, during a press conference held after the April 2012 legislative elections, Hamat Bah stated that NRP supporters, including Dulo [or Dullo] Bah, the party's campaign manager, and the NRP candidate in the riding of Sabach Sanjal, were arrested and detained at police stations following the publication of the election results (*Foroyaa Newspaper* 19 Apr. 2012). An article that appeared in the *Daily News*, a Gambian daily newspaper, also indicates that 12 NRP supporters, including Dulo Bah, who is referred to as the party's "propaganda secretary," were scheduled to appear in court on April 11, 2012, following their arrest (*Daily News* 11 Apr. 2012). Contrary to the information provided by the *Foroyaa Newspaper*, the *Daily News* states that 12 people were arrested on March 29, 2012 (ibid.). According to the *Daily News*, they were accused of "inciting violence, conspiracy to commit felony and going armed in public" (ibid.).

According to the US Department of State *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012*, the police "occasionally" refused to issue permits for opposition parties to hold political rallies (US 19 Apr. 2013, 17). Similarly, Freedom House also states that protesters must obtain permits from the police "who, under heavy political pressure, often deny them" (Freedom House 2012).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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United States (US). 19 April 2013. "The Gambia." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012*. <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204335.pdf>> [Accessed 26 July 2013]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact representatives of the African Center for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, and the Campaign for Human Rights in The Gambia were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: Afrol News; Amnesty International; British Broadcasting Corporation; City Limits Radio; *The Daily Observer*; *The Dispatch*; Factiva; Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme; Gambia Echo; Hello Gambia; Human Rights Watch; Media Foundation for West Africa; *The Point*; *Political Handbook of the World 2012*; Reporters365; Senegambia News; Shout-Africa; United Kingdom – Home Office; United Nations – Refworld, Integrated Regional Information Networks; West Coast Radio; Wow.gm.

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