

Truth, Reconciliation & Reparations Commission (TRRC) Digest

Edition 10



Photo: © Jason Florio
© 2020 ANEKED & The Point Newspaper

Presented by:

The Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) is mandated to investigate and establish an impartial historical record of the nature, causes and extent of violations and abuses of human rights committed during the period of July 1994 to January 2017 and to consider the granting of reparations to victims and for connected matters. It started public hearings on 7th January 2019 and will proceed in chronological order, examining the most serious human rights violations that occurred from 1994 to 2017 during the rule of former President Yahya Jammeh. While the testimonies are widely reported in the press and commented on social media, triggering vivid discussions and questions regarding the current transitional process in the country, a summary of each thematic focus/event and its findings is missing.

The TRRC Digests seek to widen the circle of stakeholders in the transitional justice process in The Gambia by providing Gambians and interested international actors, with a constructive recount of each session, presenting the witnesses and listing the names of the persons mentioned in relation to human rights violations and – as the case may be – their current position within State, regional or international institutions.

Furthermore, the Digests endeavour to highlight trends and patterns of human rights violations and abuses that occurred and as recounted during the TRRC hearings. In doing so, the TRRC Digests provide a necessary record of information and evidence uncovered – and may serve as “checks and balances” at the end of the TRRC’s work.

After each release, the Digests are translated into Fula, Jola, Mandika and Wolof, and transmitted over local radio stations.

#NeverAgain

DISCLAIMER

*The current publication is **NOT** a document emanating from the TRRC. It is produced by ANEKED and The Point Newspaper.*

The information in this publication has been compiled from live testimonies given at the TRRC hearings. Great care has been taken to accurately represent the verbal testimonies, however errors cannot be fully excluded.

Please note that the culpability of any persons mentioned by witnesses can only be established by a competent court.

Discrepancies and conflicting testimonies are highlighted on the next page.



Photo: ©Jason Florio

The coastal town, Essau where many victims of the witch-hunt ordered by Yahya Jammeh were abducted from. Victims were beaten and forced to drink a concoction resulting in severe immediate and long-lasting health problems.

DISCREPANCIES/CONFLICTING TESTIMONIES

Ensa Badjie

Ensa Badjie claimed that when he was Inspector General of Police, he told officers serving under him that promotion within the police was merit-based and they should be loyal to the government. However, Mustapha Ceesay testified that Ensa Badjie had stated on a number of occasions, including in December 2008, that no officer would be promoted unless they were loyal to Yahya Jammeh.

Ensa Badjie told the Commission that he was only made aware of the visit of the witch-hunters to Banjul Police Headquarters on Wednesday 14th January after speaking to Yahya Jammeh in the morning and that he did not attend the morning parade, which Abdou Colley confirmed in his testimony. He also denied that the witch-hunters had visited the offices the previous day (Tuesday 14th January). In his testimony, Ken Mendy also only referred to the witch-hunters visiting on one occasion. However, Mustapha Ceesay vehemently asserted that his recollection of events was correct and that the witch-hunters visited Police Headquarters on two occasions. He explained that upon arrival on Wednesday 14th January, his colleague Inspector Yusupha Saine informed him that after his departure the previous day (Tuesday 13th January), witch-hunters came to their office and recorded all their names. He added that Yusupha Saine further told him that Ensa Badjie had ordered everybody to attend the morning parade on Wednesday 14th January 2009.

Ensa Badjie testified that he did not accompany the witch-hunters when they escorted Kumba Jatta from the parade to his office and confirmed that he was not present when Kumba Jatta's juju were taken off his body. Yet, Abdou Colley testified that Kumba Jatta was not at the morning parade and only two persons were identified there: Mustapha Ceesay and Yahya Darboe. He added that Ensa Badjie led the witch-hunters to Kumba Jatta's office. Mam Jarra Jatta also testified that her father, Kumba Jatta told them

he was sitting in his office at Police Headquarters in Banjul when Ensa Badjie and Regimental Sergeant Major, RSM Abdou Colley came into his office accompanied by the "men in red" and plain clothed officers.

Abdou Colley

Abdou Colley told the Commission that Ensa Badjie was present for the ritual at Police Headquarters during which animals were slaughtered and an oath of allegiance to Yahya Jammeh sworn, but that he (Abdou Colley) and others kept themselves away from the group. However, Mustapha Ceesay testified that junior and senior officers as well as the general men swore an oath of allegiance over the hole with the blood in it.

When asked whether, as a disciplinary officer, he had any role in the punishment of Mustapha Ceesay, Abdou Colley said that in this instance Ensa Badjie made the decision, and no charge sheet was forwarded to him. The Deputy Lead Counsel countered that they had information (from Mustapha Ceesay) he had marched the officers to the orderly room with charges, but Abdou Colley still denied that this took place.

Mustapha Ceesay

Mustapha Ceesay told the Commission that the number of persons identified at the Banjul Police Headquarters as witches was far greater than 10. However, Ken Mendy and Ensa Badjie testified that there were about 10 names recorded on the day the witch-hunters came to the Police Headquarters.

Omar Jawo

Omar Jawo testified that he did not participate in the torture of Lamin Ceesay, which is contrary to Lamin Ceesay's testimony that stated that Omar Jawo together with Saikou Jallow and other soldiers had beaten him with chains, 8 mm rods, pipes and sticks at Fort Bullen during the witch-hunt campaign.

OVERVIEW

The 10th session of the TRRC was the longest so far, with 39 sittings before the Commission. For the first time, the TRRC heard almost as many women as men during the public hearings which were also for the first time, held outside of Banjul in Essau, Jambur and Sibenor. In addition to English, witnesses testified in Mandinka, Wolof, Fula and Manjango; and as in previous sessions, there were issues with the quality of interpretation resulting in some of the testimonies not being accurately translated into English.

The four-week session focused on the witch-hunt campaign ordered by former President Yahya Jammeh and implemented by one of his closest aid, Solo Bojang – a senior member of the Junglers hit squat. This campaign resulted in the persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of hundreds of mainly elderly men and women from various villages in West Coast and North Bank regions as well as of security personnel. The TRRC announced that according to the testimonies received at least 39 of the victims died after their ordeals but it is believed this number to be greater due to the many cases that are yet to be accounted for. All the victims reported suffered severe immediate and long-lasting health problems, in addition to having to face life-time stigma of being accused of witchcraft. One witness reported that a woman was raped during the witch-hunt campaign.

Witnesses testified that the capture and abductions were carried out by Fula men believed to be from Guinea or Mali, who benefited from the assistance of state security as well as Green Boys and Girls, a vigilante group that was mobilised to intimidate citizens on Jammeh's behalf. According to several witnesses, the team of witch-hunters were in some instances assisted by local police officers or the village head (alkalo).

Some of the abducted victims testified to having been driven to a house in Kololi known to be Baba Jobe's compound while others were taken to Kanilai, at a place they believed to be one of former

President Jammeh's houses. In both places, victims were beaten, tortured and subjected to degrading and inhuman conditions in addition to being forced to bathe naked or semi-naked in an unidentified liquid and also made to drink a concoction believed to have been made from kubejara (or kubejaro), a local hallucinogenic plant.

The Commission also heard the testimonies of police officers accused of assisting during the witch-hunt campaign. Most notable was the testimony of former Inspector General of Police, Ensa Badjie who, contrary to what victims stated, denied being a willful participant and deflected all responsibility to Yahya Jammeh. We would like to highlight that at the time of release of this publication, it has been reported that Ensa Badjie has been reinstated into the police force as a police commissioner. The victims of Yahya Jammeh's witch-hunt included people from his own tribe and region, which goes to show that the former dictator was not selective in his abuse and violations against Gambians and non-Gambians.

TRRC Chairman Sise acknowledged that only a fraction of the victims of the witch-hunts gave statements to the TRRC because of the stigmatisation that comes from being branded a witch in Gambian culture and society. He called for a sober reflection by all Gambians, highlighting that the country needs to reform some of its cultural attitudes.

The session saw 44 persons testify including 20 women, most of them victims of the witch-hunt or their relatives, and only a few being alleged perpetrators of human rights abuses and violations. One person testified via video conferencing/Skype.

In the course of the session, the human rights violations reported include:

- Persecution
- Arbitrary arrest and detention
- Torture, as well as inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death
- Rape
- Forced labour

31 persons were mentioned by witnesses in relation to human rights violations committed, namely¹:

Ensa BADJIE (also known as Jesus): Inspector General of Police, IGP, from June 2008 to March 2010. Accused of having participated in the persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment -leading to death in some cases- of security sector officials as well as the unlawful demotion of former police officer Mustapha Ceesay in 2009. Confessed to the unlawful arrest and detention of then Brigadier General Gibril Bojang in 2009. Ensa "Jesus" Badjie was unlawfully sacked in March 2010, arrested, tortured and sentenced to life imprisonment on robbery-related offences. He was pardoned in 2015. According to several media reports, he was reinstated back into the Police Force with the rank of a Police Commissioner in February 2020.

Sankung BADJIE: Assistant Inspector General of Police in 2000. Accused of obstruction of justice during the Commission of Inquiry into the student massacre in 2000.

Korrka BAH: National Intelligence Agency, NIA officer in 2009. Accused of participating in the torture of Ensa "Jesus" Badjie in 2009.

Tamsir BAH: Officer Commanding of Sibanor in 2009. Accused of the arbitrary arrest and detention of Nyima Jarju, her baby and her mother-in-law Fatou Bojang in 2009.

Foday BARRY: Director of Intelligence and Investigation at the National Drug Enforcement Agency, NDEA. Accused of the unlawful arrest and detention of Kebba Jarju, former State House driver.

Kebba Jarju BOJANG: Alkalo of the village Jambur in 2009. Accused of having aided and abetted persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of more than 60 persons in Jambur, leading to death of at least 18 persons.

Solo BOJANG: Soldier in the Gambia National Army, GNA, second in command of the death squad team "the Junglers". He later became Kanilai Farm Manager. Said to be a relative of Yahya Jammeh. Accused by the majority of the witnesses in this session of having overseen and implemented the persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of hundreds of persons, leading in at least 39 deaths during the 2009 "witch-hunt". His name is on the list of wanted persons issued by Gambian authorities in 2018. Last reported to be in Casamance, Senegal.

Omar CHAM: NIA officer in 2009. Accused of leading the torture of Ensa "Jesus" Badjie in 2009.

Abdou COLLEY: Former Police Regimental Sergeant Major, RSM at Banjul Police Headquarters. Accused of participating in the persecution, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of Kumba Jatta in 2009. Police Chief Disciplinary Office at the time of release of this publication.

Laluwa CONTEH: Member of the Green Boys in 2001. Accused of leading the assault of Omar Bojang in 2001.

Salifou CORR: Soldier in the Gambia National Army based in Barra and at Fort Bullen. Accused of participating in the persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment - leading to death in some cases - of residents of Essau and Barra in 2009.

Saikou JALLOW: Former Captain in the Gambia National Army posted at Barra. Said to be a manager of Yahya Jammeh's properties on the North Bank and rumoured to be among the death squad team "the Junglers". Accused of participating in the persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment - leading to death in some cases - of residents of Essau and Barra. Accused of participating in the torture of Lamin Ceesay in 2009 at Fort Bullen. In hiding and warrant issued for his arrest at time of release of this publication.

¹The allegations against individuals listed here are only those that were mentioned in this session. Individuals might have been accused of other crimes in previous sessions. Please check our previous Digests.

Benedict “Ben” JAMMEH: Held several positions in the security sector including Inspector General of Police and Director of NDEA. Accused of conspiracy to provide false evidence against Ensa “Jesus” Badjie. Deceased (2018).

Kebba JAMMEH: Former Police Commissioner. Accused of instructing Omar Jawo to comply with the witch-hunters in 2009. Deceased.

Yahya JAMMEH: Chairman of the AFPRC, later APRC, and President of The Gambia until December 2016. Accused of ordering the persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of hundreds of persons, leading in at least 39 deaths during the 2009 “witch-hunt”; accused of having organised forced labour in his home village Kanilai; accused of ordering the unlawful arrest and detention of then Brigadier General Gibril Bojang in 2009; accused of conspiracy to provide false evidence against Ensa “Jesus” Badjie and of ordering his arrest, detention and torture in 2009. He was also accused by one witness of drug trafficking. In exile in Equatorial Guinea at the time of mention.

Dembo JARJU: Said to be a soldier from Makumbaya village. Accused of participating in the persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of residents of Makumbaya in 2009.

Kebba JARJU: Former driver at State House. Said to have confessed to disposing of bodies of persons killed. Accused of conspiracy to provide false evidence against Ensa “Jesus” Badjie.

Ousman JARJU: Serving in the Police Intervention Unit, PIU in 2009. Accused of being part of the team transporting victims from Sintet to Kanilai (including his mother Samsa Kamerah) that were subsequently detained and subjected to torture, inhuman and degrading treatment- leading to the death of some- in 2009.

Yahya JATTA²: Accused of the unlawful arrest and detention of Kebba Jarju, former State House driver.

Omar JAWO: Former Officer Commanding of Barra Police Station. Confessed to participating in the persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of residents of Barra and Essau in 2009. Accused of torturing Lamin Ceesay in 2009. Retired at the time of release of this publication.

Edrisa “Alagie Morr” JOBE: Former NIA officer and later head of the NDEA Intelligence Unit. Accused of the unlawful arrest and detention of Sirra Jallow, Momodou Jallow and Pulo Jallow in 2009. Reported to be in Scotland at the time of release of this publication.

Numo KUJABI: Former Director of the NIA. Accused of the unlawful arrest and detention of Ensa “Jesus” Badjie in 2009. Deceased (2014).

Sulayman “Solomon” MANGA: Accused of participating in the persecution, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of residents of Sintet in 2008 and 2009 along Solo Bojang and Tambajiro.

Pa Habibou MBYE: Former Crime Management Coordinator at the NDEA. Accused of conspiracy to provide false evidence against Ensa “Jesus” Badjie.

Paul MENDY: Former Member of Parliament for Kombo South. Accused of ordering the arbitrary detention of Omar Bojang in 2006. Deceased (2013).

Pa Wally NJIE: Sergeant at Barra Police Station. Accused of the arbitrary arrest and detention of Alhagie Bubacarr Faye in 2009.

Bukarr SALLAH³: NIA officer. Accused of participating in the torture of Ensa “Jesus” Badjie in 2009.

Ousman SONKO: Former Inspector General of Police and Minister of Interior (2000-2016). Accused of aiding and abetting the persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading

²Said to be the brother of former Jungler Malick Jatta and former Chief of Defence Staff Baboucarr Jatta.

³Referred to as Babucarr Sallah as well in the press.

treatment of persons in 2009. He was the superior of Ensa “Jesus” Badjie who was accused of having participated in the persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment - leading to death in some cases - of security sector officials as well as the unlawful demotion of former police officer Mustapha Ceesay in 2009. Detained in Switzerland and under investigation by Swiss authorities for crimes against humanity, including rape at the time of release of this publication.

Lamin SOWE: Accused of participating in the persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of persons in 2009. Accused of being one of the men in charge at Baba Jobe’s compound in Kololi where numerous victims were detained and forced to drink a hallucinogenic concoction, which had immediate as well as long-lasting severe health implications on the victims, leading to the death of some.

Gaye SOWE: Crime Management Coordinator at the Gambia Police Force in 2000. Accused of obstruction of justice during the Commission of Inquiry into the student massacre in 2000.

(First name unknown) TAMBAJIRO: Named by several witnesses as being the leader of the witch-hunters and responsible for the persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of hundreds of persons, leading in at least 39 deaths during the 2009 “witch-hunt”.

5

TYPES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS



persecution



rape



arbitrary arrest/detention



torture, as well as inhuman and degrading treatment



forced labour

31

PERSONS MENTIONED

in relation to human rights violations committed



PLACES

ONE OF YAHYA JAMMEH'S RESIDENCES IN KANILAI BABA JOBE'S COMPOUND MILE 2 PRISON
NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY ESSAU JAMBUR SIBANOR POLICE STATION FORT BULLEN
MAKUMBAYA BARRA BANJUL POLICE HEADQUARTERS HOLGAM DETENTION CENTER

44

PERSONS TESTIFIED

40 Victims and their relatives (including 20 women)

3 Perpetrators of human rights abuses and violations

1 Witness



5 ENGLISH SPEAKERS

25 MANDINKA SPEAKERS

5 FULA SPEAKERS

1 MANJANGO SPEAKER

8 WOLOF SPEAKERS



WITNESS NAME: Abdou COLLEY

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 11th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt at Banjul Police Headquarters

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): RSM at Banjul Police Headquarters

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Police RSM and witness to the witch-hunting

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Police Chief Disciplinary Office

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Abdou Colley began his testimony by detailing his background studying Arabic in northern Senegal, then returning to Gambia and rising up the ranks of the police force. In 2009, he was the Regimental Sergeant Major, RSM at Police Headquarters in Banjul in charge of the discipline, punctuality, and obedience of the police officers. Every morning he would call a parade, at which information from the high command would be disseminated to the police.

The witness testified that in 2009 – he could not remember the date - something unusual happened at the Police Headquarters. Abdou Colley testified that between 10 am and 12 pm a group of around six people claiming to be marabouts came into the Police Headquarters. They were dressed in red with mirrors sown into their hats and cowrie shells on their clothes. They were also carrying

cow horns and pieces of cow tails in their hands. The witness testified that they spoke in Mandinka and Jola, and did not appear to be Gambian, adding “if you are not very strong in heart you would be scared and you would probably jump out the window”.

The marabouts were accompanied by the then Inspector General of Police, IGP, Ensa Badjie and a group of soldiers.

Upon further questioning from the Deputy Lead Counsel, the witness said the only soldier he recognised was Solo Bojang⁴, who he believed was close to then-President Yahya Jammeh. He also told the Commission that it was then IGP Ensa Badjie who had given the marabout the permission to enter the headquarters.

He told the Commission that the marabouts were going from office to office creating confusion. He found the group and accompanied them from office to office. He testified that in each office they would ask people to stand up and go around the four corners of the office with their mirrors and their horns. When they did not find what they were looking for, they would move to the next office. The witness testified that they searched his office, but did not find what they were looking for. At first, the witness said he did not know what they were looking for, but under further questioning he testified that he heard from others that they were coming to look for witches.

After searching every office in the three-story building, then IGP Ensa Badjie asked the witness to blow the whistle to call a parade to pinpoint those who had been identified. As the parade was taking its form, the marabouts were singing in low voices in the Jola language, and the men dressed in green⁵ were beating drums they had brought with them.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness to define a witch or wizard. The witness responded that he does not believe in witchcraft. However, if it does

⁴The witness first identified him as Solo Jibba but under further questioning clarified that it was Solo Bojang.

⁵Probably referring to the Green Boys.

exist, he told the Commission it would be better for the person to die rather than live because witchcraft is an embarrassment and not acceptable by Sharia.

Upon questioning from the Deputy Lead Counsel, the witness said that he did not know where the order to dispatch the marabouts came from, but IGP Ensa Badjie was answerable to then-Minister of Interior Ousman Sonko, who was directly answerable to Yahya Jammeh.

After the parade formed, Ensa Badjie addressed the assembled men and told them that they had come to identify witches and wizards.

The marabouts then went from soldier to soldier. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness to demonstrate, and the witness walked up the audience and pointed with the knuckle of his left hand, and put his right hand up in a stop motion. He said they would first point the horn, then hold up the mirror to the person. If the person was chosen then they would be told to fall out of the parade. They did this until they identified two individuals: Yahya Darboe and Mustapha Ceesay.

According to the witness, Yahya Darboe was a chief superintendent in the police force in charge of personnel, and is still in the police force as chief of operations on the north bank. Mustapha Ceesay was a sergeant under the plainclothes division.

Abdou Colley told the Commission that a third man, Superintendent and Assistant Commissioner for Banjul Kumba Jatta, was also identified by the marabouts. When asked why Kumba Jatta was not at the parade, the witness responded that he believes it is because Kumba Jatta, who was in his late 50s, was ill and could not participate.

