

Question for written answer E-008613/2016
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 130
Ilhan Kyuchyuk (ALDE)

Subject: VP/HR - Human rights violations in Gambia

Gambia has one of the poorest human rights record in the world. The government of President Yahya Jammeh, who came to power in a military coup in 1996, routinely targets human rights defenders, journalists, political opponents and critics, as well as LGBT people. Systemic human rights violations in the country led to protests in April 2016, and to a rising number of departures from Gambia, which has the highest number of migrants arriving in Italy this year relative to its population. During the protests, security forces arrested dozens of opposition party members. In total, an estimated 55 people were arrested on 16 April, with many of them allegedly tortured while in detention. Ebrima Solo Sandeng, head of the opposition party's youth wing, died in detention. The death of Mr Sandeng has brought into stark focus the worrying pre-electoral environment in Gambia. In the months prior to the 1 December 2016 presidential election, there have been credible reports of forceful suppression of peaceful demonstrations, arrests and ill treatment of the opposition.

1. What steps will the VP/HR take to protect and preserve human rights in Gambia, particularly in a pre-election period?
2. What actions will the VP/HR take to protect members of the political opposition in the country?