



PRE-ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT, NO. 1

Period of Assessment: October 30th, 2021 - November 6th, 2021

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SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS OF THE CANDIDATE'S NOMINATION PROCESS OF THE GAMBIA - Period of Assessment: October 30th - November 6th, 2021

Release Date: November 15th 2021

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INTRODUCTION

Gambia Participates, as part of its 2021 Presidential Election Observation Mission, deployed nine observers to monitor the nomination process of presidential candidates at the IEC Election House. The data in this report is based on information submitted by nine (9) long-term observers stationed in the greater Banjul.

The nomination of presidential candidates took place in The Gambia from October 30th to November 5th, 2021 with 23 presidential aspirants submitting their credentials to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). The nomination process of presidential candidates before Election Day is outlined in Section 42 of the Elections Act with The IEC's Returning Officer acting as the general overseer. The IEC then reviews the respective application to determine whether the candidates are qualified to run for president in accordance with the law.

On November 6th, 2021, at the IEC Election House, candidates' nomination documents were subjected to public scrutiny where interested individuals with valid voters' card were allocated five minutes to review the applications. In the afternoon of November 6th, 2021, the IEC Chairman, announced that only 6 out of 23 candidates met the nomination requirements and provided details for the rejection of the other candidates.

METHODOLOGY

Gambia Participates deployed nine (9) Long-term observers stationed within the Greater Banjul Area to monitor the entire nomination process at the IEC Secretariat. Before their deployment, the observers were professionally trained on the general principles of election observation, non-partisanship, impartiality, and non-interfering amongst other key areas. Observers were also trained on standard data collection tools developed by Gambia Participates for the purpose of monitoring the pre-election period.

Each checklist was individually and manually completed by the observers and later submitted electronically to the Gambia Participates secretariat, using designated and programmed software, provided by Gambia Participates. The Gambia Participates secretariat reviewed every checklist and asked follow-up questions where necessary in order to ensure that the data provided were credible and verifiable. The data was then analyzed by data clerks and the Gambia Participates secretariat provided a report on the information received.

In this report, Gambia Participates presents its findings from the nomination period relating to the general environment, preparedness of the IEC, political campaigns, use of state resources, COVID-19 protection, and other critical incidents.

MAIN FINDINGS

GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

88.8% of Gambia Participates' observers noted that the general environment was calm and orderly. However, 11.1% of the observers noted either violent incidents, political and party tensions between among party supporters, or an attack on a party leader. 88.8% of Gambia Participates' observers also noted the presence of other domestic observers and media practitioners. 77.7% of observers noted the presence of international observers (mainly the African Union and European Union) at the IEC Election House.

100% of the observers witnessed the presence of security personnel throughout the period of assessment; mainly the Police Intervention Unit (PIU) officials. 44.4% of observers noted the presence of ECOMIG soldiers. Majority of observers noted that more than 100 security personnel were present in their area of observation. The conduct of security personnel was generally orderly and they also respected professional standards.

IEC PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

During the nomination period, the IEC secretariat was generally accessible to observers. Security personnel stationed at the IEC prevented overcrowding of candidates' supporters at the IEC secretariat during the nomination process. Reasonable time was allocated in between the nomination of each candidate; however, observers monitored a time conflict between candidates due to overcrowding by party supporters and traffic congestion outside the premises of the IEC office. This situation prevented some candidates, the NPP and Essa Mbye Faal, from arriving at the office of the IEC on time.

22.2% of the observers noted the presence of COVID-19 Health Kits in and outside the IEC premises. Authorized personnel inside the IEC Election House were provided sanitizing lotion and facemasks by Red Cross officials. Observers also noted the presence of ambulances for emergency situations.

Observers had limited access to observe the presentation of nomination documents by candidates because the tent provided for domestic and international observers was approximately 10 meters away.

POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING

Although the campaign period does not start until November 9th, 2021, physical political campaigning was widely witnessed during the nomination period. 77.7% of observers witnessed in-person campaigns by political parties and independent candidates. Political campaigns were mainly through vehicle caravans (66.6%) and rallies (44.4%).

During the physical campaigns and rallies, 77.7% of the observers noted that citizens/candidate supporters were not wearing masks.

USE/NON-USE OF STATE RESOURCES

Observers noted that the incumbent presidential candidate did not use a government vehicle (as per the car number plate). However, 44.4% of the observers witnessed the use of state resources during working hours by national-level and local government officials. The resources mainly used were government vehicles by Ministers and Governors.