The witness continued that then IGP Ensa Badjie led the marabouts to the office of Kumba Jatta. Abdou Colley told the Commission he thought that Kumba Jatta was specifically targeted because it was known that he was "covered in charms". When the men arrived at Kumba

Jatta's office, they pointed their cow horns and mirrors at him and asked him to stand. The marabouts told Kumba Jatta to remove his talismans, which they began putting in a bag. They then asked him to remove his shirt and all the talismans he wore under his clothes. According to the witness, he had so many talismans they could fill a large rice sack.

After they took Kumba Jatta's talismans, the marabouts returned to the parade grounds. They then went to a palm tree behind the grounds where a goat and a cock were tied up. They dug a hole, and killed the two animals, burying their blood in the hole. The witness told the Commission that IGP Ensa Badjie was present for the ritual, but that he (the witness) was around one kilometer away in an effort to separate himself from the group. The Deputy Lead Counsel challenged him on this point, but the witness maintained that he and others kept themselves away from Ensa Badjie and the marabouts.

The Deputy Lead Counsel later told the witness that they had information that junior and senior officers as well as the general men swore an oath of allegiance over the hole with the blood in it. The witness responded that he did not see that.

After the blood was buried, Ensa Badjie ordered that those who had been identified report to the marabouts. The witness stated that the IGP told the men that anyone who did not report would be charged and dismissed from the service.

The witness then added that he did not know why the witch-hunt happened or why Ensa Badjie or Solo Bojang took part. He did say that Solo Bojang was often present for gatherings, especially if Yahya Jammeh was attending, adding he did not know if Solo Bojang could have been there without Yahya Jammeh's authorisation.

The witness continued that those identified were ordered to go to a place he did not know in Kotu. Only Kumba Jatta ever went to the location, Yahya Darboe and Mustapha Ceesay did not report as ordered.

Under further questioning from the Deputy Lead Counsel, the witness said that he heard that at that location they were given something to drink⁶.

Abdou Colley testified that when Kumba Jatta returned to work after drinking the concoction his body was weak.

The witness later revised his testimony to add that before drinking the concoction, Kumba Jatta had appeared physically strong and healthy.

The witness said that Yahya Darboe was neither charged nor punished, but Mustapha Ceesay was transferred from Police Headquarters to Fatoto. He claimed he did not know why Yahya Darboe was not charged, and confirmed that Mustapha Ceesay's transfer to Fatoto, on the eastern-most edge of The Gambia, was a form of punishment. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if Mustapha Ceesay was also demoted. The witness claimed he did not know, to which the Deputy Lead Counsel replied that he was.

When asked whether, as a disciplinary officer, he had any role in the punishment of Mustapha Ceesay, he said that in this instance Ensa Badjie made the decision, and no charge sheet was forwarded to him. The Deputy Lead Counsel countered that they had information that the witness marched the officers to the orderly room with charges, but the witness denied that this took place.

Upon questioning the witness said that he did not receive information of similar events taking place outside headquarters or in other branches of the security forces. He told the Commission he was unaware of other witch-hunting exercises in the country. After more questioning, he did acknowledge that civilians were aware of the witch-hunting. After significant questioning, the witness said he was only aware of events at his office and his household and could not speak to other witch-hunting activities outside of these two spheres.

In his concluding remarks, the witness told the Commission that the TRRC was waking up The Gambia

and making it possible for civil servants and junior workers to speak about what happened in the past. He said if Gambians unite as one and tell each other the truth, they will have peace.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Yahya Jammeh, Ousman Sonko, Ensa Badjie, Solo Bojang

When asked if he would like to revise any parts of his testimony given that others might contradict him in the future, Abdou Colley replied that everything he had said was the truth.

⁶Later in the testimony the translator specified he used a Wolof word meaning “a drink which is intended to cleanse”.

WITNESS NAME: Ken MENDY

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 11th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt at the Banjul Police Headquarters

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Superintendent of the Registry of Police

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Ordered by the then Inspector General of Police, Ensa Badjie to accompany the witch-hunters and write down the names of people who were accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Deputy to the Regional Commissioner of the West Coast Region

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Chairman Lamin Ceesay opened the hearing by asking everyone to take a moment to remember the early victims of atrocities and then to everyone who was victimised by twenty-two years of brutal dictatorship in The Gambia. He asked for prayers from religious leaders for all the victims of the dictatorship, after which the Commission proceeded with the testimony from Ken Mendy.

The witness told the Commission that after completing senior secondary school in November 1993, he joined the Gambian Police Force as a recruit and proceeded to give a history of his career with the force. Ken Mendy explained that his initial training took him five months to complete and afterward, he got his first posting under relief to Banjul Police Station from May 1994 to 1996. In 1997- 2000, he was then posted to the Registry Office of Police Headquarters as a record clerk. In 2000, he was promoted to the rank of corporal and then, from 2001 to 2010, he was placed in the same office as the, man in charge of the registry.

The witness stated that at the registry office, with his officers, they were responsible for managing incoming correspondence with the Office of the Inspector General of Police. He added that during that time, he received a series of promotions: in 2002 he was promoted to sergeant, then to the rank of inspector in 2004, in 2006 he was promoted to the rank of assistant superintendent



of police, then in 2008 to superintendent, in 2010 he became chief superintendent, and in 2015 he went on to become assistant commissioner. Ken Mendy testified that as assistant commissioner, he was assigned to the district of MansaKonko. Thereafter, from November 2017 to March 2018 he was redeployed to Police Headquarters as the assistant to the commissioner of operations. From March 2018 to the time of the testimony, he stated that he was posted to the West Coast Region as the deputy to the regional police commissioner.

The Counsel then returned to the events of 2009 that took place when Ken Mendy was superintendent of the Registry of Police. The Counsel asked him what his daily activities were like at the registry at that time and Ken Mendy explained that his office was charged with receiving all correspondence addressed to the Office of the Inspector General of Police as well as sending messages from the then Inspector General to action officers within Police Headquarters. In the mornings, Ken Mendy would often deal with urgent correspondence while most other officers were attending the morning parade. Thus, as a result of his work he was usually exempted from early morning parade duties.

When the Counsel went on to ask Ken Mendy if he had been around to witness a certain incident that took place during the morning parade one day in 2009, Ken Mendy explained that on that day, between 8:30 and 10:00 in the morning, while he was in his office, the then Inspector General, Ensa Badjie, called him to his office without explanation. He added that much

to his surprise, when he (the witness) arrived at the office, he found that Ensa Badjie was accompanied by four to five men dressed in traditional chaya trousers, some shirtless, and carrying ritual objects including drums, a mirror plate surrounded by red cloth, a small calabash, and a horn decorated with pieces of red cloth. Aside from the strange men, Ken Mendy remembered that the only other people present in the office were himself, Ensa Badjie, and then Police Commissioner Edu Sambou⁷.

Mr. Mendy commented that he had never seen something like this at Police Headquarters before. Continuing on with his testimony, he stated that when he arrived at the Office of the Inspector General, the man with the mirror plate pointed it at him while looking down at the mirror. The man instructed Ken Mendy to come towards him and as Ken Mendy did so the man with the mirror plate moved slowly backwards, looking at him through the mirror. Ken Mendy told the Commission that he had the feeling that they were searching him and after the inspection ended, the men told the then Inspector General that Ken Mendy had “nothing on him” and that he was a “good man”.

The witness said that the then Inspector General did not participate in the ritual and only observed it, again, explaining nothing. When the men told the then Inspector General that he (Ken Mendy) was okay, they continued to his office and performed the same ritual there, this time accusing Ken Mendy’s secretary, Fatou Njie. The witch-hunters told him that she had a sickness in her. He further explained that after this occurred, Inspector General Ensa Badjie instructed him to copy down the names of anyone the men accused of witchcraft and ordered him to follow the group as they continued on to other offices. He stated that it was at this moment that he first realised that then strange men were, in fact, witch-hunters.

Further testifying, the witness told the Commission that they next went to the personnel office where the witch-hunters began beating their drums, dancing, and chanting while using the mirror to inspect the office. They accused Yahya Darboe of being a witch. Ken Mendy explained that whilst this was happening, the then Inspector General watched the men perform their ritual inspections and when they accused anyone of witchcraft, he would instruct

Ken Mendy to write down that person’s name. He added that the witch-hunters communicated in Pular while someone translated in Mandinka.

After accusing Yahya Darboe, they left the personnel office and went upstairs to the IT unit at the third floor where they continued drumming and chanting and accused Mustapha Ceesay and Yusupha Saine of being alleged witches.

The witness recalled that with each accusation, they used the ritual horn to point out the person accused of witchcraft. After, they continued to the police advisor’s office where they leveled accusations against FRI Jammeh. He stated that next, they went downstairs to Kumba Jatta’s office where they continued to beat their drums and use their ceremonial objects, accusing Kumba Jatta of being a wizard as well. From there, the entourage went with the accused to the parade grounds where they forced Kumba Jatta to remove his shirt and several juju charms that he kept in his pockets and around his waist. Kumba Jatta appeared upset but did not react as his charms were being taken away.

The witness explained that the witch-hunters continued on to accuse then Commissioner Pa Silver and then proceeded to the parade grounds where Ensa Badjie assembled the senior security officers. After listening to his story, the Counsel asked Ken Mendy if any armed men had accompanied the witch-hunters adding that they had evidence of this from other sources. Mr. Mendy responded by saying that although the Commission may have evidence to that effect, if the armed men were there that day he was too focused on what was happening in his group to notice them.

Continuing on with his testimony, the witness recalled that at the parade ground, the witch-hunters furthered their search for witches in much the same way as

⁷Full name is Edward Sambou but most commonly known as Edu Sambou.

before with drumming, chanting, and dancing, using the mirror plate to inspect the police officers. The witness noted that the mood in the parade ground was dark because the police officers had never been subjected to anything like this before.

At the parade grounds, the witch-hunters slaughtered a cock at a palm tree and afterward Ensa Badjie made the senior police officers line up, approach the slaughtered cock, and swear their loyalty to the President at the site where the sacrifice had been made.

The witness remarked that at that moment, no senior officers made any comments on what was happening and none of them refused to participate. Mr. Mendy could not recall what, if anything, was said by the accused individuals during this time. He estimated that he was asked to write down the names of ten or more people who were accused by the witch-hunters. In the parade ground, after the ritual sacrifice of the rooster, Ensa Badjie instructed all the people who had been accused of witchcraft to stay at the parade ground and for everyone else to go back to their regular posts.

At this point, the Counsel asked Ken Mendy if he was aware of evidence that Solo Bojang was present that day with the Green Boys to which Ken Mendy replied that he was not aware. Going back to his testimony, he stated that after dismissing everyone but the accused, Ensa Badjie told them that they would be taken somewhere to be bathed and given something to drink. When they were given this order, Mustapha Ceesay and Yahya Darboe said that they would refuse to go no matter what the cost. The witness told the Commission that Ensa Badjie warned them that they would be dismissed from their posts if they refused to go but Yahya Darboe and Mustapha Ceesay did not change their minds. According to the witness, the others were taken to either Kololi or Kotu. The Counsel asked Mr. Mendy if he knew where

the then Inspector General got his orders from and he responded that he was unsure. Asked if, in his opinion, the senior officers swore their allegiance to Yahya Jammeh willingly or not, Ken Mendy responded that he believed that they swore allegiance against their will. He went on to affirm, once again, that what took place that day was not part of their regular duties.

Ken Mendy then went on to narrate that a few days later, Mustapha Cessay was marched to Ensa Badjie's office, an event that was not witnessed by Ken Mendy but that he had heard of. Although Ken Mendy worked in the registry and did not see exactly what charges had been leveled against Mr. Ceesay, he had heard that he was punished with a demotion. Ken Mendy believes that Mustapha Ceesay was charged because he refused to board the truck. Yahya Darboe however, who also refused to get in the vehicle, was not charged. Asked what had happened to the list of alleged witches, the witness explained that he gave the list to Ensa Badjie following request for it.

The witness stated that ultimately, he believed that the list of those who were accused of witchcraft was not filed anywhere at all. The Counsel asked Mr. Mendy what had happened to the people who were asked to get in the vehicle and he replied that they were taken away to be bathed and given something to drink.

When asked by the Counsel to speak to the consequences of the witch-hunt, Ken Mendy said that he believed that Kumba Jatta lost his dignity and social standing because of the stigma associated with the accusation of witchcraft.

He also explained that he believed that the other officers sympathised with the men who were accused of witchcraft but that they could do nothing to help or show support for the accused. The Counsel

asked if Ken Mendy or the other officers believed in the accusations and the ceremonies that were held by the witch-hunters and Mr. Mendy said that he did not believe in the rituals or the accusations but it is possible that some of the other officers did. When Ken Mendy encountered Pa Silver, Yusapha Saine, and FRI Jammeh, he could not tell how they were doing physically but he said that he believes the accusations caused them psychological damage.

When asked once again, if he knew where the orders to bring witch-hunters to Police Headquarters came from, Ken Mendy responded that he did not, asserting that it would be better to ask the then Inspector General of Police, Ensa Badjie. The Counsel also asked if it would be a normal part of the duties of the then Inspector General of Police to order witch-hunting exercises and Mr. Mendy reiterated that it is not a normal part of the inspector general's duties.

The Counsel asked who the then Inspector General usually took orders from and Ken Mendy informed them that it was normal for the Inspector General to take orders from the head of state, at the time President Yahya Jammeh. Mr. Mendy added that he had heard that there were other incidents of witch-hunting in Barra, Njambour, and the Fonis. Mr. Mendy said that it was possible that other witch-hunting activities took place in other public institutions but he could only speak to what happened at Police Headquarters.

When asked if he heard about who conducted the witch-hunting exercises and if they were accompanied by security forces or any other officials, and who gave the order for the witch-hunting exercises, the witness affirmed that he did not know if anyone else was present at the witch-hunt. Ken Mendy added that although he did not know if Yahya Jammeh gave the orders for the witch-hunting exercises, he did know that *if* the then President did give such orders that no one would have been able to oppose them.

The Counsel thanked the witness for his testimony and handed the witness over to Chairman Sise. Chairman Sise spoke to how shocked he was to hear of these

kinds of things happening in The Gambia. Imam Sey asked the witness if the people who were accused of witchcraft were "detractors" of Yahya Jammeh and he replied that although it may look that way to the Imam, that he would not be telling the truth if he agreed that accusations of witchcraft were only being directed at Yahya Jammeh's detractors.

In his concluding remarks, the witness thanked the Commission for the opportunity to come and testify. He challenged all Gambians to testify before the Commission if they were witnesses to or victims of crimes and abuses. He went on to say that the Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission reveals the truth and that Gambians need to change their attitude to respect the rule of law. He addressed his fellow police officers by saying that they should only act within their legal duties and boundaries.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Ensa Badjie



WITNESS NAME: Mustapha CEESAY

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 12th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt at the Banjul Police Headquarters and the witness' investigation about that witch-hunting campaign; the witness being accused of witchcraft, his victimisation and the impact it had on him and his family

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft and documented the witch-hunt

POSITION AT THE TIME OF EVENT (S): Sergeant (Police)

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Residing in the U.S., Studying criminal justice management

[The witness testified via skype and there were some technical issues at times]

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Mustapha Ceesay gave the Commission an overview of his academic background, which included different courses such as police command and leadership as well as investigations. In 1997, he enlisted with the Gambia Fire Service and joined the Gambia Police Force in 2004. He was first deployed to the Police Intervention Unit, PIU and then (still in 2004) to the Serrekunda Police Station and then (2005) to the Police Headquarters.

The witness described his different posts until he became acting Inspector General of Police, IGP. He added that he remained in that role until December 2006 and was then redeployed to the office of the Commissioner of Administration. In 2007, he joined the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Sudan as a police adviser and returned to The

Gambia in December 2008. He then explained how he resumed work within the police force.

The witness was asked to list the different IGP over the years, which he did. He cited Landing "Thirteen" Badjie (2004 until his dismissal, **arrest** and **detention** in February 2005)⁸, Ousman Sonko (until the September 2006 elections). When Ousman Sonko was appointed Minister of Interior, Ousman Sanneh (now late) became acting IGP until Musa Mboob was appointed in November 2006. He was fired a few months later and around mid-2007, Ben (Benedict) Jammeh became the IGP until mid-2008, when Ensa Badjie called Jesus was appointed. The witness said that Ensa Badjie remained IGP until he, the witness, left the police (in 2009). Mustapha Ceesay confirmed that in a span of a very short period of time, he served under numerous different IGPs.

The witness explained that he knew Ensa Badjie from before, as he had worked under him in 2004-2005 at the Serrekunda Police Station. He noted that he started having concerns about Ensa Badjie, in August 2008, when he, Badjie, addressed returning peacekeepers from Darfur and made statements, that the witness considered to be very worrying.

Ensa Badjie said that no peacekeeper was going to be extended during his time as the IGP but the concerning part of the speech was that he mentioned that while serving as the IGP, promotions within the police would be done based entirely on loyalty to President Yahya Jammeh.

Asked how he heard about the address made in August 2008, since he was in Sudan at the time, the witness explained that Ensa Badjie's statement had been recorded by officers who were present but also published in The Daily Observer Newspaper. He remembered reading it on the online platform AllAfrica.com on 12 August 2008.

⁸At the end of his testimony, the witness explained that Landing "Thirteen" Badjie was arrested and detained because he was investigating the murder of Deyda Hydara in December 2004.

The Deputy Lead Counsel noted that he did provide the Commission with a link but that they could not download the article. So, she could not read it ahead of his testimony. She then asked him to give more details about a statement made by Ensa Badjie in December 2008. The witness said that Ensa Badjie made this statement in Kanilai when the security was there to harvest the Yahya Jammeh's farms.

In his address to the security forces, Ensa Badjie said that no officer will be promoted “unless you are loyal to the President, Yahya Jammeh”.

Mustapha Ceesay explained that he had found that very insulting and noted that this statement was reported in some news channels, including if he remembered well by the Point Newspaper.

The Deputy Lead Counsel said that she would now quote an article that had been posted on All Africa, whose authors were Hatab Fadera and Assan Sallah and that was dated stated Monday 1st December 2008. The title of the article was “*IGP calls for loyalty to prezzy and the nation*”, and quoted “*We in the security services have realised that we are public servants of this country in which loyalty is unquestionable.*” (...) “*If you are not loyal to the president and his government of the day, you have no room within my force because I will make sure that you are out of the police force*”. She explained that the next paragraph talked about a recent donation from the President: 14 brown new pickups to the police force. The article went on by quoting Ensa Badjie saying: “*So if President Jammeh is dying for us, we should also die for him.*” The Deputy Lead Counsel noted that these statements were attributed to IGP Ensa Badjie.

Asked about his opinion, Mustapha Ceesay started by saying that security forces should not have been sent to work for the President on his farms in the first place. But at the time, if one did not go to work at the President's farms, you were considered not loyal. He however always refused to step foot in Kanilai. He explained that he had

joined the Gambia Police Force to serve the Gambian people, provide them with safety, security as well as to protect their lives and properties. He did not join the security forces to work on anyone's farm. He noted that while he was serving in the PIU in July 2004, he should have been deployed to Kanilai on one occasion.

Before the departure to Kanilai, officers were given packets of condoms. He explained that he considered this to be “**very insulting**” and immediately came out of the ranks and said he was not going to **Kanilai**.

He surrendered his weapons and went into the next-door mosque, opened the microphone and started preaching about the consequences of such dangerous actions. He asked why one would distribute condoms to officers who were being deployed supposedly to go and maintain law and order. He added that he was subsequently charged but that the charges never went through. He noted that the entire PIU witnessed this and after the incident he was transferred from the PIU. He reiterated that he did not go to Kanilai because they were distributing condoms and that he did not want to be part of that. He then quoted a verse in the Quran which says: help each other in good and piety, but do not help each other in transgression and sin.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked Mustapha Ceesay if that was the only occasion where he witnessed such a distribution of condoms to officers prior to their deployment to Kanilai. The witness said yes, but noted that it was also the only time he had been selected to be deployed there. The Deputy Lead Counsel said that the Commission was hoping to give Ensa Badjie an opportunity to respond to the allegations made in the article regarding his statement and the oath of office that police officers take⁹.

⁹Ensa Badjie testified the next day, on 13th November 2019.

