

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-1304

November 2, 2011

Mr. Edward Gomez  
Attorney General and Minister of Justice  
Marina Parade  
Banjul  
Republic of The Gambia  
West Africa

Dear Attorney General Gomez:

I am writing to request immediate information regarding Chief Ebrima Manneh, a Gambian journalist with the *Daily Observer* who has been missing since a troubling detention by Gambian security personnel more than five years ago. In light of your recent comments claiming that Manneh is alive -- a stark contrast from previous Gambian government silence and denials regarding his whereabouts -- I ask that you immediately provide any information regarding Manneh's location and condition. I similarly ask that you proceed without delay in cooperation with the British Foreign Office in an agreed upon investigation of Mr. Manneh's disappearance.

Chief Manneh disappeared on July 7, 2006, allegedly detained for political reasons by plainclothes police officers thought to have been members of the Gambian National Intelligence Agency. He was reportedly held at the Fatoto Police Station in eastern Gambia, at Mile Two Prison, and/or a National Intelligence Agency compound in Serekunda, in addition to being sent at one point to the Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital in Banjul for high blood pressure treatment.

Amnesty International, the Economic Community of West African States Community Court of Justice, Freedom Now, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and a number of other human rights organizations consider Chief Manneh to be a prisoner of conscience and have called for his immediate release.

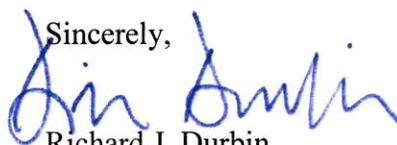
The Media Foundation for West Africa, a regional, independent, nongovernmental organization based in Ghana, filed suit on Chief Manneh's behalf in the Community Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Nigeria. The court has jurisdiction to determine cases of human rights violations that occur in any member state, including The Gambia. On June 5, 2008, the Court, in a decision that is binding on The Gambia, declared the arrest and detention of Chief Manneh illegal and ordered his immediate release. Additionally, the United Nations Human Rights Council's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued a sweeping opinion in November 2009 against the Gambian government, also calling for the "immediate release of Mr. Manneh."

Despite the UN Working Group decision, the judgment of the ECOWAS Court of Justice, and repeated requests by Chief Manneh's family, fellow journalists, and the international community, Gambian President Yahya Jammeh has refused to answer even basic questions about Chief Manneh's arrest or his whereabouts. My direct appeal to President Jammeh for a discussion on this case was similarly met with deeply troubling silence.

Yet, in an October 10 interview with the Gambia's *The Daily News*, you stated the following:

Now, let me tell you with a high degree of certainty that Ebrima Chief Manneh is somewhere... We shall talk about this case at a later stage when it is more convenient; when I can prove to you beyond any reasonable doubt... I can tell you that Ebrima Chief Manneh is alive.

If Chief Manneh is, in fact, alive, and you do have knowledge of his whereabouts, helping to resolve his disappearance could add credibility to your recent comments at the 50<sup>th</sup> session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, during which you spoke of the need to "speak out against human rights abuses." Sadly, without an immediate accounting for Mr. Manneh, those words will ring hollow in Gambia and around the world.

Sincerely,  
  
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

Cc: Mr. William Hague, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the United Kingdom.