

ACTION *Mr. Feltman / Mr. Simonovic (email)*

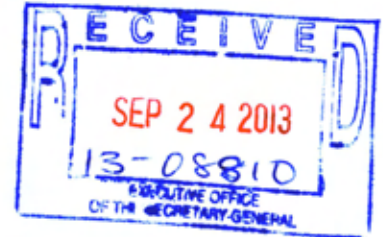
COPY *DSG*

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 23, 2013

(email) Mr. Scapa Scary
AG



UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay
Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Dear High Commissioner Pillay:

We write concerning the well-documented case of Gambian journalist Ebrima Manneh who disappeared in 2006, most likely after being arrested by Gambian security officials. He was held incommunicado and may have died in detention. We and other U.S. Senators have tried for years to secure Manneh's release or an accounting of his fate not only due to the injustice of his detention, but also in an effort to bring some larger measure of accountability to the Gambia's deeply troubling lack of press freedom. To this end, we were encouraged that in January 2012, Gambian strongman Yahya Jammeh wrote to UN Secretary Ban inviting an investigation into Manneh's disappearance and the death of a fellow journalist Deyda Hydara. We understand that Secretary General Ban wrote back on April 4, 2012, welcoming the Gambian government's commitment and referring the request to your office. Unfortunately, now more than a year and a half later, we are dismayed at what appears to be little if any progress in pursuing this unique and highly fragile opening. *(Corlog 12-01152)*

When a leader such as Gambian President Jammeh asks for an investigation that will likely point to his own notorious security forces, the window for pursuing such an opening is limited. In fact, according to information we have received, Jammeh has been incorrectly told that Manneh left the country – information that has caused Jammeh to believe his government would be exonerated. Yet, requests to your office for an update on this investigation have been either ignored or we are told that the UN is waiting for a point of contact in the Gambia. It is not at all surprising that no contact has been provided during the last 18 months. Such foreseeable obfuscation by the Gambian government is not a reason to give up.

As members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, we have supported the United Nations and have secured annual contributions for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. We have visited important UN missions in some of the loneliest corners of the globe – missions that are literally matters of life and death for the local inhabitants. Given the UN's capabilities in such difficult situations, we appeal to your office to investigate Mr. Manneh and Mr. Hydara's cases and, in doing so, provide some hope to the Gambia's citizens whose access to a free press has long been denied. We stand ready to support such an effort.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator

RECEIVED

cc: UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon
US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power

OCT - 2 2013

EOSG/CENTRAL

HRT 1031003