The witness was then asked to recount the conversation he had with IGP Ensa Badjie upon his (the witness') return from the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Sudan in December 2008. Mustapha Ceesay explained that during that first meeting, he was told to take some time off and come back to work on the 30th December 2008. Several persons were present at that meeting, these were the Deputy IGP Modou Gaye, Yankuba Sonko (Minister of Interior at the time of this testimony), former Deputy IGP and his Contingent Commander Modou Sowe, former Deputy Fire Officer Sainey Sangyang, Superintendent Aziz Bojang and Superintendent Ousman Cham.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if during the conversation, the IGP mentioned a possible promotion. The witness responded that Ensa Badjie told him that he would promote him as an officer, possibly assistant superintendent, ASP, based at headquarters. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if at any point, there was any discussions about loyalty including loyal to the President or the nation, to which the witness responded that this never came up. The witness explained that he resumed work on 30th December 2008, noting that his posting was not finalised at the time. So, he was based at the IT unit, with a temporary posting, pending his final posting to a specific unit.

Moving on the year 2009, the witness recounted how on 13th January 2009, around midday he left to office to go to Brikama and only returned to work the following day, which was Wednesday 14th January. The witness explained that upon arrival, around 7.30 am, his colleague Inspector Yusupha Saine informed him that after his departure the previous day, some persons, claiming that they were witch-hunters, came to their office and recorded all their names. Yusupha Saine further told the witness that IGP Ensa Badjie had ordered everybody to attend the morning parade on Wednesday 14th January 2009. After a lengthy exchange, it was established that the purpose of that order was to ensure everybody attended the parade with no excuse.

The morning parade took place at 8 am sharp. After about 10-15 minutes later, the IGP, after his usual briefing, informed them that President Yahya Jammeh had sent

some people to headquarters the day before to screen officers (to find out if they were witches) and also to ensure they were all loyal to him.

Ensa Badjie told them that at 10 am everybody was to come back to the parade ground, as the witch-hunters would be back when these people were to return and everybody would be screened and asked to swear allegiance to the President.

The witness recalled that Ensa Badjie said that this was an executive order and whoever would not comply would be dismissed from the Police Force. The Deputy Lead Counsel told the witness that she was sure that he had heard the testimony of Abdou Colley who was the RSM at the time and who was responsible for calling these morning parades. In his testimony to the TRRC, he said that the IGP was not present at the first morning parade.

Mustapha Ceesay confirmed that he had listened to the testimony of Abdou Colley but that his statement was not correct. According to the witness, IGP Ensa Badjie was at the parade ground and he personally made the announcement. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if his testimony was that after the RSM Abdou Colley assembled the parade, he handed over to the IGP who made these statements and then the parade ended. The witness confirmed that this is what he had said. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked about the rank of the witness at the time. He responded that he was a sergeant, a rank he received in 2007.

The witness explained that by 10 am, RSM Abdou Colley blew the whistle calling everybody in but instead of going down, he, the witness went to his office. After about five minutes, he heard him walking down the corridor knocking office by office to make sure everyone went to the parade. Asked to explain why he did not go down immediately when he heard the signal,

Mustapha Ceesay explained that he felt that what was going on was satanic and he did not want to get himself involved.

But at the same time, he did not want to hide either. That is the reason, why he went to his office and waited to be told personally to go down.

He further said that when they went down to the parade ground, they formed up as usual, according to their ranks. He added that the gardeners and the cleaners were also present concluding that “technically, whoever worked at the headquarters was at the parade ground”. While they were forming up, the parade ground was surrounded by four or five armed military officers from the State Guard and about 20-30 Greens Boys and Girls wearing caps which had Kanilai Farms written of them, amongst them were five drummers. He noted that he also saw five men who were dressed in red from head to toe further away. They had cowry shells, mirrors and all sorts of things on their body. Several plain clothe officers and few military officers standing with them.

When asked if he recognised anyone amongst all these persons, the witness answered that he saw Solo Bojang standing with the witch-doctors (he later specified that Solo Bojang was wearing civilian clothes as opposed to the State Guards members). He explained that he knew who Solo Bojang was because he used to come to the Police Headquarters and that he was part of the President’s security personnel. The witness noted that he did not know what his specific role was, but anytime he came to the headquarters to see the witness’ boss (the Deputy IGP), he was doing errands for the President. The witness explained that at these occasions, they used to sit down and talk about matters related to the President or about other things. He was asked if he could give them examples of the kind of matters discussed and specify if those were state security issues.

Mustapha Ceesay remembered one case in which Solo Bojang had come to speak to the acting IGP. It concerned an officer called Colley who was also the Alkalo of Jabang

and who was opposing the purchase of some land in the area by a businessman called Julakay.

The witness said he heard Solo Bojang telling his boss that they must warn Colley to stay away from that land.

A few days later, Julakay himself came to the office and discussed the matter with his boss. He remembered being instructed by the Deputy IGP to write a letter cautioning Colley to stay away from that land. He highlighted that he remembered the “incident vividly” and noted that Colley was called into the office and he was cautioned in his presence.

Asked to describe the attire of the men in red more specifically, the witness said that their leader had a cow tail and a round plate of about 30 centimeters diameter with a mirror in the middle, and small cowry shells and small mirrors all over it. They had some patches of different things on their breasts. The Deputy Lead Counsel then asked him about the plain clothed military officers. The witness said they were from State Guard. He highlighted that working in the security force, it was easy to identify plain clothed officers because they were usually wearing their armour and carrying their personal weapon on their side.

When asked if apart from all the persons he had already mentioned, others were present, the witness said that there were some civilians who were standing next to the entrance of Drug Squad who had come to the Police Headquarters to look for their paperwork. But because the entire Police Headquarters was at standstill, they were asked to go and stand there. Among them, he recognised Lawyer Edu Gomez.

The Deputy Lead Counsel said before moving on to what happened during the second parade, she would refer him to the pictures that he had provided and also give copies to the Commissioners. Before

displaying the photos, she asked the witness in which circumstances he took them. The witness responded that when “all this” was unfolding, he took pictures with his mobile phone because he knew that there would be trouble and he wanted to back himself up. He noted that he was not able to take good pictures while at the parade, so immediately after the witch-hunters left the headquarters, he ran and hid on the balcony on the second floor of the building just above the main entrance where their vehicles were parked.

The witness noted that the only photo he took while the parade was going on was when the officers were asked to line up to go and give their oath of allegiance to the President. He then realised that it was not safe. A first picture provided by the witness which said “Witch Doctor” was then shown.



The witness said the person on the left was the leader of the witch-doctors. He was the one who would run in the middle of people. He would walk a few steps, then randomly stop and point his cow tail to someone, indicating where that person had to go. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness if he recalled what was on the man’s hat. The witness said the hat had some tails, he did not know from which animal as well as some cowry shells and mirrors. It had some blue patches on it as well. The Deputy Lead Counsel told him he had mentioned a

mirror that was in the form of a plate. She asked if that was the one that they were looking at in the photo, to which the witness responded yes. Asked to describe the object further, he said that in the middle there was one mirror and smaller mirrors on the side with cowry shells around them. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness to describe the rest of the leader’s outfit and the witness explained that all kinds of things were hanging (from his belt), including animal skins and tails.

Mustapha Ceesay said that the second individual on the photo was also part of the group and while he did not know what his specific role was, he was always with the Witch Doctor except when he was running. When the Witch Doctor stopped, the other man would join him. The witness was asked if there were any items hanging on his clothing. The witness said he had some beads, which in Mandinka are called ‘Konongo.’ The witness highlighted that he was wearing a Kanilai Farm hat.

A second photograph was shown, which said “Witch Doctor 1” and that portraited the two same individuals, but this time standing next to a blue pick-up, a vehicle belonging to the State House. In the picture, there were individuals dressed in green and the witness confirmed that those were the “Green Boys” that he had been mentioning earlier. He added that the officer standing behind the two men was Sergeant Badjie, who used to drive the commissioner of operations. He noted that he did not know if he was still in the police force (he later specified that Badjie was not escorting the witch-hunters).

The Deputy Lead Counsel noted that the witch-hunters were using State vehicles for their missions.

The witness was asked if he recalled what was written at the back of that t-shirt of the leader of the witch-hunters. The witness said it is written in French, he remembered Guinea but because there was a tail that covers part of the writing, he could

not remember what was written, but it seemed to have been “Guinea Conakry” written in French. He was asked if he knew where these witch doctors came from and if so, how he found out. The witness answered that he later understood that they came from Guinea Conakry and explained that he had done research on the matter and had spoken to different people who had been close to them.

Mustapha Ceesay explained that he came to understand that President Yahya Jammeh brought them from Guinea following the death of his aunt and of two of his close personal protection officers Musa Jammeh and Tumbul Tamba, amongst others. He also remembered having heard IGP “Jesus” Ensa Badjie specifically saying that the President brought them from Guinea at the parade as he was talking to other officers. The witness recounted how Ensa Badjie was explaining how they caught one woman and after giving her their “whatever concoctions”, the woman confessed to have caused the accident of a military truck that happened a few months earlier along the Coastal Road near TAF at Old Yundum. He heard the IGP saying that the woman said she used her head to “head” the truck. The witness said that was crazy. He added that he took note of it as the IGP said it.

A third photograph was shown, entitled “Witch Doctor Number 2”. The witness explained that this was another man from the group of the five witch-hunters. This person was also wearing red, complete red with black on his cap and he had some cowry shells, but not as many as the leader. He was asked if he recalled if he played any particular role during the events at the Police Headquarters. The witness said while the leader was among them, he would be walking around them just like his colleagues, carrying a tail, probably a cow tail. He explained that the officer that they saw dressed in white holding a paper was Inspector Yusupha Saine. He was the one who informed him that these people were coming. When asked about the whereabouts of Yusupha Saine, the witness that he was head of the IT unit, but then said that he was not sure he was still in the police.

The Deputy Lead Counsel then said that she would like to look at one more photograph entitled “Green Boys and

Drums” The witness explained that the photo showed a vehicle which was one of those their leaders used to drive. The Green Boys that accompanied them were sitting at the back, with the drums that they beat while this thing was going on. The witness mentioned that there was also a spade at the back of the pick-up. He said this was the spade that they used to dig a hole at the headquarters where they buried their concoction together with the blood from the animals they had slaughtered. He added that this was the spot where the officers were asked to come and swear at the shrine.

The Deputy Lead Counsel thanked him very much for that explanation and then said let them move on to what actually occurred during the 10 am parade and reiterated what the witness had already said so far, regarding the persons in attendance. The witness started recounting what happened and explained that once everybody assembled, IGP “Jesus” Ensa Badjie addressed the parade and said that President Yahya Jammeh had sent those witch-doctors to screen officers, to find out if they were witches. He continued saying that whoever was identified would have to drink their concoction and would be washed by these witch doctors. He added that those who were witches, would **die** but that nothing would happen to those who were not.

He also told them that every individual had to swear allegiance to the President at a shrine that they were going to build at the headquarters. He ended-up saying that those who did not comply would be fired.

The witness explained that after Ensa Badjie’s speech, the officers had to form a sort of circle so that “these people” could surround them. Then the drumming started and the Green Boys and Girls started singing in Jola, a language that he does not understand but recognised. He added that he knew some of the songs having heard them on the radio

before. He also heard them saying the name of President Yahya Jammeh in one of their songs. As the beating of the drums intensified, the witch doctors started running towards them. The witness laughed and said it was just funny. He added that they started running up and down. They would run, take few steps, stop, back track and go back again, identify one person randomly and point to him to go and stand at one corner. He explained that as this was going on, he was standing with some officers, such as Mariama Gassama. He mentioned that he told them to read whatever they knew of the Quran because this was Satan on full display. He himself was reciting Suratul-Fatiha, Ayatul Kursi and other verses of the Quran.

Mustapha Ceesay explained that the leader of the witch-hunter ran inside the circle the police officers had formed while the others were running in circles. The leader was the one who identified the individuals who were supposedly witches or had to be screened further to determine whether they were witches or not. When these individuals were identified, he told them to move to a corner behind the office of the Commissioner of Banjul Division. At one point, as already 20-30 people had been identified and as he, the witness was reading his verses of the Quran, the witch-hunter stopped before him and told him to join the group. He explained that he became angry, but decided to calm down and wait for "things to take their natural course". When around 40 people had been identified, Ensa Badjie instructed Ken Mendy who was the officer in-charge of registry to record all the names.

The Deputy Lead Counsel said that the Commission had heard from Mr. Ken Mendy the day before that he had been asked by the Ensa Badjie to write down the names of any individual who was pointed out as a potential witch as it happened. The Deputy Lead Counsel confirmed with the witness that according to him, he did not do so until the 40 individuals had been selected. The witness said that this was how it unfolded and assumed that Ken Mendy had sincerely forgotten the chronology of things. He noted that Ken Mendy was mixing up the two days.

The Deputy Lead Counsel explained that Ken Mendy only referred to the witch doctors visiting on one occasion (the second day), and noted the difference with the witness'

testimony. The witness said his recollection of the events was that on the Tuesday, they only came into the offices, but it was one the next day, that people had been pointed out at the parade. He added that on the second day, the only times that they went into the building was when they went into Kumba Jatta's office and when they went to the IGP's office. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked him if it was not possible, that he, the witness was mistaken and not Ken Mendy.

Mustapha Ceesay reiterated that when he came in the morning on the Wednesday, his office mates had told him that these people had come to the headquarters the previous day. He added that Inspector Yahya Darboe (who was his personal friend) told him that the witness' name had been written down that Tuesday. He pointed out that IGP Ensa Badjie and RSM Abdou Colley both mentioned the fact that these people had come to the headquarters the day before.

In order to get more clarity on how the events unfolded, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness how soon after the events he started taking note or making a record of what happened on that day. The witness replied that he did so immediately and explained that he has a habit of keeping a journal in which he records every major event in his life. He explained that initially, he recorded everything for his own reference and secured it in case anything happened to him. He secured his writings by sending them to his brother living in the U.K. through a clandestine email address. He also saved the pictures he took of the witch-hunters that way.

He added that he gave some of his writing to other friends as well, in confidence, in case he would be killed.

He explained that he did so, so that his children would know what happened to him. He was asked if he could tell them the name of his book and when it was released. He said that the title of the book

was “Witch Doctors at The Police Headquarters, My Resistance and The Consequences” but that it had not been published yet. However, on the 14th (January) after he took the pictures, he wrote a news article, pretending to be a random person who had witnessed the events and told his brother to share it with the online and Gambian newspapers.

The Deputy Lead Counsel thanked him for this information and noted that this was significant because the Commissioners would have to make a decision regarding the veracity of the facts. In that sense, the information on how he recorded the event was very important to assess the reliability of the evidence he was providing. At that point, the witness remembered that he still had a notebook and suggested to go and fetch it, but the Deputy Lead Counsel told him that the Commission would examine it later and move on with his testimony.

Going back to his testimony, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness who apart from him had been identified by the witch-hunters. Mustapha Ceesay responded that they were many, including FRI Jammeh¹⁰ and many cleaners. He was asked how, in his opinion, did the witch-hunter manage to identify the individuals whose names they had written down the day before. The witness replied that these were two different proceedings but noted that some of the persons identified on Tuesday were also identified during the parade. Recapping, the witness said the leader of the witch-doctors was the one who was pointing on the individuals and told them to go and stand at one place. When the procedure was finished, Ken Mendy was asked to come and record their names down. The Deputy Lead Counsel explained that she was trying to understand how the witch-doctor managed to identify those whose name had been listed the day before.

Mustapha Ceesay answered that he did not know that but knows that it happened. He cited the example of Yusupha Saine and FRI Jammeh, whose names were recorded in the office (on Tuesday) and again during the parade. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if at the parade grounds, he heard the leader of the witch-hunters or any of the witch-hunters speaking at any point. The witness said he spoke very briefly but did not say much, just a few words in Fula and then moved on. He added that they might have

spoken at a very low tone, but he did not hear it. The Deputy Lead Counsel wanted to know more about what had been said and the witness explained that while he can recognise when Fula is being spoken, he does not understand Fula. He confirmed that there was no interpretation and noted that in fact they were speaking amongst themselves. He added that they had their own way of communicating and one of the witch doctors was interpreting for IGP Ensa Badjie.

The Deputy Lead Counsel then asked about the role of Solo Bojang during the event. The witness responded that Solo Bojang was technically coordinating everything. He was standing with IGP Ensa Badjie, would consult him and followed the witch-hunters everywhere, for example when they ran into the building. The Deputy Lead Counsel said just to be clear, he was saying that

**the witch-doctors consulted with
IGP Ensa Badjie and Solo Bojang
while those activities were going.
Mustapha Ceesay confirmed that
this was the case.**

The witness was then asked to explain what happened to Kumba Jatta. Mustapha Ceesay narrated that for some reason Kumba Jatta had not attended the parade and had stayed in his office. At one point, the witch-hunters ran inside the building followed by Solo Bojang and IGP Ensa Badjie. After about five minutes, they came out with Kumba Jatta. They held his hand like that (he demonstrated by holding his right wrist with his left hand). He further said Kumba Jatta had a juju, called ‘Timbabulor’ in the local languages. The witch-doctor held Kumba Jatta’s hand in the air and led him into the crowd of officers. When they came to the middle of the parade ground, Kumba Jatta was ordered to drop his juju and all the ones he had been wearing were taken from him and put into a black plastic bag. The witness noted that everybody in the Gambia Police Force or security generally knew that Kumba Jatta was wearing these jujus but that he

¹⁰Famara R.I. Jammeh known as “FRI” Jammeh.

was the most peaceful person you would ever see in this world. The witness never heard him charge anybody. He explained that Kumba Jatta was the deputy commissioner, Banjul Division and was a hardworking person.

He went on saying that they went into his office and then virtually dragged him out, **humiliated** him in the presence of over a hundred people and took his jujus from him. He could not tell how that they took the jujus from him because he was not there when it happened (inside the office).

**When he was dragged into the crowd,
one of the witch-hunters poured
a concoction, whose composition
the witness did not know, over him.
Kumba Jatta was standing there,
almost shaking, embarrassed,
humiliated.**

Then one of the Green Boys was ordered to dig a hole in the gardens near the parade ground and his jujus were buried in there. He noted that these things happened after they had slaughtered a goat and a cock and put their **blood** into the hole and buried a bottle of concoction. He showed his bottle of water to the Commission and said that the bottle was similar to that one. Mustapha Ceesay explained that they buried the bottle almost to its neck and some cement blocks were squared around it. This was the place where officers had to come and take their oath, adding that it was under the palm tree.

The Deputy Lead Counsel wanted to focus on the **slaughtering** of the goat as well as the cock, and asked the witness to describe what kind of goat and cock they were. The witness said this was a red goat, which looked very healthy. He noted that the cock was also red. He said that he thinks that FRI Jammeh was the one who was ordered to slaughter the goat while IGP Ensa Badjie slaughtered the cock. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked that this was in spite of the fact that FRI Jammeh had been identified as a potential witch according to the witness testimony. The witness responded in the affirmative and reiterated that FRI Jammeh slaughtered the goat.

The witness was asked if the animals were buried within the Police Headquarters. He explained that the **blood** of the animals was poured at the same place where the bottle had been placed: in the small garden with the palm tree but their bodies were taken away. He noted that in fact, one could see the goat on the pick-up on one of the photographs he had given the Commission. The picture was then displayed and the Deputy Lead Counsel noted that the goat was brownish. The witness explained that it was indeed a brown goat and said they called it a red one because there was no pure red goat.

The Deputy Lead Counsel said that she wanted to discuss how officers were asked to take their oath at the “shrine”. Mustapha Ceesay testified that IGP Ensa Badjie ordered the superior officers to go and take their oath. As they had gone halfway, he ordered everybody else to join the queue according to their ranks. The witness explained that since he was a sergeant, he did not move. He was standing still. Virtually everybody left him and they formed these two lines to go and take their oath. The witness noted that at that point, he was wondering what had befallen The Gambia. He was lost in that thought when he heard IGP Ensa Badjie calling him and ordering him to join but he did not move. He noted that it was only later that he went to the back of the line and took his phone and took two pictures of the officers lining up. The Deputy Lead Counsel said that they would show one of the photographs.