While government and non-government officials can support a party or candidate of their choice, they cannot use public property for political activities. Section 91(b) (c) of the Elections Act prohibits the use of state resources for political activities.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

During the observation period, critical incidents reported by the observers included an attempted attack on the GDC party leader and intimidating comments by certain political party

supporters. Observers witnessed the arrest of an individual with a sharp knife in the crowd of GDC supporters. Evidence of the arrest by police personnel was obtained by our observers.

On intimidating comments, 11.1% of the observers reported the inciting of violence by party supporters towards the IEC officials should the nomination of their candidate be rejected.

OUTCOME OF CANDIDATE NOMINATIONS

Candidates that Filed for Nomination	Candidates/Parties that Withdrew their Nomination	Candidates Rejected	Candidates Approved
21 candidates in total filed for nomination	5 withdrew/did not file for nomination Matthew Gomez – Independent GFA APP Tamsir M. Jassey – Independent Mamadou Bah – Independent	15 candidates rejected 1. Joseph Henry Joof – Independent 2. Marie Sock – Independent 3. Alhaji Mamadi Kurang - Independent 4. Ebrima Tabora Manneh – Independent 5. Momodou Bah – Independent 6. Bankole Yao Jojo Ahadzie - Independent 7. Lamin Satou Bojang - ANRD 8. Mai Ahmed Fatty - Gambia Moral Congress (GMC) 9. Mamadi K. S. Camara – Independent 10. Ismaila Ceesay - Citizen Alliance (CA) Party 11. Sheikh Tijan Hydara - Gambia Alliance for National Unity (GANU) 12. Alieu Sowe - GAP 13. Sheikh Matarr Nyang – Independent	6 candidates approved National People's Party (NPP) - Adama Barrow (incumbent) United Democratic Party (UDP) - Ousainou Darboe Gambia Democratic Congress (GDC) - Mama Kandeh People's Democratic Organisation for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS) - Halifa Sallah Independent - Essa Mbaye Faal Independent - Abdoulie Ebrima Jammeh

		14. Papa Faal – Independent 15. DP – Yusupha A. Dumbuya	
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RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)

- The IEC should provide a projection screen outside the nomination tent and an audible PA system to increase transparency of the nomination process.
- The public scrutiny of candidates' nomination documents is a progressive move by the IEC, thus we recommend that the IEC increase the number of time allocated to individuals to vet nomination documents from 5 to 10 minutes. In addition, Gambia Participates recommends that the IEC provide an "usher" who could guide interested citizens to a particular candidate's application documents during the period for public scrutiny.

To Political Parties and Candidates

- Candidates and political parties should intensify calls for a peaceful election, and take action against supporters who are not calm, and do not exercise restraint and tolerance during political campaigns and on their social media platforms.
- Candidates and political parties must raise the flag against risky car rallies and call on their supporters to not overload vehicles.
- Political parties should sensitize their supporters on the importance of respecting the rule of law and democracy and ensure that rallies and campaigns are done within the confines of the law.

To Citizens of the Gambia

- Citizens should abstain from making intimidating comments or perpetrating physical violence during political campaigns.
- Citizens should wear face masks, get vaccinated and hydrate themselves at all times during campaign period because the COVID-19 pandemic is not over and will likely become more dangerous during the campaign period.

- Citizens MUST not sell their voter's card to anyone. Vote buying is an act of electoral fraud and punishable under the laws of The Gambia. Citizens must obtain evidence of those responsible for vote buying and immediately report it to the IEC.
- Citizens should refrain from publishing untrue and uncorroborated information.

To Security Personnel

- Security personnel must continue to provide adequate protection to all candidates without prejudice.
- Security personnel at all times must respect the rights of citizens and abstain from using excessive force against citizens.
- The deployment strategy of security personnel should not inadvertently cause fear amongst citizens during political campaigns.
- Security personnel should at all times discharge their duties impartially and without fear or favor

To Government Authorities

- Public officials must abstain from using public resources (personnel, finance, property, etc.) during political campaigns as mandated by Section 91 of the Elections Act.
- Government officials during working hours must not leave their offices for political activities.
- Government officials must not coerce subordinates into supporting any political party and/or engaging in any form of campaigning within their offices.

To the Media

- Media houses should provide impartial coverage and slots to all candidates
- Rates for political ads must be consistent for all presidential candidates.
- Media houses should verify sensitive information before dissemination and whereas there is a live coverage of political activities where hate speech, inciting of violence and other sensitive are detected, the media should immediately end the live video and delete the video.

To the International Community

- The international community should regularly send messages to candidates and political parties on the significance of respecting the rule of law and holding credible, meaningful polls.