When asked about the kind of oath the officers were asked to give, the witness answered that he was not aware of whatever they said at the front of the line, only that Ensa Badjie had said that the officers were going to swear allegiance to the President. The witness explained that he did not go closer to find out what they were saying, but mentioned that on the picture, one could see two lines, which if they looked at the pictures of the officers that were lining, if they look at line two, they would see how the inspectors were standing in front, followed by the sergeants and other ranks and plain clothed.

He indicated that on the photo, one could see one officer in blue next to the line, and said that this was Commissioner Famara Jallow. The witness stated that Famara Jallow did not take part in it and was just walking around. When asked if all the officers were taking the oath, he responded that not every officer was part of it. He knew some officers who ran into their officers and did not want to get involved. Among them was his friend Tijan Badjie, who is now late, who locked himself in his office. He also remembered Yamundow Jagne, who was an ASP female police officer. She was the Officer-in-Charge, OC of gender and child protection. She also ran away and did not want to be part of the idolatry. He explained that his friend Seedy Saidyhan was called by Yamundow Jagne to come inside and that he, the witness, was wondering if he should go too. However, as he did not want to run away, he decided to stay.

He confirmed that Kumba Jatta was pulled out of the building as the allegiance procedure had already started. He noted that after the incident with Jatta, the oath taking went on. Mustapha Ceesay, said that at one point they (probably meaning the witch-hunters) went back to the IGP's office for an unknown reason to him and then went to the Drug Squad Office, and as such, the rest of the officers never took their oath. He explained that they did not spend much time at the Drug Squad Office because everybody had deserted the place.

From there, the **witch-hunters wanted to go to the Fire Service but its Chief Fire Office, **Roger Bakorin**, did not allow them to enter.**

So, they came back. That was when he went to the balcony to take photos. The Deputy Lead Counsel said just to be clear, from what he could see they attempted to enter the Fire Service office to do presumably the same thing they did at the Police Headquarters, but were prevented from entering. The witness said that was right. He was asked if he was aware of any other government institution where they did something similar. The witness said from the Police Headquarters on that same day, they went straight to Gambia Telecommunication Company,

GAMTEL where there was a fire incident a few days before and the witness got information that they went to other security institutions like the army, the National Intelligence Agency, NIA and also the prison. He specified that he only heard they went there, but he did not cross-check it.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked for more details about these other places. The witness answered that his understanding was that the same happened at the army, and that they then did it at the Police Headquarters. He said that he knew for sure that they went to the prisons after having been at the police. He explained that he had gotten information that it also happened at the NIA, from a friend who used to work there. He was asked if he was aware of any governmental institutions where they were not allowed to get in as Roger Bakorin did, he said that he did not know.

The witness wrapped up, saying that as they left, he then took the pictures, he had just shown. He was asked what the mood of the police station was and how he and the other officers felt about what had just taken place. The witness responded that the entire headquarters was in a very sad mood. Everybody was angry, afraid and experiencing **anxiety**. He himself was very angry but mostly, he was concerned about what was going to befall The Gambia. He explained that he thought that there was no way that such a manifestation of idolatry would not be followed by calamity. This was his main concern and he was praying for The Gambia.

The Deputy Lead Counsel said that she wanted to seek further clarification on two points. She recalled that the witness had said that when IGP Ensa Badjie addressed the police officers at 10 am, he had stated that anyone identified as a potential witch would be taken to a particular location where they would be forced to drink a concoction, which would determine whether or not they were in fact witches. She asked the witness if the IGP had indicated where that location was. The witness responded that the IGP said they were going to be taken to Kotu at the

witch doctor's place. He explained that he later realised that this was Baba Jobe's compound but confirmed that this was not specified during the briefing.

The second clarification concerned the number of people identified as potential witches during the parade. The Deputy Lead Counsel told him that while he mentioned about 40 people, the day before Ken Mendy had testified and said that probably just over 10 individuals were identified. The witness stressed that it was far more than that. He was asked how he was able to recall the number of people who were identified. The witness said first of all, he was standing among them. In addition, the next day, on Thursday 15th (January), RSM Abdou Colley said that those whose names were called had to go to "this place" (Kotu). He explained that as the truck was waiting outside, he, the witness refused to go. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if he recalled who called out the names on that day, to which the witness answered that it had been Ken Mendy. When asked, he said that IGP Ensa Badjie was not present on the Thursday.

The Deputy Lead Counsel then asked the witness about the consequences he faced when he refused to board the truck. The witness replied that RSM Abdou Colley told him that this was an order from the IGP, to which he responded that he should go ahead and tell Ensa Badjie that he, Mustapha Ceesay was not going. He stated that he was not the only one, and while some people went, others did not go either.

The witness was asked to describe what happened the next day, Friday 16th January 2009. He explained that on Friday morning when he came to office, he wrote a statement as to why he would not go even before they asked him to. He left it on the computer and went to the morning parade. During this parade, IGP Ensa Badjie enquired if everybody had gone. Ken Mendy and RSM Abdou Colley informed him that only a few people did so. IGP Ensa Badjie then ordered Ken Mendy to bring down the list and said that those whose names were on the list should stand aside.

IGP Ensa Badjie then took the list and started by calling the people one by one and ordered them to board the truck. When his name was called, he refused again and

told the IGP that he could tell President Yahya Jammeh that Mustapha Ceesay said he was not going. The witness noted that at this moment he felt very angry. He explained that everybody accepted going, except for him and Inspector Yahya Darboe. The witness said that when the IGP asked him why he did not want to go, he responded that it was **satanic**, and that he would not be going. So, the IGP asked him to write a statement why he refused to obey President Yahya Jammeh's orders. He also asked Inspector Yusupha Darboe why he was not going, to which he gave a similar response and added that this was not part of his job as a police officer.

Mustapha Ceesay said that they were both told to go and write their statements. The witness explained that since he had already prepared his, he just printed and signed it. He made two copies, so that he could keep one. He gave it to the Commission and noted that because he was in a rush, he dated it 15th January instead of 16th. He explained that what he wrote in the statement was Suratul-Fatiha as well as one statement saying that he would not be involved in anything in which he did not have knowledge; and that he surrendered his affairs to his God. When he gave the statement to IGP Ensa Badjie, he looked at it, passed it at Deputy IGP Modou Gaye who also looked at it and told the witness that it would be advisable for him to comply. But he responded that he was not going to. The letter was then given to RSM Abdou Colley, who was ordered by IGP Ensa Badjie to dismiss the witness.

Mustapha Ceesay testified that he told them that he would rather be dismissed, jailed or killed than to worship idols.

He explained that RSM Abdou Colley ordered one sergeant called Ali Jobe who was the witness' junior to write his charge sheet. The Deputy Lead Counsel noted that the witness had provided the Commission with that document and stated that the document said the following:

IT unit: Police headquarters

Rank: Sergeant

Name: Mustapha Ceesay

Reg Number: 221

Charged with two counts. First count: Disobedience to orders. Second count: Discreditable conduct.

She noted the writing is a little faint so she would do her best to read it out and said: “*Being (in) breach of the police disciplinary code as prescribed in the first schedule of the police rule cap 18 volume 4. Count 1: Sergeant 221 Mustapha Ceesay for that you did on the 16th January 2009 at the Police Headquarters around the hours of 9.30 am to 10 am. For you were given orders by the RSM to go to Kotu, for you to be washed by those marabouts that came to the Police headquarters on the 14th of January 2009, which you refused to do without any excuse or permission. Count 2: Sergeant 221 Mustapha Ceesay for that you did on the same date, time and place, you acted in a matter that could tarnish the good image of the force by saying that you would not be washed. You did so without any lawful excuse or permission*”. The Deputy Lead Counsel explained that the officer referred to as in charge was ASP A. Colley (RSM) and noted that the order was on 27th of January 2009 and signed by someone with the registration number Sergeant 791. The witness said that this was Sergeant Ali Joof, who was the one who wrote the charge sheet. He added that on the right corner, one could see the endorsement by the IGP at the end of the process on the 27th January. The witness explained that he was **demoted** and transferred to Fatoto.

The Deputy Lead Counsel indicated that she wanted to make sure that they had all the information from the document before they moved on. She added that on the second page it was indicated that he had pleaded not guilty to both charges but that he had been found **guilty**. The document ended saying “referred to Commissioner of Operations for punishment”.

The witness explained why it took two weeks to get signed and explained that the document went first to the Commissioner of Operations, Famara Jallow,

but he refused to get involved. So, for two weeks nothing was done and on the 27th (January) at the Master Parade, IGP Ensa Badjie enquired what had happened to his charge sheet and was told by RSM Abdou Colley that they were waiting for Commissioner of Operations to sign the document. The IGP then ordered that the document be taken to him before the end of the day and because Famara Jallow did not want to get involved, his assistant Pa Silver who was a Chief Superintendent at the time decided to take the charges. He was the one who wrote that he found him guilty on both counts and forwarded the document to the IGP for punishment on the 27th of January.

The Deputy Lead Counsel thanked him for that explanation, which had been very helpful. The witness then explained in details how demotions were handled and referred back to the document, which stated “*Awarded demotion to the rank of first class constable and immediately transferred to Fatoto PIU, orders by IGP*.”

The witness was then asked to recount what happened at the parade on 27th January. He explained that there were lots of things that people talked about at the parade. So, when IGP Ensa Badjie opened the floor for questions, he, the witness raised his hand. But instead of allowing him to speak, they asked why the witness was still there since the President had ordered that whoever refused to comply with the witch-doctors should be fired. IGP Ensa Badjie told RSM Abdou Colley that on all circumstances the witness should be brought to him on that day. The witness added that he was initially charged together with Inspector Yahya Darboe but that his charges were later dropped. So, on that day, after Famara Jallow refused to handle the case, Pa Silver took the orders and by 1.30 pm, he, the witness was in the IGP’s office for orders. He mentioned that he was escorted by Sergeant Ali Joof, who had written the charge sheet and marched by Sergeant RSM Abdou Colley and that the orders were attended by Ken Mandy.

Mustapha Ceesay recalled that IGP Ensa Badjie told him that he was stubborn, that he was not loyal to the President.

He continued by saying that he did not understand why the witness had not been fired since the President had given clear orders that anyone who refuses should be **fired**. The witness further explained that at the time, first class constable was the lowest rank in the police force and Fatoto the farthest and most challenging PIU unit. So, his demotion and transfer were a **punishment**. Later in the testimony, he specified that this was to happen with immediate effect.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness if he knew why the charges against Yahya Darboe were dropped. The witness explained that Yahya Darboe told him he sought advice from religious people regarding what to do when you are “forced to ascribe partners to God” and what his fate is in Islam would be. Yahya Darboe told the witness that the religious person said that he could do what he was ordered, since he was forced to and that God would not hold him accountable for that. So, Yahya Darboe decided to comply (and go to the place in Kotu) but in fact nothing was done to him. Nonetheless, RSM Abdou Colley considered that he had obeyed the orders and the charges were dropped. The witness added that he, however, knew that the piece of advice that Yahya Darboe had gotten was wrong. He said Allah would not allow you to ascribe partners to him in any way, shape or form. Being forced is no excuse to go close to “jalang” and Satan.

Asked what impact the situation had on him and his family, the witness responded that it was “the most **devastating** thing” even if they had prepared themselves psychologically for the worst. He added that in fact he was expecting to be **killed**, so being demoted and transferred to Fatoto, was “okay with him”.

He noted that what was the most **difficult**, is that **he had been associated with witchcraft or being forced to swear allegiance at a Satan shrine**.

His family including his mother, his wife and little children, his grandmother and his extended family were all devastated. He explained that living in The Gambia and being associated or accused of witchcraft or being a witch was **stigmatising**. The family was stigmatised, he was stigmatised but he personally did not mind, he knew it was okay. When he went to Fatoto, he thanked God and he thanked a few officers.

Mustapha Ceesay said that he received support from a man whose last name was Basangeh, who was the PIU commander in Fatoto at the time. He had been informed about the witness’ arrival and the story behind it by a common friend, Aziz Bojang and had agreed to support the witness. The witness also mentioned Sergeant Lamin Cham, who was the second in command, as being very helpful as well as other junior officers. He said that of course, there were few who talked about it, but he had expected that.

At this point in his testimony, the witness reflected on why he refused to undertake the procedure, since he was not a witch and while others had played along. But he stated that he was not a pretender. He was a Gambian citizen by birth and by descent. He could be the President of The Gambia or any other position. So, nobody could threaten him to do what he should not do.

The Deputy Lead Counsel then asked the witness to tell the Commission what he had seen while he was still at Banjul Headquarters, from 15th to 27th January. He was asked if he had observed anything about the condition of the officers who had been taken to Baba Jobe’s compound or if he had received

evidence about what happened there. The witness said the few officers who he had spoken to, especially those from his office, informed him that there were a lot of women and old men present at this place. Some were in a very “**dilapidated**” condition.

He was told by one of them that some July 22nd Movement Boys were physically torturing these old women who were under their captivity.

He added that they were **captured** against their will and being **tortured** for no reason. He mentioned that he saw Kumba Jatta, who had been there too, and that he was also “dilapidated” and so embarrassed that he hardly came out of his office anymore. Mustapha Ceesay added that Kumba Jatta was not only **humiliated** because of what happened to him, but he also became **sick**. He could not even talk to him as it was even difficult to look at him. When asked what had changed in his condition, the witness explained that before Kumba Jatta used to walk straight but after the incident, one could see that he was lacking energy, almost bending down and was in **physical pain**.

The Deputy Lead Counsel wanted to know if he had received details on how the July 22nd Movement Boys were physically **torturing** old women.

The witness said that he was told by his colleagues that they had seen them beating and pouring water on the women and telling them “you are witches, we will kill you,” in Mandinka.

When asked if he had been given any other information about what happened at Baba Jobe’s compound, the witness responded that they did not, and only described the general atmosphere there saying that there were many “dilapidated” persons there. Some were in very bad shape; **vomiting** and some were almost **naked**. They told him that it was horrible to look at. When asked if in addition to Kumba Jatta, he had witnessed other officers’ condition, the witness answered no, but added that in fact

most of those he spoke to did not drink anything. He remembered that one elderly female cleaner, whose name he has forgotten, had drank the concoction and that he never saw her again.

The Deputy Lead Counsel moved on to ask the witness to give example on how the **stigma** to be suspected of being a witch affected him and his family. Mustapha Ceesay mentioned that for instance, his oldest daughter Fatoumatta, who was nine at the time was being **bullied** by the children in her school. On one occasion, she had to fight about two to three children who were telling her “*your father is a witch*”. She came home crying and demanded answers. He said that he tried his best to reassure her and explain the situation to her in words that she would understand.

He told her that she was clean and that they were descent and noble so she should not worry. But at the same time, he immediately transferred her to another school. The problem was that there was no place in fourth grade where she belonged in the new school and so she was put in second grade, which was **devastating** for her. He explained that this was one of the reasons why he decided to write his book, so that even if something happened to him, his children would have firsthand and detailed information on what happened to their father and why.

The Deputy Lead Counsel recalled that earlier in his testimony, the witness had told them that after the incident at the headquarters on the 14th January 2009, he conducted investigations into the activities of the witch-hunters. He was asked if he could tell them what he had gathered in the course of his researches, such as the areas where they operated and what they did in those areas. The witness said that he received information that the witch-hunters were **invading** villages in Foni especially but also some villages in the Kombos like Makumbaya, Talinding and in Jambur. In Foni, they had been to Nyantempo and Sintet. He mentioned that his cousin who lived in Sintet was also **abducted**, but that she fooled them by pretending to be sick. When they were not looking at her, she dipped her finger into her throat and started throwing up. So, they let her go.

He continued saying that he also received information that the witch-hunters went to Barra as well, from a PIU officer stationed in Fatoto but who went to Barra on a leave. While he was there, he witnessed these people's invasion of Barra and Essau. One officer told him that the father of one sergeant in the police, whose name he believed was Omar Jahateh, had been **abducted**. When he tried to defend his father, the soldiers **beat** him. He noted that this happened on the same day that Alhagie Tabora was **abducted** together with other people. He added, that at this time, he received information from Kiang and from Jifarong where his mother came from, that a lot of people from Foni had crossed the river to run away from these people. They were virtually **emptying their villages** either by staying in the bush for the whole day or cross to Kiang or Casamance. Those who had their family members in Kombos relocated there.

Mustapha Ceesay noted that it was horrible for the country at the time.

Someone also told him when they came to Talinding, the women at the market were seen throwing away their merchandise including their oil, vegetables, fleeing for their lives and their dignity.

He recalled that he went to visit his grandmother and her sister around end of March in 2009 and on arrival, he saw his grandmother's older sister sitting down in the platform in the middle of the compound. As he parked the vehicle, he could not see her anymore. He went inside and found her in the back, attempting to climb a fence. This woman was 87 years old. She was **crying** and **trembling**. When he saw this, he immediately told her that it was him and rushed to her.

He narrated that she was trembling so much that she could not stand. He asked what happened but she could not speak. His cousin who was living with her told him that neighbours were threatening her, saying that Yahya Jammeh's witch-hunters would be going for her because she was old and "dilapidated". She said she would prefer

to **die** than be labeled a witch after living all her life in a dignified way. The witness explained that it was at this moment that he swore he was never going to wear a police uniform again because not only had he been helpless regarding what had happened to him and his immediate family, but even his aging grandmother was in a frightened state.

The witness continued saying that because people would run away before the witch-hunters reached the villages, a PIU unit was assigned to them.

From that moment on, the PIU would surround the villages to ensure that its inhabitants did not leave so that they could abduct and torture them all in the name of fighting witchcraft.

He added that while Yahya Jammeh's mother was never given a concoction to drink, they forced other people's mothers, which he considered to be wrong. He therefore decided to no longer be part of a force or a unit that was being used to give VIP protection to abductors rather than to support and protect the **victims**. The Deputy Lead Counsel recapped what the witness had narrated and concluded that this had really caused a lot of **chaos** in the country.

The witness recalled the case of one officer whose last name was Jarju who used to be posted in Fatoto. His father had to be **hospitalised** at the Royal Victoria Hospital, RVH as both his kidneys failed because of the concoction that he was forced to drink. He explained that the officer and his family are from Makumbaya.

His grandmother died as a result of what she went through and he said his aunt was even raped by the Green Boys while she was intoxicated and that they kept raping her even when she was conscious.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if he could tell them the condition of the officer as he recounted all of this information to him. The witness said Jarju was **crying** as he was explaining this to him. He noted that he was devastated and wanted to resign from the force, but since he was afraid that his father could pass away at any time, he did not want to be unemployed or victimised because of his resignation. The witness noted that he has a picture of him but did not share it with the Commission as he did not have Jarju's permission. He noted that they would have seen from his face in which state he was. He would have done anything to fight for the dignity of his family but he was helpless.

The Deputy Lead Counsel recounted what the witness had said about the **human rights violations** that had occurred, including the **abductions, tortures** by the Green Boys and the **rape** of one woman. At this point, the witness reiterated that this woman was **raped** multiple times. The Deputy Lead Counsel then asked if he had received any other information about what was done to the individuals who were **abducted**. The witness said the abducted individuals were being taken to two locations. Those around the Kombos were being taken to Baba Jobe's compound and the others, around Foni, were taken to Kanilai. He said that apart from **beating** them, they were **pouring water** on them. While they **crawled**, they would **hit** them, **kick** them and perform other **dehumanising** acts on them. He noted that on top of that, people were suffering from the stigma of being accused of being a witch, which he said was very serious in Gambian society.

When asked to describe where Baba Jobe's compound was located, the witness explained that Baba Jobe owned two compounds in the Kotu/Kololi area. He added that when Baba Jobe was expropriated in 2004, he, the witness was working in the PIU and the PIU officers were being taken to his main compound, which is two junctions away from the Palma Rima junction in Kololi, about 500 meters from the highway. Regarding the base in Kanilai, the witness said that he did not know its exact location.

The Deputy Lead Counsel enquired about Baba Jobe's compound and the witness explained that it had been confiscated when Baba Jobe was named by the United Nations as having been implicated in some **armed deals**. He mentioned that the PIU officers were guarding the two compounds. But when the witness left the PIU in 2004, he lost track of what happened there but later learnt that they were used for Yahya Jammeh's family members. At one point, Jammeh's mother was living in one of the compounds.

The witness was then asked to give more details about the **suffering** some of these victims experienced as a result of drinking the concoction. The witness mentioned that he knew with certainty that the victims were given 'kubejaro', which is a plant. He explained that many people from the provinces, Kiang and the areas would know what it is. He stressed that 'kubejaro' is a very **intoxicating** plant. You drink a smallest part of it, you would be **hallucinating** and it could have a deadly impact on you.

He added that when these people were given this portion to drink, they had hallucinations which made them say things and see imaginary things that nobody could understand because they had **lost their mind**. He noted that this was fitting with what the IGP had said at the parade ground on the 14th January, when he mentioned that one old woman said she hit the military truck with her head and believed that this had caused the accident which **killed** those soldiers. The witness concluded that if somebody is put in such a situation (meaning drinking the concoction), she would say anything. He also heard that one of the victims said that he had **killed** his own son, even if he was still alive. He reportedly said so while being **tortured** and forced to **confess** that he was a witch. He reckoned that in their **hallucination**, they would say anything just to get away.

The Deputy Lead Counsel said he also mentioned the stigma of being called a witch, particularly in the Gambian context and asked him to elaborate more on this.

The witness highlighted that witchcraft is one of the worst things that could happen to any family. In as much as it is was not part of the religion, it was part of the Gambian history.

He added that while nobody ever saw it, for some reason people believe in it. If you are accused of being a witch, nobody would get close to you. He added that 99% of the time, the people who are accused of being witches are old, lonely, poor people who have no one to defend them. Typically, these persons do not have children or their children passed away at an early age. He added, that people would just create a story “this person is a witch” and highlighted that once a person is being accused of being a witch, the entire family is completely **stigmatised**.

Mustapha Ceesay explained that people would refrain from marrying a person from a family accused of being witches, even though nobody saw it. He went on, saying that people would also run away from those accused of being a witch, which is very difficult for that person to endure. *“In a country like The Gambia where we depend entirely on their community and their social connection, if you would be associated with something that would make you lonely, isolated, without help, especially when you are already a lonely person, it is very difficult. I know it because I lived it.”*

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked him if through his investigations on the witch-hunters in the various regions of The Gambia, he was able to get an estimate of how many people had been affected by the hunt. The witness answered that, in all, if you put it together, it would be in the thousands. At the Police Headquarters, forty people were already affected and when they went to Sintet, according to his cousin, the bus was full of persons abducted. He added that in Jambur alone sixty people were affected. He said he had sent them the picture of the bus that they used.

Mustapha Ceesay explained that when the witch-hunters went to a village, they would **capture** whoever is old and alone or whoever they could meet. In Jambur, for instance

the youngest person they took was 45 years old. But logically if there are old witches, there must be young witches too. But in that village, the youngest they took was 45. According to the witness, this shows that they were just randomly picking-up people and **humiliated** them.

The witness said that around 2010, he received information that he could not confirm and explained that this was why he did not put it in his statement, but still wanted to mention it during his testimony. He explained that he heard an allegation, but did not remember the exact source, that Yahya Jammeh was involved with South American **drug cartels**. The cocaine and heroin were being produced by a poppy from either Afghanistan or somewhere else. Apparently, Yahya Jammeh wanted to prove that The Gambia had something that was more effective for drugs than poppy, the “kubejaro”. They therefore used the witch-hunt as a cover up, using the persons as guinea pigs to test if see if the “kubejaro” could be used as a drug.

He added that he received that information when he was working with the British Embassy and a British special agent came to The Gambia when two tons of **cocaine** were discovered. He repeated that he was not sure who had told him that at the time. The Deputy Lead Counsel thanked him very much for that information. She said they would of course continue with their investigations to look into this issue of human experiments being conducted with the purpose of determining whether or not “kubejaro” was more effective than other drugs such as cocaine.

The Deputy Lead Counsel recalled that the witness had mentioned another theory why Yahya Jammeh had brought these witch-hunters from Guinea Conakry, which was because his aunt and his two personal bodyguards had died. She also repeated what the witness had said about a unit of the PIU, which was responsible for surrounding villages and preventing villagers from running away before the witch-hunters arrived in those villages. As a result of this, the witness decided to resign from the Gambia Police Force.

The witness explained that he resigned on 31st March 2009. But because Ensa Badgie wanted to have him hooked for some reason, he decided not to approve his discharge. This meant that technically he could be charged for absconding. He said it took him five months before he could get his discharge certificate. He added that while this could have also prevented him from getting a job, he was very lucky and got a job with the British Embassy. That was how he was saved. He said he believed that otherwise he would have been **arrested** because the IGP even gave orders to Bakary Sanneh who was the OC PIU at the time to charge the witness for absconding. However, Bakary Sanneh did not act on the orders.

The Deputy Lead Counsel read the witness' discharge certificate, which was signed on 31st August 2009 and stated that his conduct was very good. It is essentially an assessment and appraisal of how he was as a police officer and included this sentence "*he was neat, punctual, obedient and dedicated to his work. He held various responsibilities and always willing to share his great ideas with his subordinates*".

Mustapha Ceesay continued saying that he never wanted to leave The Gambia, even if his life was in **danger**.

He explained that his telephone was tapped immediately after he left the headquarters and that he kept being followed by unknown people who wanted to abducted him.

He noted that he had developed his own security tactics, which thanks to God worked out. For instance, he made sure to never go anywhere alone. He also stated that when he was at any uncomfortable place on his own, he would pretend to be on the phone while he walked and said things like "*there were things I wanted to tell you but I cannot tell you because there is somebody following me right now*". By acting like this, he made sure that the person following him knew that he had been noticed and that this presence had been mentioned to someone else.

He recalled that on one occasion in 2011, he was in a commercial vehicle coming from The University of The Gambia with his friend Seedy Fatty. An unknown man who was later identified as an NIA officer got involved in their conversation and started **intimidating** the witness telling him that he was a traitor, that he was giving information to the British Embassy and they were following him. He went on saying that if they laid their hands on him "*he would regret why he was born*". He added that none of these was worrying to him because **death** would only come when it was time.

But an event that happened on 3rd June 2012 changed his perception of the situation. That day Yahya Jammeh's brother (he thinks it was Araba Jammeh, something like that, he could not remember the name fully), was being driven with breakneck speed from Kanilai and knocked the witness' grandfather's student down.

The young man called Ousman Jammeh was 19 years old and was killed on the spot.

The witness was there on the scene. The next day, Yahya Jammeh sent a delegation to the victim's **burial**, which included Lamin Sanneh who was the former Commissioner of Western Region, the former Paramount Chief Demba Sangyang, Seedy Njie, Dahaba, as well as Yahya Jammeh's cousin who was in charge of Kanilai Farms (he could not remember his full name but his last name was Bojang)¹¹.

They brought 20,000 dalasi, some bags of rice and oil as Yahya Jammeh's condolence gift to the witness' grandfather. After the burial in Kambujeng in his grandfather's house, the witness addressed the President's delegation and told them to tell Yahya Jammeh that his drivers, his convoys, his officers were **killing** their people on the road. He mentioned that his brother's son who was just six years old was knocked down in Lamin on 30th May 2011.

¹¹Most probably Solo Bojang.

The witness explained that this incident happened when the Mauritanian President came to town and children were taken from the school to welcome him on the road. Yahya Jammeh was throwing biscuit out but the drivers were reckless and children were run over by one of Yahya Jammeh's vehicles in the convoy. They were four and three of them **died**. His brother's son Momodou Ceesay had his leg fractured. They spent three months at the RVTH. They later took him and cured him through local means. He explained that when the mother of the victim, Ndey Drammeh, confronted the driver who had come to visit the child at the hospital and asked him why they were doing that. The driver responded that when such **accidents** happened, they only report it to the President (Yahya Jammeh) and that is all they knew about it.

The witness said that during the 2011 presidential election, a similar thing happened in Busumbala. About eight people were **killed** as Yahya Jammeh was throwing biscuits to children. He added that this does not include the students that were being **randomly killed** either by the convoy or by the soldiers that drove from Kanilai to Kombo. So, at the burial, the witness had told them that this was unacceptable. They as Gambians, they had to live in The Gambia, their children were going to school, they had to go and look for their **survival** and when they were being killed on the road, Yahya Jammeh would send 20,000 dalasi. He concluded "*it is not going to work*".

Mustapha Ceesay said that he recorded his speech and immediately secured it just in case anything happened to him because of it. He noted that after that, they intensified their **intimidation** and attempts to have him **arrested**. His family was very uncomfortable and feared for his life and therefore he decided to make use of the U.S. visa he had had for over a year already (noting that he could have left before). He highlighted he left because his family wanted him to be safe. This was in 2012.

Asked to describe the impact, this had on this family, the witness responded that the impact could not be measured. His mother had been living in **pain** since. When he went to the U.S., he left his second wife whom he married in 2009 with his mother. He explained that the woman was the widow of his late brother and that he

took her with the rest of the children. He added that his entire family had been crying: not only because of his absence, but also because of the continuous **stigmatisation** they **suffered** having been labeled as witches. He noted that he thanked God because he came from a descent family. For over 500 years, his close family members in Katong Kunda, in Jifarong, in Keneba were imams, who are known for their service and contribution to humanity. He concluded by saying that associating him with anything "ungodly and stigmatising as being a witch" was unforgivable.

He noted that nonetheless, he had forgiven "Jesus" Ensa Badjie. He said that he was just like any other Gambian who because of greed and fear wanted to secure their position.

"The only person I could not forgive forever is Yahya Jammeh".

He added that this was not because of what Jammeh had done to him, but because he forced so many people to swear at an idol just for him to be president. *"Some of them had died, some of them he had turned them into demons, destroyed their 'dunya' and 'akhira'. They are in hell right now thanks to Yahya Jammeh"*. He said that he could not forgive such a person. Otherwise, he had forgiven everyone else. The Deputy Lead Counsel thanked the witness very much and noted that because of the time difference he had to start his testimony at 4 am.

The floor was given to the Commissioners. The Chairman started by saying "*what a chilling testimony!*" He thanked the witness for sharing his pain with them and having spent time preparing his testimony. He said there was one point in his testimony that left him completely bewildered and referred to the part when the witness had said that he had heard that the Gambian Government might have used people as guinea pigs to test local drugs. He punctuated saying "*absolutely unbelievable*".

The witness wanted to correct one point and said that he did not say the "Gambia Government" but

that it was Yahya Jammeh who was using the system for his own interest. This process was independent of The Gambia Government, who apart from a few people who were used to do his dirty things, knew nothing about what he was doing. It was Yahya Jammeh and Yahya Jammeh alone. The Chairman said he agreed with him very much indeed, but highlighted that Yahya Jammeh was the one who the rest of the world saw as the representative of the government. That was why he used it in that sense, but he completely agreed with the witness. The government and country were **hijacked**. The Chairman went one saying that Yahya Jammeh had instrumentalised the State to pursue these outrageous things.

That he had even **raped** somebody in the State House.

Commissioner Kah told the witness that he was sorry for what happened to him and wanted to know how he had been able to rebuild his life. The witness responded that it had been very difficult. He called it a life in transition. This event of 14th January 2009, he called it the beginning of an end and the beginning of a beginning. He was almost settling down into a job that he loved, which had the potential that he was looking for in life. Having being diverted into the unknown, and living in constant **fear**. It had been very difficult. Despite having a luxurious job at the British Embassy as the human resource administrator, he was never safe. He added that he was under constant **intimidation** and surveillance.

Until he left The Gambia, every day he wondered what could happen to him, such as being **arrested** or **abducted**. After leaving the country, struggling to settle down as an immigrant had been the most difficult thing that one could imagine. If he could have chosen, he would have never gone to a place where the temperature is -20 Celsius, if he could have stayed serving The Gambia. He admitted that he had had opportunities in the U.S. that he could not have had in The Gambia. But he was away from some of the most important family members he had, like his mother, even if some part of his family in the U.S. with him. He noted that over the past eight years he was only

able to go back once for a very short period and concluded that this was not how he wanted to live his life. So, he had been a life in transition.

Commissioner Kah then asked the witness what impact the witch-hunt had on the police as a whole. The witness said ever since the police force had been created in this country, this was the worst that it had ever dealt with. Nothing like this had ever happened to the police although individual officers had been **victimised**. But for the entire institution to be brought down to such a degrading situation by total strangers could not be tolerated. Until today, the police had not yet gained back its dignity. There were officers, hundreds of them who were willing to put their life to protect their **dignity** and the profession, but they could not because of fear of what could potentially happen to them. The police had been badly **demoralised** and this had effects until today.

Commissioner Imam Jallow told the witness he was very much moved by his statement, particularly the quotations he had made about being guided rightly and not doing wrong at any time. The Commissioner wondered how one man had been able to control everybody to the point that he could do all these evil things without anybody saying anything about it. The witness said how Yahya Jammeh succeeded was two folds. He quoted a verse of the Quran and translated it as "*when evil leaders come, they destroy the towns, those who are dignified are those that they destroy*". He said that this was how Yahya Jammeh succeeded in doing what he did: he harmed you when you were not "in his line" and rewarded you if you did things for him.

He said that he had kept all his pay slips and noted that a police officer was being paid a 1000 dalasi to support a family of 5 or 10 and with no other job opportunities here. He asked why would someone fear to lose his job for something that he would not be able to stop even if he tried and refused to comply. He further said that people have been enslaved by their family's needs. He noted that a few "went to the

excess because of greed" but the majority of them had been in this situation because they were individuals. He added that since 1954, they did not build The Gambia; they built individuals. They had never been a community of people where they would stand for each other. This was the second reason.

When asked to give his closing remarks, the witness told the Chairman he knew it was their time to leave but we wanted to seek his permission to give him time to address The Gambia and the security forces on something that was very important. He stated that he had been waiting for 10 years for this opportunity and that today is the day. All he wanted was to show them and the citizens of The Gambia what the life of a police officer was. The police are not what they see them as. The police are more of victims than aggressors and he wanted to give a few examples:

He mentioned IGP Landing "Thirteen" Badjie. He explained that he, the witness was among the investigators who investigated the death of Deyda Hydara and he said that at the time IGP Landing "Thirteen" Badjie did everything to make sure he laid hands on primary suspects. But as a result of that determination, he was **arrested** in his house at 3 am, detained in Mile 2 Prison for five days and dismissed after over 30 years of service. He said he regretted that a person like Ousman Sonko who never served even in the military police was brought to the police.

The witness further said that officers were **humiliated**, **tortured** and **killed**, adding that nothing was done for those who died on line of duty, nothing happens. He cited a series of examples: in December 2016, a fire officer called Balika Conteh was trapped as he was fighting a fire at around Kotu. He was burnt down and died after four months and nothing was done for his family. He gave another example, citing Corporal Alagie Barrow who was stationed at the police station in Somita. As he was deployed at a checkpoint, he was hit by a truck, dragged for 75 meters and his body was completely destroyed. When he died, his family received 5000 dalasi. The same happened to the families of Jam Korra and Fadera who died in an accident when escorting Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara.

He then referred to Yamundow Jagne who was a chief superintendent of police and was shot while she was serving in the peacekeeping mission in Darfur. She was evacuated to Banjul, spent months at the RVH but the police did nothing about it. They did not even follow-up with the U.N. to make sure they compensated Yamundow Jagne. He added that since 2010, Yamundow Jagne had been living in pain, struggling to get medication and treatment, to no avail. His own brother Lamin who is currently serving as a sergeant in the police was involved in an accident with 27 other officers in 2009 while they were driving in a police truck going on an official mission to Basse. After the accident, he was given only three Paracetamol and while he was left with a disability from the accident, no-one cares about what happens him.

He then spoke about Tijan Badjie who died last June and who was his personal friend. The witness explained that Tijan Badjie had been instructed to prosecute the current Vice-President¹² and the Director of Press when they were in The Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices (Gamcotrap). But because they had committed no offense, he could not secure a conviction against them. As a result, Tijan Badjie was **arrested**, dismissed and **detained** for months. He was brought back to police but left the country in 2013 and from that moment on he struggled getting his gratuity. He then mentioned Pa Jallow who was a commissioner of police and whose only crime was to be related to Alagie Yoro Jallow of the Independent Newspaper and so, he was abandoned and his juniors were promoted over him. He noted that his friend Aziz Bojang was fired for no apparent reason and was only reinstated months later. The current Deputy IGP experienced the same fate.

Mustapha Ceesay mentioned that every peacekeeper is contributing 10% of their MSA (in dollars) to the police, but he wondered where that money was going to and why it was not used to care for their officers.

¹²Isatou Touray.

Before, it was said that the money was going directly to Yahya Jammeh, but since he was gone, the money is still not being used for the officers. He said “somebody has to talk about it” warning that up to this day, the police are being used by politicians and those in position for their own selfish interest.

He referred to the Faraba incident¹³. The Faraba people were being deprived from their livelihood, which was given to one businessman. All they were trying was to get it back so that could farm to survive. The witness said that instead of using common sense and resolve that matter, the government sent out PIU officers there. The villagers saw them as an intimidation and on the first occasion one officer was pelted and his teeth got broken. The police did not do anything about it. According to the witness they should not have sent the PIU there and after that incident should have recalled them and instead should have used dialogue to resolve the issue. But they refused to do that and eventually, more than 25 officers were injured in that incident. Some were victimised including ASP Fatty.

He noted that people died and now police officers were charged for **murder** and **manslaughter**. According to the witness this is not right. The police leadership sent them to Faraba and by doing so they technically gave the orders. According to him, when the police were attacked, they had to defend themselves. We wondered how people could be given AK47 and live rounds without training and highlighted that as a result of that they were now going to be trialed for murder and manslaughter. He recapped saying that their place was burnt down, more than 25 were injured and some had to be hospitalised and lives were lost. He noted that the IGP said that he did not give them orders, but highlighted that by the virtue order of sending them to Faraba, he gave them orders to be there.

Mustapha Ceesay said that when incidents happen, the police has to respond regretting that they were not properly trained in de-escalation. He complained that the

police are not supported, they had no leadership, no direction and are basically left on their own. Still talking about the Faraba incident, he said that some of the police officers faced a volatile situation for the first time in their career, where they were attacked and injured by an entire village. What he wanted to tell Gambians is that the police are not their enemy. They are suffering from the same problems as the country: under-development.

The witness continued and highlighted that his last pay in the police in March 2009 was 1729 dalasi and wondered how an officer could support a **wife, three children, a mother with that amount.**

He called on Gambians to come together as a country. Yahya Jammeh divided them and used the security by separating it from the community. Today the government should come together and bridge that gap, especially as some members of their community demonised their police officers. He stressed that they are not demons, they are mere victims of the same violations everyone suffered. He regretted that it had become a modus operandi for citizens to attack police stations to venting their anger. “*This is not right*”.

He stated that he was in uniform in 2000. He remembered that shortly before the April 2000 protests, those who were in the fire service could not wear their uniforms outside because they would be attacked. He stated that during the April 2000 student demonstrations, two fire officers Binta Kinteh and Jabou Ndour had petrol poured on them and could have been burnt down, if God had not saved them. He noted that petrol was also poured on Awa Bitteh (Sanneh) and that she too could have died if God had not saved her. He stated that the week before his testimony at the TRRC, people had attacked a police station because they were angry. He warned that

¹³On 18 June 2018, the Police Intervention Unit shot three men dead in the Faraba Banta village and injured ten others as the community clashed with law enforcers regarding sand mining activities in the village by a private company. On 1 July 2018, President Adama Barrow set up a commission of enquiry to look into the events and six police officers were charged with murder. On 8 January 2019, the State House reported that President Barrow had decided to discontinue the prosecution against the police officers. Following an outcry by civil society, the Justice Minister Abubacarr Tambadou denied any interference or attempt by the president to discontinue the case.

there is going to lead to anarchy in the country and that no-one is going to gain from it. He said in the Mandinka language that they should not make Gambian police and security their enemies highlighting that they are working for the people of the country.

Mustapha Ceesay said that if current President Adama Barrow decided not to resign after three years as he had promised, they should wait for the results at the polls. But no-one should try to destabilise their country. He referred to what is happening in Iraq, in Libya, in Syria, in Yemen, he then switched to the Mandinka language and asked where it all started. He then said in English that (it started because) they were not following due process. If people believed that Adama Barrow was wrong, they should make their case during the elections and remove him through that means. If he loses, he would go out. But according to him the President has a constitutional right to remain in office until 2021.

He again switched to the Mandinka language and advised them to have pity for the women folk. Switching between languages, he described the **difficult conditions women face** and how they are struggling to survive. He called on people to have sympathy for women and also for the young people. He referred to the 2017 impasse (political crisis) when 150,000 people were displaced and 50,000 sought refuge abroad. Despite this situation, not a single gunshot was fired. He asked how could they guarantee that in 2020, when 30-40 people come out wanting to force the President out, this was not going to bring violence in their country. He highlighted that The Gambia is not like any other country. If there is a gunshot in the morning, there is not going to be any food. He noted that 90% of the Gambians do not have water in their homes and wondered what would happen if the water source is damaged.

He noted that if the water is shot down, the police could not “make command of any situation for more than one hour”. He called upon the Gambian government and those in charge of their security, to come up with a national strategic policy directing how the internal security should be handled. The police itself should have policies and procedures in place and standards that are compatible

with democratic policies. He warned that they cannot continue to do things as they do now. He went on saying that there was no-one in The Gambia with the right mindset and the right confidence to lead the security sector.

Ending his statement, Mustapha Ceesay said that most importantly, he wanted to tell the politicians and the government that they must stop politicizing their security forces. The security forces had been used by Yahya Jammeh. This must stop.

In order to rebuild their police force, it needs to become responsive, accountable and representative. In order to do so, the governance system itself must be free from nepotism. He said that people should be appointed based on merit and not based on who supports them. Finally, he mentioned that the government must do something as peacekeepers cannot continue to secure The Gambia, noting that it should be Gambian security that secures the country.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death

Yahya Jammeh, Solo Bojang, Ensa Badjie

Drug Trafficking

Yahya Jammeh

Unlawful demotion

Ensa Badjie



Dodou Sanyang stands beside the bed of his late mother, Naa Joni Sonko who, in 2009, was abducted during the witch-hunt campaign ordered by Yahya Jammeh. She was forced to drink a concoction, from which she suffered ill-health and never fully recovered.

WITNESS NAME: Ensa BADJIE (aka Jesus)

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 13th November 2019

EVENT (S): The 2009 witch-hunt, the witness' role and participation; and his subsequent victimisation

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Inspector General of Police

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Inspector General of Police

POSITION AT TIME OF TESTIMONY: Unemployed¹⁴

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

After giving his education background, Ensa Badjie told the Commission that he enlisted in The Gambia Police Force, GPF in February 1989 adding that during his training career, he was given the baton of honour. He went to detail his ranks and promotions throughout the subsequent years and said he was stationed at Kotu at the time of the 10th and 11th April student demonstrations in 2000.

The witness told the Commission that when the demonstrations took place, he was the first person to see the students at the Fire Service, which they were vandalising. He ran to Kotu Police Station and as he was just entering the station, somebody threw a bottle at him, wounding his leg in the process. Further narrating the incident, he explained that he told others in the station to leave because what was unfolding was not safe. He saw Awa Sanneh¹⁵ coming out of the station officer's office where they poured petrol on her and others threw stones. He added that he suspected that Awa Sanneh also "got a problem from there" because she was pregnant at that time and claimed he helped some of the policewomen and other women in the station and their children escape.

Moving on from the April 2000 student demonstrations, Ensa Badjie explained that he was promoted to the position of sub-inspector some time in 2000/2001 then after a while to the position of chief inspector. In 2005, he left the country to go on a mission in Sudan, returning in 2006.



The witness then launched into a detailed narration of events including his promotion and how he was sent back to the Crime Management Coordination, CMC on executive orders. He added that Ousman Sonko insisted these were executive directives so he had no choice but to return "because of the situation at the time".

Asked to clarify, the witness stated that during those days, one had to follow instructions whether they liked it or not. "*If you did not do that, you know what would happen to you*", he added. He stated that everybody in the country, including the Commissioners knew what was happening, but nobody talked. When probed to clarify what people were afraid of and what would happen if you either disobeyed orders or did not do what was expected, the witness responded that when executive orders came, you could not violate them unless you left the country. He added that you could not refuse those orders and stay in the country as a free person.

He was asked what were some of the things that would happen if you denied an order and stayed in the country and he explained that "*they would create a problem or hook you on another side where you did not know anything because the Big Man had all the powers in his hands*". Asked who he was referring to and the witness stated the former President Yahya Jammeh.

¹⁴At the time of release of this testimony, it has been reported that Ensa Badjie was reinstated in the police force as a police commissioner.

¹⁵Awa Sanneh Bittaye is a police officer and testified at the TRRC on 23rd September 2019.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked for examples. The witness laughed and said the example was his own case, adding that everyone had heard about that in the country. He claimed he always told Yahya Jammeh the truth, but he (Yahya Jammeh) saw it as the witness challenging him. He was asked if he was referring to his own victimisation that happened after the witch-hunt and the witness responded in the affirmative.

The witness explained that if you advised the “Big man”, he would take it as a challenge from you or he would tell you “*Oh you know more than me.*” He cited the example of Brigadier General Gibril Bojang accused of stealing Yahya Jammeh’s money. Yahya Jammeh instructed him (the witness) who was IGP at the time¹⁶ to investigate the matter. Ensa Badjie revealed that he suggested to some of his colleagues (Saul Badjie, Umpa Mendy, “Bombardier”, Kawsu Camara and then Chief of Protocol Alagie Ousman Ceesay) that they instead plead with Yahya Jammeh to forgive Gibril Bojang and they agreed. He said his reasoning was that too many trained security officers had been dismissed and this was not safe for the country.

The witness explained that upon hearing this, Yahya Jammeh became wild. He added that Yahya Jammeh said a lot of things that he the witness could not repeat before the Commission. He also told him that he would release Gibril Bojang and would instead take him (the witness) to the prison and by that time, the Junglers were downstairs. The witness further added that Yahya Jammeh asked him what it was going to be. So he responded that he had come there to plead and appeal to him and if he accepted it, okay. If he did not accept it, that was also okay so the witness was instructed to take Gibril Bojang to prison.

Ensa Badjie remarked however that Gibril Bojang’s statement was not taken, neither had he been arrested, charged or taken to court.

He nevertheless took him to prison by force as he had no choice, claiming that if he had not, the repercussions

would have been far worse for him. Gibril Bojang was made to board the vehicle with the witness and the Junglers, driven to Mile 2 Prison and handed over. He revealed that Gibril Bojang was later taken to court where he pleaded guilty and jailed on one count for four years and the other count five years concurrently.

Following Gibril Bojang’s case, the witness stated that he went to Ousman Sonko and announced he was going to leave this job because he could not work under such conditions. Ousman Sonko told him that this was the situation but if he left the job also and “sat down”, matters would be more serious than this. The witness said he retorted that he would run away but Ousman Sonko reminded him that if he left, his brother the former CDS¹⁷ would be in a serious mess. The witness also recalled that Yahya Jammeh had called him after Gibril Bojang’s sentencing to complain that the right sentence had not been handed out and he responded that Gibril Bojang was a first offender and though there were discrepancies in how the money had been embezzled, when he stood in front of the magistrate he pleaded guilty. He did not waste the magistrate’s time nor did he waste the court’s time.

Ensa Badjie told the Commission that Gibril Bojang’s case was in 2009 but in 2008 towards 2009, there were series of problems between the witness and Yahya Jammeh, which were many. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if it was fair to say that as a result of those series of problems, he felt that he had to obey any orders or directives that he was given. The witness answered that this was the case when Yahya Jammeh started “this witch-hunt”.

Moving on to the 2009 witch-hunt, the Deputy Lead Counsel told the witness that they had received evidence from other witnesses that the witch-hunters went to the Banjul Police Headquarters. She asked if prior to the day that they had arrived, the witness had received any information about their presence and activities in The Gambia. The witness explained that a day before they came to the Police Headquarters,

¹⁶The witness later specified that he was appointed in June 2008.

¹⁷The witness later revealed in his testimony that his brother is Katim Badjie.

he had heard rumours that they had gone to the military barracks and the National Intelligence Agency, NIA Headquarters in Banjul.

Upon further questioning, Ensa Badjie revealed that he had received information that the witch-hunters caught alleged witches and they also used to claim that certain people had certain ailments and they had to be washed to expunge those ailments from their system.

He added that he heard that anybody who had been pointed out was taken to Baba Jobe's compound in Kololi. Asked if heard anything that was done to people who were taken to Baba Jobe's compound and the witness replied in the negative.

Ensa Badjie then proceeded to narrate what happened on the day that the witch-hunters came to the Banjul Police Headquarters. He could only recall the year and was unsure of the date and day though he believed it might have been on a Wednesday. He narrated that one day, between 10-11 am, Yahya Jammeh personally called him on the telephone and told him that Solo Bojang was coming with some marabouts, who were Fulas, to the headquarters and instructed him to ensure everybody complied and dismiss those who refused.

The witness was then asked if Yahya Jammeh told him what they were supposed to do when they arrived at the Police Headquarters and he responded in the negative. He added that it was only after the whole incident that he questioned Solo Bojang who then explained everything to him. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked some follow-up questions regarding the conversation between Ensa Badjie and Yahya Jammeh, and he further stated that he was told, "IG, comply with it. If you do not comply your head would roll and anybody who does not comply, make sure the person is being sacked. Sack the person!" The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if Yahya Jammeh said anything else during that conversation and the witness said well

he might have said something but this was the main discussion and within 10 minutes Solo Bojang arrived in his office with the Fula marabouts.

Asked what he understood by his "head would roll" and the witness explained that it was a "service terminology" that Yahya Jammeh used. It could be anything, including being sacked, or **jailed**. Going back to when Solo Bojang arrived, the witness narrated that he came accompanied with **armed** soldiers, armed plain clothed officers, Police Intervention Unit, PIU officers and the Green Boys. The witness looked through the window and he saw that the main entrance coming into the Police Headquarters was completely sealed with armed soldiers guarding posts.

When Solo Bojang came into his office, the witness asked what had happened and he responded "Didn't 'Oga' tell you I was coming with these Fula men?", to which the witness responded he had.

The witness told the Commission that he asked him what they wanted and he told him that they were there to perform some work. Then one Fula man instructed him in Fula with Solo Bojang interpreting to stand up. He recalled that they were drumming and singing in his office. The witness then said the Fula man instructed him to take off his trouser and he complied, after which he took a mirror and used it to inspect the witness' body all the while the drums were still beating.

The Fula man then used the big mirror to inspect his office, pointing it at the corners of the office, the walls, even under the chairs and tables. When they were done, he heard the Fula man tell Solo Bojang in Fula "*this man does not have a problem*". He stated that he was really ashamed after that but he had no choice because "*they all knew what was happening, who was sitting there*". He added that he had no powers and had to comply to safeguard his life. When they were ready, then they told him to go with them to the offices.

Ensa Badjie told the Commission that Solo Bojang was doing the interpretation with another person because he (the witness) could not understand Fula very well. Asked to give more details about Solo Bojang, the witness responded that he was a major, part of the State Guards, reporting directly to Yahya Jammeh. He further explained that he was from a village called Karo in the Foni region.

Going back to who Solo Bojang came with, the Deputy Lead Counsel noted that the witness had mentioned PIU officers. He was asked if PIU officers were not under the IGP's authority. The witness laughed and responded that he agreed that he was the IGP but there were PIU men who were directly under the auspices of the Office of the President even before he became the IGP. Some were at the State House, others were at Kanilai or posted at other places. He noted that he had no power over these men. The witness was asked if he knew the names of any of the people who were commanding those PIU officers and the witness asserted that it was Solo Bojang as he was the senior man and the operational commander at that time.

Going back to the morning in question, the Deputy Lead Counsel sought to clarify if the morning parade had already taken place on the day the men came. The witness vehemently affirmed that he only attended the parade as the IGP on Mondays. He added that if he remembered correctly, the men came on a Wednesday and swore on the Quran that he did not attend the parade on that day. He instead claimed that he was in his office and that unless the system had changed, the IGP only attends parades on Mondays.

The Deputy Lead Counsel revealed that the reason she asked was because they had received evidence that the witness had attended the morning parade at 8 am. She further told the witness that they had also received information that the day before on a Tuesday, the witch-hunters came to the Police Headquarters in the afternoon. He was asked if he recalled that. Holding the Quran, the witness denied he was there adding that he would leave the person who accused him to Allah's judgment.

Further testifying, in a very angry tone, he asserted that the Fula men did not come for him. He repeated that only

after Yahya Jammeh's call did Solo Bojang arrive in his office accompanied by the Fula men adding that he had nothing to hide.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if prior to being asked to follow them to the offices, he had asked anyone else to join him and follow the group. The witness confirmed he did and explained that after 10 minutes of dealing with the Fula men, he got up, asked Ken Mendy to come and instructed him to follow the witch-hunters and write down the names of the individuals the witch-hunters would identify as the "Big Man" (meaning Yahya Jammeh) wanted a list sent to him. The witness then claimed that he also followed them personally because he was the IGP at the time, therefore he was the man in charge of the Police Headquarters and the people the witch-hunters were to inspect were part of his family. He further added that he followed them to know who they were going to point at as his men were under his responsibility.

Describing the scene, Ensa Badjie told the Commission that the witch-hunters who were about six¹⁸ in numbers (with two holding mirrors and horns and two people beating the drums) led the way, Solo Bojang and his team were behind, followed by the witness and Ken Mendy. Behind the group were two or three **armed** men with AK47 rifles escorting them. Ensa Badjie testified that whenever they entered an office, he just stood at the door of the office and looked at them. He could not recall how many people were identified during the office-to-office search but remembered that after a few offices were inspected, the witch-hunters and Solo Bojang wanted to go downstairs. The witness was asked to call the officers so he instructed then Regimental Sergeant Major, RSM Abdou Colley to assemble the men.

The Deputy Lead Counsel said that she wanted to show him the photographs that were submitted by Mustapha Ceesay the previous day so that he could let them know if these were the people that he recalled seeing on that day. While the witness was going through them, the Deputy Lead Counsel told him that the photographs included some of

¹⁸The witness was unsure as to the exact number and hesitated between five, six and seven.



police officers who were lined up, of the goat that was **slaughtered** on that day as well as photos of the Green Boys, the drums and the witch-doctors.

After looking at the photos, the witness showed the Commission one of the photographs and pointed to the person on the left who he identified as the leader of the witch-hunters. He also identified the man leading the way; the goat; the items the men wore; the two drums but remarked that if he could remember properly there were three drums.

The Deputy Lead Counsel thanked the witness and invited him to resume his narration by telling them what happened when all the men assembled downstairs at the Police Headquarters. The witness explained that when they came downstairs, both male and female police officers were assembled and both doors leading into the Police Headquarters were all sealed by armed soldiers. He recounted that he then told the assembled officers that Yahya Jammeh had called him this morning to inform him that Solo Bojang was coming there with Fula marabouts and they should all comply with them. He said he had added that Yahya Jammeh had instructed for anyone who refuses to comply, to be sacked and stressed that these were his exact words.

Ensa Badjie recalled that Solo Bojang, the Fula marabouts and their entire team were present. He was asked if during that address he said anything about the fact that people would be asked to swear an oath, which he denied. He further testified that at that time, the goat had not even been brought in; it was inside the vehicle parked outside. When asked if at that point he had told the officers what the witch-hunters were looking for, he responded that he could not remember. Asked if he recalled saying anything else, the witness swore by the Quran that should he remember anything before he leaves the premises of the Commission, he would tell them.

Ensa Badjie however did remember that he had stressed that the orders were coming from Yahya Jammeh as he wanted the officers to understand that it was not him (the witness) who had ordered the witch-hunt, he was just complying with orders. Asked if after his address, anyone else say anything during the gathering and he responded that it was possible that Solo Bojang might have said something but he could not remember anybody from the police saying anything else.

Continuing on with his testimony, the witness explained that the Fula men came with their drums and stood in the middle of the parade ground. They asked people to stand in a circle around them and they did.

The witch-hunters were in the middle singing and drumming and those holding horns and mirrors pointed at people, including Kumba Jatta.

The witness specified that he could not remember exactly whether Kumba Jatta was a superintendent or chief superintendent but he was responsible as deputy commissioner for the Banjul area.

He explained that when Kumba Jatta was identified, they told him to remove the “things” on his body because those “things” were not good. They escorted Kumba Jatta back into his office and after 10 minutes they came out with one them leading Kumba Jatta by

the right hand. The witness said that when he looked carefully, he saw the paw of an animal in Kumba Jatta's hand, which looked like the hand of a baby because it had nails on it just like baby fingers.

The witness also recalled seeing a plastic bag filled with jujus. The animal paw, which Kumba Jatta was holding, was in his hand but the marabout told Kumba Jatta to drop it. When Kumba Jatta did, the man did not pick the object with his bare hand but instead placed the bag over the object and used it to scoop it into the bag. The witch-hunters then went all the way near the office of the licensing department, dug a hole and sent someone to bring the goat into the headquarters.

At this point, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness to confirm that he was not present when Kumba Jatta's jujus were taken off his body and the witness did. He asserted that he was standing outside and did not see when they were removing these jujus from Kumba Jatta's body. He further explained that the reason he stood outside was he wanted to see where they were digging and what was going to be put inside that hole.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked for clarification and the witness further explained that whilst were removing Kumba Jatta's jujus from his body, others were digging a hole. Then one went outside to collect the goat. When the goat was brought in, the marabouts escorted Kumba Jatta out of his office. Asked who else apart from Kumba Jatta was identified at the parade ground and he remembered that three people or four people in total including Kumba Jatta were identified.

When asked about Mustapha Ceesay, he responded that it was a possibility but claimed that he did not know Mustapha Ceesay and had not had a chance to watch his testimony the day before.

The Deputy Lead Counsel stated that they would come back to Mustapha Ceesay's case. She proceeded to

ask the witness about Yahya Darboe. Ensa Badjie responded that if he saw his photo, he might be able to remember him because at the headquarters, there were many Yahya Darboes. The Deputy Lead Counsel called out a few more names to see if that would jog his memory including that of Yusupha Saine, which the witness remembered. He added that he could not say for certain whether Yusupha Saine was identified or not because when they started the identification, he did not follow the witch-hunters. He just stood back and looked at them because they were doing the identification by themselves.

Ensa Badjie further testified that he recalled who FRI Jammeh was but could not remember if he was identified by the witch-hunters. He was then asked what about Pa Silver but the witness replied that he could remember three or four people including Kumba Jatta. The Deputy Lead Counsel then told him that they had evidence from Ken Mendy that there were over ten names listed. Asked if he saw the list after Ken Mendy prepared it, the witness responded that it was possible that he saw the document because if he gave an instruction to somebody to do a job, when it is done then the document is shared with him.

The Deputy Lead Counsel said he had told them earlier that the list was supposed to be sent to Yahya Jammeh. He was asked if that was correct and he confirmed, thus contradicting his earlier statement. He added that when Yahya Jammeh called him at around 3-4 am, he gave him the names on the paper over the telephone. He was told they would come back to that phone call, but did he know where the list currently was or if a copy was on file, to which he responded that he could not remember where he had placed it.

Going back to what happened at the Police Headquarters on that day, the witness was asked if apart from the goat, any other animal was brought in as far as he recalled. After a short silent moment, the witness stated that a red cock was also brought in. He added that when the hole was dug, they first buried a bottle after pouring the liquid into the hole,

the goat and cock were slaughtered and buried into the hole. He further testified that Solo Bojang asked him to come closer, where the hole was and the witness complied.

The witch-hunters poured the blood of the slaughtered animals, muttered words and Solo Bojang who was translating asked him to repeat after him, which the witness did. When he left, then DIG Modou Gaye was also brought and made to swear in addition to a few other senior commissioners. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if he could expand on what he was swearing to as far as he recalled.

Ensa Badjie laughed and then responded that they **swore an oath of allegiance to Yahya Jammeh** and were made to say that “**you are also behind and supporting the Republic of The Gambia plus the citizenry and you will never betray them, you will never betray the country**”.

The witness was asked if that oath was different from the oath of office that they would normally swear upon being appointed to the police force. The witness replied that some words were identical but some were different. He then defended his actions by stating that they had no choice because they were all afraid of Yahya Jammeh. He added that the reason he told RSM Abdou Colley to assemble the men was because they went through many problems and they came out of those problems. If he wanted to explain that here, he would name so many people who are holding high positions in the country at the present moment and they would not like it.

The witness then launched into a convoluted explanation, which was unclear due to the poor quality of interpretation but the Deputy Lead Counsel redirected him to what happened at the Police Headquarters when the oath of allegiance was sworn and asked about the rest of the other ranks and men. The witness said he could not

remember but it was possible that some men did not swear allegiance, adding that because of the situation at the time, everybody was careful of himself. The slightest error that you commit the man present there was his right hand (referring to Solo Bojang); he was working directly under the Big Man. None of them liked it but nobody had any choice.

The Deputy Lead Counsel then took the witness back to the singing and drumming. He was asked if he recalled what language this was done in and he explained that this was in Fula and in Mandinka but remarked that he could not remember what exactly they were saying because his mind was focused on the events that were unfolding and the consequences.

The witness stated that the entire process was painful to everybody, people were ashamed but nobody dared say anything because there was a complete lack of trust. Yahya Jammeh had informants everywhere adding that there were a lot of plain cloth officers who were present. Everybody had to be careful and if you did something which was not to Yahya Jammeh's liking and he heard about it, especially for him (the witness) if he had done something or said something, he would not have been there today.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness if after all this took place, he gave any other instructions concerning the list of people who were identified.

Ensa Badjie affirmed that when they went to the parade ground, he advised them that **Solo Bojang and the others were sent by Yahya Jammeh and anyone who had been identified had to go to Baba Jobe's compound. Should anybody fail to comply with these orders, they would be sacked immediately or “heads would roll”**.

The Deputy Lead Counsel told him he had told them earlier that the next day, he went to Baba Jobe's compound and the witness answered that he had heard rumours that Kumba Jatta had gone there alone to collect his jujus. Ensa Badjie added that he lived near Kotu Police Station so when he closed from work, he decided to go there to assess the situation. He called Solo Bojang who was at Yahya Jammeh's mother's compound in Kotu and he directed the witness to Baba Jobe's compound.

When he arrived, he found security officers at the gate with some armed with AK47 rifles.

The witness explained that what he saw was very sad and nobody would want to allow their mother or father be in such condition. There were many people and some of these people could be his mother, some could be his father.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if he was referring to civilians and he clarified that he was referring to those who were **abducted** and taken to Baba Jobe's compound. When probed, he recalled seeing more than 50, with some in the hall and others outside in the yard. Asked to describe the condition of the people he saw and the witness responded that their condition was terrible and he would never agree to have his mother or father in such a condition.

Going back to the call the witness had with Yahya Jammeh in the early morning regarding the list of individuals who were identified, the witness was asked if apart from reading out the names of the individuals who were identified, anything else was discussed. The witness stated that Yahya Jammeh told him again that should anybody not comply with those orders, they should be sacked immediately. Ensa Badjie explained that he did not follow the instruction up until the third day after the visit of the witch-hunters because he knew what was going on was not right. At this point, the Deputy Lead Counsel interrupted and asked if during those three days, he was aware of any of the police officers refusing to go to Baba Jobe's compound. The witness responded in the negative adding that the instructions were that those identified

were to go by themselves to Baba Jobe's compound, he therefore did not provide any escort. However, a few days later he heard that there was one person who had refused to go.

Asked if he only heard about only one person refusing the go, the witness responded yes, adding that he did not talk to juniors directly and that there was a chain of command with officers between him and the juniors. He went on to explain that a few days later, the Big Man called and he informed him that everyone complied except one officer by the surname Ceesay¹⁹. Yahya Jammeh told the witness to dismiss the officer with immediate effect so when he went back to headquarters, he gave instructions to someone (he could not remember who) to charge Ceesay. Later, Ceesay was referred to his office and the witness stated that instead of dismissing him, he demoted him and transferred him far away from Banjul.

Ensa Badjie explained that if you are demoted, after six months, you are reinstated and given the old rank you were demoted from. He added that the reason for taking him away from the Banjul area was because he did not want the Big Man to find out that he had not complied with the orders, alluding that something may have happened to him (the witness). He claimed that he did not mean to make Ceesay suffer and he wanted him to be far away to avoid being reported to the Big Man.

The Deputy Lead Counsel remarked that he had testified that in general he would follow Yahya Jammeh's orders essentially out of fear but on this particular occasion he chose to disobey and in a way alter that order.

He was asked why he felt he could do that in this particular occasion. The witness did not respond directly to the question but instead deflected to the fact that Yahya Jammeh had mood swings and

¹⁹The witness was probably referring to Mustapha Ceesay.

sometimes if you called and he was in a bad mood, the operators on the switchboard would warn you and tell you "*Eihhh you leave that thing until another day because today he is in his bad mood*".

He further explained that what he did was demote and transfer Ceesay, which was against the instruction received but he also prayed to God that the Big Man would not find out and again alluded that should he have, something may have happened to him (the witness). He then contradicted himself and told the Commission that there were many orders given that he had defied, adding that Yahya Jammeh would later ask him and he would simply say he had forgotten. The Deputy Lead Counsel told him they had testimony from Mustapha Ceesay that two days after the incident, probably 16th January, when the witness was informed that certain police officers refused to go to Baba Jobe's compound, he (the witness) took the list and started calling out the names and directly ordering them to board the truck and go to Baba Jobe's compound. The witness laughed and shook his head.

The Deputy Lead Counsel added that additionally, the testimony of Mustapha Ceesay alleges that he (the witness) asked Mustapha Ceesay and Yahya Darboe to write a personal statement and thereafter instructed that they would both be charged. The witness argued that there were many people between him and Mustapha Ceesay who he remembered was a sergeant at the time. He claimed the command could not be directly from him to a sergeant as there were many people between them. There were many senior officers who could relay messages but he could not just come to a junior officer and give him orders.

The Deputy Lead Counsel counter-argued that he would agree that there were instances where as IGP, he would address police officers directly. The witness highlighted that he addressed the police officers only on Mondays when they were at the parade ground. The Deputy Lead Counsel further suggested that he would also address them if they were charged and then brought before him for orders. The witness countered that before they came to him, they had their own station officers, SOs. They started from those SOs or come to the commissioners or to the DIG before they were referred to him. When they

were referred to him, he looked at the charges on the file and the recommendations based on which he took a decision.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if in such an instance, the officer would appear before the witness to receive the final order and the witness confirmed that was the case. The Deputy Lead Counsel added that she was asking this question because initially when they discussed Mustapha Ceesay's case, the witness did not recall any orders being issued, which the witness concurred with. The Deputy Lead Counsel further stated that when she provided his police file to the witness, he was able to go through it and then confirm that that was in fact what happened. The witness agreed. The Deputy Lead Counsel said so her question with regards to Yahya Darboe is whether he was charged and at some point his charges were dropped. The witness answered that he was not aware. He further claimed that the only person he could remember whose report was given to him and who had refused to go was "this Mr. Mustapha Ceesay".

Moving on, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked if apart from what happened at the Police Headquarters, the witness was aware of the activities of the witch-hunters in other parts of the country or in other institutions. The witness disclosed that he heard that they went to many places, including Sintet, Jambur and Nuimi but he had never gone to any of these villages because "it was not his business". He added that the security personnel present were not under him.

Continuing on with his testimony, the witness recalled without giving details that he heard rumours of what the witch-hunters did when they went to these villages however he never received any reports from the Criminal Investigation Unit, CIU as nobody dared to investigate. Asked about his own family, the witness revealed that after he was cleared at the Police Headquarters, the witch-hunters told him they wanted to visit his father's compound. The following day, they went to his father's compound where his mother was living. They searched the whole place and according to their statement, found a horn in the kitchen. They also searched their neighbours but thankfully they did not give any concoction to anybody.

Asked if he knew the reason for the witch-hunt, the witness responded that he did not know the reason but when he was IGP, he had joined Yahya Jammeh on a “Meet The Farmers” tour at Somita, they were sitting down and he heard him saying that people from the Foni region “will eat you²⁰”, adding that “if you happen to build a good house, you will not have the time to enter in that house”.

Ensa Badjie further told the Commission that if they consult GRTS giving them the year, and if those words were not edited out, they could hear those statements.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked how he believed that was somehow linked to the witch-hunt issue and the witness recalled that he had confronted Solo Bojang at the Police Headquarters who told him that the reason for their presence was because some people were witches and wizards but they could be cured.

Solo Bojang allegedly added that those people who are sick or who had certain ailments on your bodies, they could help them clear those ailments from their body. The witness stated that when Solo Bojang told him that, his mind went to the statement Yahya Jammeh made at that meeting in Somita.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness to confirm if what he was saying was that Yahya Jammeh made a statement during the Meet The Farmers tour saying that people in the Foni area harboured some kind of ill will towards people who were succeeding such as himself and that the witness believed that what Solo Bojang told him about these witch-hunters being able to cure people, was targeted at people of the Foni region and other people who had similar intentions towards people like Yahya Jammeh. The witness then clarified that it did not mean that Yahya Jammeh had bad intentions towards the people of Foni adding that he was just telling the Commission what he had heard.

The Deputy Lead Counsel then told the witness that before she asked him about his own victimisation, considering his role at the time as IGP and what happened with the witch-hunters coming to the Police Headquarters in 2009, if there was anything he would like to say to the police officers who served under him at that time including Kumba Jatta and Mustapha Ceesay.

The witness told the Commission that he wanted to reiterate that the reason he accepted the witch-hunters coming to the Police Headquarters was because he had received a directive from the command-in-chief of the armed forces, Yahya Jammeh. If it was he, Ensa Badjie who brought these people, he would have asked them to forgive him. If it was he who had forced them to drink the concoctions, he would tell them to forgive him but he followed orders against his will. He added that what subsequently happened to him was even worse than what happened to those who were victimised by the witch-hunters.

The Deputy Lead Counsel pointed that he still did not refuse the orders, though he had explained the reasons for not refusing the order. She further asked if he had anything to say to them because he was not able to carry out his responsibility as IGP in order to protect them. The witness then pleaded for their forgiveness explaining that at that time he did not have the power or the command. He stressed that he was alone against armed men who outnumbered him. He further explained that even the Minister of Interior Ousman Sonko, who was his superior, was aware of what was going on but he did not dare take any actions. He added that if he went to the Minister of Interior, he would just say “Hey! Me, I cannot be part of this”, thus why he (the witness) could not refuse. He further claimed that he tried to protect them the best he could and that if he had enforced Yahya Jammeh’s directive, Mustapha Ceesay would have been dismissed.

Moving on from the witch-hunt, Ensa Badjie was asked to testify about his own victimisation. The witness told the Commission that he had previously said, he

²⁰Probably making reference to the belief that so-called witches “eat” people.

had many problems with Yahya Jammeh, because he used to tell him the truth but Yahya Jammeh would not accept it. He asserted that Yahya Jammeh was responsible for his **arrest**, trial, conviction and imprisonment. He added that they tried to **arrest** him when he came from Taiwan, where he had gone to do a development course there.

At this point, Ensa Badjie launched into a very convoluted narration regarding events leading to this arrest on 3rd March 2010 in connection with a drug case he was asked to investigate, which the Deputy Lead Counsel had to interrupt and redirect him to discuss his own ordeal.

The witness then revealed that Alagie Morr Jobe and his group at the NIA had planned to **arrest** him. They had come up to his compound many times but he would always get information prior to their arrival that they were planning to **arrest** him and would evade them. He added that they tried for two weeks and on the third week, the then Deputy Director of the NIA, Louis²¹ called him to inform him that Yahya Jammeh had ordered for his **arrest**. He therefore went to the NIA and surrendered himself to Numo Kujabi, the Director of the NIA at the time.

The witness stressed that he had not been dismissed, charged or caution. In tears, he explained that he was **tortured** and his hands were handcuffed and put over his legs, all the while demonstrated to the Commission. He added that they then brought a stick and hung him between two tables. At this stage, the witness was very emotional and repeated that he was bleeding, had wounds on his nose and mouth and that all his clothes were torn.

He disclosed that they tortured him so he would confess to what they were accusing him of.

Ensa Badjie testified that the day after they had taken him to Mile 2 Prison, Alagie Morr Jobe **arrested** his wife, Sirra Jallow, her father, Momodou Jallow and her younger sister Pulo Jallow. They were all taken to the NIA Headquarters and **detained** there. He highlighted that his last child who was 8 to 9 months at the time was unable to be breastfed. He was then taken to the NIA

Headquarters in Banjul as well where he was made to sign his dismissal letter. The witness further stated that he was taken back to Mile 2 Prison where he was held **incommunicado** for a few days. He was again taken back to the NIA, where they asked him to sign a statement but he refused so he was returned to Mile 2 Prison.

The witness related that either on the 9th or the 13th March 2010 at around 8.30-9.00 pm, he was in a one-man cell at the maximum-security wing when then Superintendent Alagie Jobe came and opened the cell. He told him in Wolof “get up, get up. We need you”, adding that he had a stammer. The witness was taken through the back door and as he was being taken away, he saw two NIA operatives he recognised, Bukarr Sallah and Korrka Bah. They were waiting for him and had thought that the witness was coming through the main wing’s gate. As soon as the witness arrived, Bukarr Sallah put on a mask but it was too late.

“Bukarr, I have recognised you”, the witness stated in Wolof adding that he used to give his father fish money when he was in Bansang in 1996. The witness said he turned to then Inspector Nuha Darboe, a prison officer from Kalagi who was also escorting him to these men and told him that if anything happened to him, it was Korrka Bah and Bukarr Sallah who had come for him. He was then made to board a pick up, sandwiched and a nylon bag was placed over his head. At this point in the testimony, the witness very distraught, got up and was ushered outside.

When Ensa Badjie returned, he was asked to continue with his narration. The witness again detailed how he was escorted by Alagie Jobe and Nuha Darboe and handed over to NIA officials Korrka Bah and Bukarr Sallah. He remembered that when they placed the nylon bag over his head, they tied it around his neck. He could not breathe. He tried and struggled. He explained that he would blow air in the nylon bag and when it became a little wide, he would try to breathe. He also tried to create a hole in the bag using his teeth. Once at the NIA Headquarters, they took him upstairs to the conference room, where they started beating

²¹ We assume the witness was referring to Louis Gomez, the former deputy director of the NIA who died in 2018, whilst standing trial with eight former NIA officials for the murder of UDP activist Solo Sandeng.

him using high-tension cables. Whilst **beating** him, they would say “*the target is you*” “*You refused to sign the statement*”. He recalled that Omar Cham was the head of the **torturing** team of four or five men, which included Korrka Bah and Bukarr Sallah.

After they **beat** him, they took him back downstairs and returned to Mile 2 Prison at the maximum-security wing. He remembered that as they took him downstairs, he saw that Kuluteh Manneh who had also been brought in after being accused in connection to the drug case, was being led upstairs.

On the injuries he suffered, he recalled that he was bleeding from his mouth and whenever he went to the toilet, blood would come out.

Nevertheless, he was not taken to the hospital as the prison officers were afraid. The witness highlighted that Baba Jobe and Lamin Darboe who was later executed were in the prison with him.

Continuing on with his testimony, the witness explained that one day, blood clots started spilling out of his mouth and a prison medic called Buba Jatta, who had vowed to help him instructed one Musa Sangyang to escort the witness to a hospital. He recalled seeing one Dr. Sanyang from Ndembaan at the hospital. There was no medication available at the hospital so the doctor wrote a prescription and his relatives bought the medicine for him.

The witness told the Commission that when he returned, Sillah Bah Samateh was also dragged unconscious into the maximum-security prison. He further stated that whilst he was **detained**, charges which he described as malicious, fabricated and unfounded were made against him (the witness) under the directives of Yahya Jammeh. Asked how he knew it was a directive from Yahya Jammeh, the witness answered that he had worked with Yahya Jammeh for two years and knew how he operated. He expanded by saying that Yahya Jammeh used people against one another and the people that did what they did to him did not dare do that without orders from Yahya Jammeh.

Ensa Badjie recalled that **when he cried, a mobile phone was put near his mouth**. He did not know who was listening at the other end, but he believed that it was **Yahya Jammeh**.

Later on, he stated, he was taken to court. Armed robbers the witness had previously arrested were used against him as witnesses and he was charged with 51 counts ranging from economic crimes, armed robbery, house breaking, store breaking, shop breaking and other charges which he did not know about. They took him to court and there was no complainant. Their key witness was commander ASP Balo Jobe and he testified that all the charges against the witness, Kuluteh Manneh and Mam Matarr Secka were false.

The then Judge, Justice (Emmanuel) Amadi recused himself from the case as well as then Director to Public Prosecution, Mikailu Abdullah. The case was later transferred to Justice Emmanuel Nkea and Justice Joseph Ikpalai, the latter he recalled refused for the witness to call his witnesses. According to the witness, Justice Joseph Ikpalai had “a serious problem” with Barrister Barry Touray who represented the accused. The witness was convicted and sentenced to “life life” and 35 years in prison for the robbery case. He remarked that those who had actually committed the crime were sentenced by Judge Pa Harry Jammeh to nine years. He mentioned that he was also sentenced to six months but did not give a clear explanation which crime it was in relation to.

The witness proceeded to explain another incident where he was framed. He stated that one day, he was taken to the drug squad, where Foday Barry²² told him that there was a directive accusing the witness of killing a person at Palma Rima junction and another person at Bakoteh. He was also accused of having a drug bunker alongside Hatib Janneh, Baka (the witness could not remember the full name²³) and other people who were holding high positions right

²²Former director of Intelligence and Investigation at the National Drug Enforcement Agency, NDEA.

²³He remembered that he had a vehicle which had “Baka” written on it.

now in the government and whose names he preferred to write down. Hatib Janneh and Baka were wrongfully **arrested** and **detained** at the Holgam Detention Center.²⁴

Ensa Badjie explained that Yahya Jammeh was responsible for all the accusations meted against him because in The Gambia you are sentenced to death if you murder a person, adding that he would have been among the nine people who were executed.²⁵ He also added that he protested to Foday Barry so they went to another office where Pa Habibou Mbye²⁶, Yahya Jatta (Baboucarr Jatta's younger brother), Kunchi (he did not give the full name) and Pa Modou Jarra were present. A young man called Kebba Jarju was also brought in.

Foday Barry allowed the witness and Kebba Jarju to go outside the office to have a discussion in private during which Kebba Jarju confessed that Pa Habibou Mbye and "Ben" Benedict Jammeh had told him that if he made those allegations against the witness, Yahya Jammeh would give him a ticket to go to Germany. The witness added that then when they came back to the office, Kebba Jarju himself narrated everything to Foday Barry and others.

Kebba Jarju also revealed that he was a driver at State House and he used to take away bodies of those killed to dispose of them.

However, "Ben" Benedict Jammeh arrived as Kebba Jarju shared this information and Foday Barry announced that Kebba Jarju would be taken to court for giving officers false information.

The witness further testified that Foday Barry and Yahya Jatta did not take Kebba Jarju to court because they knew he would divulge the information he had just shared so they locked him up in a cell. Kebba Jarju was **detained** for 10 months and the witness knew this because his younger brother, Tijan Badjie was also **detained** there. Regarding "Ben" Benedict Jammeh, when he arrived, he apologised to the witness and wanted to give him money but he said he refused. He was returned to prison

and mentioned that he was at some point taken to the Royal Victoria Hospital, RVTH where they wanted to admit him to a private block but he refused.

Ensa Badjie told the Commission that he was eventually pardoned, which was televised. He spoke after Lang²⁷ and stated that all the allegations against him were lies. The witness went on to tell the Commission that he had forgiven those who had **tortured** him, including Yahya Jammeh because of Allah. He claimed that after the impasse when a problem occurred in the Foni region, he went with Lang Tombong Tamba, former Chief of Defense Staff, CDS Abdoulie Kujabi, Borry Colley to talk to the people to accept the new regime.

The witness then went on to detail in a seemingly unrelated event to his victimisation. He first boasted that if he had not done his work properly, Yahya Jammeh would no longer be alive. He explained that in 2009, Yahya Jammeh boarded a plane but there was fire coming out of it. The witness described how he ran and stood in front of the plane to ground it. He told them the plane would not take off as far as he was the IGP. Despite Yahya Jammeh sending people to speak with the witness, the witness refused to move and told them to inform Yahya Jammeh that that he was the IGP and as far as he was concerned, the plane would not take off. Yahya Jammeh finally came down and when he saw people standing around and crying, he declared that Ensa Badjie was one of the best IGPs. Yet, Yahya Jammeh was the same person who went on TV and accused Ensa Badjie and other directors to all be criminals.

The witness was asked as IGP what gave him the authority to ground an airplane at that time and he responded that he had sworn to protect the Gambian people and The Gambia as a country. Based on the oath he had taken, he felt he had the right to ground the plane. The Deputy Lead Counsel then countered that from what she understood, it was not within his authority as an IGP to ground airplanes but he chose to do so on that day because he felt like he was the only one who could do it. The witness repeated that as IGP, it was his job to protect people's lives and The

²⁴The witness was referring to the NDEA Holgam Detention Center in Kanifing.

²⁵The witness was probably referring to the unlawful execution of the nine death row prison inmates at Mile 2 Prison in 2012.

²⁶Former Crime Management Coordinator at the NDEA.

²⁷We assume the witness was referring to Lang Tombong Tamba who was accused of staging a coup d'état and sentenced to life in prison in 2009.

Gambia and there were many people on board that flight, including service chiefs so he took it upon himself to stop the flight.

The witness went on to praise the TRRC and highlighted that he had not been coerced into coming. He then stressed that at that time Yahya Jammeh controlled everything including the judiciary and blamed him for all the crimes committed. The witness further stated that he still passes blood when he goes to the toilet during the cold season.

Then going back to his victimisation, he explained that there was a boy who was tortured so badly that he lost an eye and unfortunately died last month.

He narrated that when the boy was **arrested**, he was used against the witness as they threatened to **torture** him. However, after the boy was released from prison, he came to apologise to the witness as well as did Sillah Bah Samateh. Ensa Badjie repeated that he had forgiven everyone from Yahya Jammeh to the last man and he did it because of Allah. He also appealed to the TRRC not to make recommendations for those who had **tortured** him and who were still employed by the present regime to be dismissed, as that they were family heads. He added that it was destined by Allah that he would go through this hardship.

The witness was asked why he thought Yahya Jammeh put so much effort into trying to remove him and the witness responded that “well not everything can be revealed” and he believed that Yahya Jammeh felt like the witness used to challenge him as he did not agree with everything he did.

The Deputy Lead Counsel told the witness she would like to address statements that were reported in a newspaper article. She added it was an article they had addressed during Mustapha Ceesay’s testimony entitled: “*IGP Calls For Loyalty To Prezzy and The Nation*” dated 1st December 2008 and authored by Hatab Fadera and Assan Sallah. The Deputy Lead Counsel read out two statements made

by the witness in response to a donation from Yahya Jammeh of 14 vehicles, brand new pick-ups for the police force.

The first quote stated: “If you are not loyal to the President and his government of the day, you have no room within my force because I will make sure that you are out of the police force”. The second quote stated: “So if President Jammeh is dying for us, we should also die for him”.

The witness was asked if he recalled making those statements and if he did, what he meant by it.

The witness highlighted that when the vehicles were distributed at State House, the Interior Minister gave a vote of thanks, after which Yahya Jammeh spoke. He claimed that he could not remember ever making such statements but he recalled that he stated that promotion was merit-based and called on his officers to be loyal to the President who is the commander-in-chief and the Republic of The Gambia; and to serve their people's interest. The witness then went on to say that the reason he called on loyalty was because every country has a leader and should only be removed by elections. He however agreed that Yahya Jammeh did not remove the People's Progressive Party, PPP through elections and that his regime was the complete opposite of the PPP regime. He then tried to change his line of argument and stated that what he had highlighted was the importance of loyalty to the Republic of The Gambia and called on his officers to be loyal to the government.

The Deputy Lead Counsel then announced that she would lastly like to discuss evidence in relation to the witch-hunt incident that they had received. She added that the evidence stated that after some of

the victims were released from Baba Jobe's compound, some of them were interviewed by Halifa Sallah²⁸ but then as a result of that they were subsequently **arrested** by the police. In fact, one of the witnesses said that they were **arrested** by a police officer from Banjulinding Police Station and taken to the Police Headquarters and was released after he had a discussion with the witness.

In response to these allegations, the witness asked who had made those statements and the Deputy Lead Counsel told him that the individual had not yet testified. She added that she could give him the name of the person but highlighted that it is someone who was **detained** at Baba Jobe's house as part of the witch-hunting campaign. When the witness was asked if he recalled this event, he laughed and responded that this was the first time he was hearing of it. He highlighted that no arrested persons were ever brought to his office and if they were, then he was not aware.

The Deputy Lead Counsel disclosed that the objective of the question was to find out whether or not he ever received a directive to **arrest** people who were interviewed by Halifa Sallah during the witch-hunt exercise. The witness responded that he had never **arrested** anybody and had never directed anybody to **arrest** anybody but there was a time Yahya Jammeh called him and instructed him to go after Halifa Sallah because he had a recorder. The witness claimed that he refused to carry it out the order for a week but the following week, Yahya Jammeh called him and cautioned him that if he gives him a directive and he refuses to implement it, he would regret the day his mother gave birth to him.

The witness went on to say that he arrested Halifa Sallah with one officer, whose name he could not recall. He added that Yahya Jammeh sent men to check whether they had carried out his orders or not. He saw former Director of the NIA Louis Gomez disembark from the pick-up and told Louis Gomez that Yahya Jammeh had asked for Halifa Sallah's **arrest** so he should take him (Halifa Sallah) away but make sure nothing happened to him. He added that he told Louis Gomez to take him to their office until the morning and wait for directives from Yahya Jammeh. The witness later heard that Halifa Sallah was released after he had been taken to court and the case withdrawn.

The Deputy Lead Counsel thanked the witness for answering her questions but before answering questions from the Commissioners, the witness asked for meeting with the person who accused him of arresting him after the witch-hunt campaign as well as the officer involved in the arrest to ensure the truth comes out. The Deputy Lead Counsel told him they would follow up with this individual, adding that whenever they get additional information, they address it with the witness concerned to see what they had to say about it and reassured Ensa Badjie that their investigations are always ongoing.

Commissioner Kah asked the witness what impact his victimisation had on his family and he responded that he finds it very difficult to repeat what happened, but all he could say is that Yahya Jammeh destroyed his whole life because when he was **arrested**, he had five sons, with the eldest in grade 6-7 and the youngest 7 to 8 months old.

When his family would visit him, an armed military officer would stand guard and point his gun at him and his family. He added that his family was traumatised.

The witness went on to say that he had lost his job after spending 22 years in the police without ever getting a charge sheet. In tears, he explained that he carried the stigma of being identified as a criminal.

Commissioner Kah then asked the witness to tell the Commission about problems that he faced or the problems that existed within the police during his time as IGP. He added that part of the Commission's mandate is to look at the institutional failures or the institutional problems that led to the human rights violations that happened during the 22 years of dictatorship.

The witness then again blamed Yahya Jammeh for everything, claiming they were the heads of the departments but just by name and they could not carry out their duties independently. Holding the Quran, he

²⁸Halifa Sallah, was an opposition leader under the Jammeh regime who investigated the “witch-hunt campaign” and then wrote about the in the opposition newspaper, Foroyaa. He was subsequently detained, charged with treason and held in Mile 2 Central Prison until his case was dropped in late March 2012. The “witchcraft campaign” ceased after it was publicly exposed.

swore by Allah that Yahya Jammeh controlled everything and they all lived in fear. He cited as an example the time Yahya Jammeh instructed for the **arrest** of one Ali for breach of contract for not completing the hospitals in Basse and Kuntaur. The witness said he refused to implement the order as it was a civil matter and called the Minister of Interior, but the minister said he was afraid to talk. Yahya Jammeh eventually called the NIA and got Ali arrested. He said he tried to reason with Yahya Jammeh to sue Ali for breach of contract through the Attorney-General's Chambers to no avail.

Ali's lawyer, Antouman Gaye sued the Attorney-General's Chambers. However, when the witness was taken to the prison, the Attorney-General's Chambers decided to withdraw the case against Ali and instead sued the witness claiming 26 million from him. The case was struck out and when he was released, he was compensated 50,000 dalasi for all his troubles.

In response to Commissioner Kinteh's question, the witness confirmed that he served five years and six months in prison, adding that he was incarcerated with people he had arrested and prosecuted. He further stated that there was a commissioner called Ali who they claimed was related to him and whose career they decided to destroy because they said he supported the witness. The witness did not know the man who was actually from Saloum but he was dismissed, taken to court and fined heavily.

The Deputy Chair told the witness they were sorry for his ordeal, but had a few questions. She told the witness that as a service chief, she would like to believe that he had a good relationship with the other service chiefs in the NIA and the army. She asked the witness if he had called his colleagues to confirm the rumours surrounding the witch-hunt. The witness responded that he did not because at that time it was impossible to know whom to trust. In theory, they were heads of their unit but in practice, "*my sister you are a Gambian, you know who was in charge*", he stated.

The Deputy Chair highlighted that they had sworn to protect the lives and properties of Gambians, yet the CIU did not provide him any information on the witch-hunt

incidents. The witness repeated that they were under command and nobody was "mad" to attempt to do any investigations. He asked that they should not be blamed and pinned it all on Yahya Jammeh.

When Commissioner Imam Jallow took the floor, he told the witness that his first question was in relation to Mustapha Ceesay, the "*gallant police officer who stood firm by what he believed and refused to take any orders no matter where they were coming from*". He asked the witness what he thought would have happened if there were twenty more officers of the armed forces of The Gambia who took the same stance. The witness retorted that "*today, everyone will show his manhood*" and claimed that Mustapha Ceesay had not showed his "manhood" at the time, though he did acknowledge that he had refused to comply with the orders given by Yahya Jammeh. He added that they were afraid to come out and none of the policemen or security men dare risk their lives.

He asked which "elder" ever stood up to Yahya Jammeh to stop what he was doing?

He highlighted that this was the reason he respected Bishop Hannah Faal²⁹ because she challenged Yahya Jammeh. He pointed out that if many imams and pastors had stood up at the time and did what she had done, certain things would not have taken place.

He then appealed not to blame but instead forgive one another.

Commissioner Imam Jallow then asked where the civil aviation authority officers were when the witness grounded the plane seeing that this would have been their task. The witness responded that they were all there standing, watching and asked the Commission to call the present Chief of Protocol Alagie Ousman Ceesay and Alagie Martin to confirm his story. Lastly,

²⁹The full name is Hannah Caroline Faal-Heim, a methodist bishop at time of mention.

Commissioner Imam Jallow asked the witness that if fear was going to be used as a pretext to cower down to the point where people would not obey their utterances and their swearing to their tasks, what advice did he have for people who were in the army now and who were going to join the Armed Forces of The Gambia.

The witness highlighted that at that time, there was no minister of defense. They had a minister of interior but the system was not independent. He added that they could not refuse to obey orders and if you did, “*a big problem comes upon you*”. He added that being defiant resulted in him being sent to Mile 2 Prison under false charges and severely **tortured**. Those the witness had previously defended and stood by never came to visit him. He ended by telling the imam he would not understand.

Commissioner Samba asked the witness about his operation at the RVTH. The witness was asked how his treatment was carried out given that he was sent back to the prison after he refused to be taken to the private block. The witness responded that he preferred to die in prison and have a proper burial “*than being at that place and die like a fowl*”, implying that he might have been killed. He therefore spent three months at the prison clinic and was operated on by one Lucas Jatta and one Dr. Jamba now in the USA.

Commissioner Imam Sey told the witness he was sitting on a “very hot seat”, adding that it was God who helped and protected him. He asked the witness how much money Gibril Bojang was accused of stealing and the witness responded that Yahya Jammeh claimed he had stolen “1 Million plus or 2 Million plus” but they recovered about “1 Million plus” from Gibril Bojang’s office. Regarding his health, the witness told Commissioner Imam Sey that he was still sick.

Chairman Sise then took the floor and told the witness he had just two small points that he thinks the witness could include in his closing remarks. He stated that it was not easy for him to pigeonhole the witness throughout his testimony. He called the witness a “*victim, perpetrator, defender of justice, brave man standing up to Yahya Jammeh not obeying orders that is given him*” and highlighted that the difficulty of pigeonholing him was

compounded in answering questions that the Deputy Lead Counsel was putting to him. He told the witness that he was very skillful in presenting the different sides of the same answer. The Chairman further highlighted that the witness had said (the Chairman said in Mandinka) “*God loves truth*” 91 times in total throughout his testimony.

Chairman Sise added that he actually had a third point and that is what Imam Jallow referred to: fear. He therefore would ask the witness to share his views on the following three points: “*enabling an authoritarian ruler, being motivated by fear and the third one is not carrying out illegal orders*”. He clarified that he wanted to know when an IGP should enable an authoritarian ruler and when should an IGP not enable an authoritarian ruler. The second point, he asked when the IGP should be motivated by fear and not do things that he wanted to do because of certain fears; and then the last point was, when the IGP should flatly disagree or refuse to carry out illegal orders. He asked the witness to proceed to make his closing remarks.

Ensa Badjie then gave his closing remarks (in Jola) without addressing the points the Chairman had just made. He started by extending his sincerest greetings to the Commission and all those present. He went on to say that his testimony was the truth and that he feared nothing now except Allah. He admitted that he worked for Yahya Jammeh but everybody witnessed what Yahya Jammeh did to him.

The witness further stated that what Yahya Jammeh did to their people from the Foni region was far worse than what he did to other regions. He added that he wanted to advise those watching and listening not to “take things angrily”. He had forgiven Yahya Jammeh for what he had done to the people of this country as well as those who **tortured** him. He urged everyone to forgive one another and blamed Yahya Jammeh for the human rights violations that took place, highlighting that not everyone was guilty.

He stressed that he had come to the TRRC on his own accord because his name had been mentioned by other witnesses and he wanted to clear up everything.

He claimed that his work was very difficult as he was given the leadership of the police but Yahya Jammeh was the president and he had to do things against his own will, citing examples such as the arrest of Halifa Sallah and the visit of the witch-hunters.

He ended by highlighting that their country is a small country and that the TRRC belongs to all Gambians from Banjul to Koina so appealed to them for their support.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Unlawful arrest and detention (of Gibril Bojang)

Yahya Jammeh, Ensa Badjie (the witness)

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Yahya Jammeh, Solo Bojang

Aiding and abetting persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Ensa Badjie (the witness), Ousman Sonko

Unlawful arrest and detention (of Ensa Badjie)

Yahya Jammeh, Numo Kujabi

Torture (of Ensa Badjie)

Bukarr Sallah, Korrrka Bah, Omar Cham, Yahya Jammeh

Unlawful arrest and detention (of Sirra Jallow, Momodou Jallow and Pulo Jallow)

Alagie Morr Jobe

Unlawful disposal and concealment of bodies

Kebba Jarju

Unlawful arrest and detention (of Kebba Jarju)

Foday Barry, Yahya Jatta

Conspiracy to provide false evidence (against Ensa Badjie)

"Ben" Benedict Jammeh, Kebba Jarju, Pa Habibou Mbye, Yahya Jammeh



WITNESS NAME: Therese GOMEZ

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 14th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The witch-hunt in Makumbaya

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Farmer

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Not mentioned

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Therese Gomez began her testimony by describing how she first came to Makumbaya when she was 25 years old as a bride of a local resident. All four of her children were born in Makumbaya, which she described as a nice place where she developed good relations with the people in the community.

She further testified that the day the witch-hunters came to Makumbaya, her family was out of the compound and it was only her, her daughter, and her daughter's newborn in the house. She explained that a man dressed in red with mirrors on his outfit came into her house, grabbed her hand and told her to come with them. She asked "where" and tried to free herself but he maintained that she had to go with him. She stated that they told her they were sent by the President³⁰.

She told the Commission the men in red, who were roaming the village abducting others, were from Mali and spoke to her in Fula and that she did not understand everything they said.

Continuing on with her testimony, she stated that the man led her, against her will, to a bus parked in the village that was surrounded by young men and women dressed in green who were drumming and dancing. She was told to board the bus and sit down. Once on the bus, she saw some of her neighbours, as well as a number of people who had been **captured** while they tended their rice fields. She later added that there were people on the bus from Makumbaya, Busumbala, and another neighboring community. She highlighted that they were not told why they had been taken from their homes and fields and put on the bus.

The bus left the village around 2 pm and took them to a house in Kololi. She told the Commission that after they arrived they were served lunch, but the witness attested that she was among those who refused to eat. After the meal, people were organised into groups and lined up by the "Green Green"³¹ and the men dressed in red. The witness said she was in the last group.

Those at the head were led into a small room akin to a toilet, "but the way they came out made me fearful. They carried them like dead bodies and placed them on the ground."

She said she initially thought the people were **killed** by whatever happened in the room, and that she was very scared, but there was no escape.

The witness narrated that eventually when it was her turn, she entered the room and was given a full cup of mystery liquid by men dressed in green. She drank the liquid, which she said had an unpleasant taste. After drinking, she was taken to a large sitting room where she started feeling the concoction's effects. Her vision began to blur and she felt as if she were losing her mind. However, she said that those people who drank last were not affected as severely as those who drank first. She also mentioned that the men in red ordered people to **undress** in order to be bathed in a special liquid.

³⁰At the time Yahya Jammeh.

³¹We assume the witness is referring to the Green Boys, a youth group of the then ruling Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction.

Some of those who drank first had, to the witness's eyes, lost their minds and were moving frantically around the room. To make them stay still the men guarding them **kicked** their legs and began **beating** them. She indicated that a man named Alasan Jarju was **beaten** so severely he later died. Another woman named Danjan Sowe was lying motionless on the floor. The witness later revealed that Danjan Sowe passed away after being taken back to her house. Those that drank the concoction first were not in control of themselves and spent the night at the location in Kololi.

As someone who had been among the last to drink the concoction, Therese Gomez continued, she was allowed to return home that night. However, as she was disembarking back in Makumbaya the mysterious liquid began to affect her. When she got home it was late at night and her daughter was the only person still awake. The witness later added that the events of that night were narrated to her by her family. She testified that she went to hold her daughter's baby, but her daughter, seeing her condition, refused to hand over the child.

The witness stated that she then went to get her bucket to go to her garden, but her older brother's wife, who had woken up, confiscated the bucket and told her to stay put. She then collected all her clothes and brought them outside as if she were about to do laundry. Her brother's wife again took all the clothes and forbade her from doing the laundry in the middle of the night. Her vision was clouded and red.

**"That's how I was," she testified,
"fighting with my [family] until
the morning."**

The witness explained that when day broke, she went to the fire ostensibly to warm some water to bathe. Instead, she plunged her hand into the red-hot coals. Her daughter dragged her from the fire pit and put the fire out. The symptoms began to subside that morning, but she claims her vision continued to be blurred and red for at least three days after she returned home. People from the village came to visit, and she overheard them saying that those who had been abducted were witches.

Therese Gomez told the Commission that after drinking the concoction she developed stomach and head problems. Whenever the sun gets hot, she gets a severe headache. When she feels pain now, she gathers all her money, even that saved for her children or a bag of rice, and goes to the hospital. Beyond physical pain, the witness said, she has been essentially abandoned by her extended family. Before the ordeal, her husband's sisters would send her their children to raise and her house used to be among the most popular among children during feasts. Now, it is just her and her direct children, and other children ran away from her because their mothers have told them that the witness is a witch. She said she has stopped going to community programmes because people run away from her.

When asked by the Counsel, the witness said that she holds Yahya Jammeh accountable for her suffering.

Commissioner Sise then asked the witness if she was given any assistance from any religious organisations. She replied that she gave everything to God but did not discuss her ordeal with the preacher in her church or anyone from her congregation. Bishop Odico clarified that apart from her daughter and her daughter's newborn, she was indeed the only person in her house the day she was **abducted**, which she confirmed.

In response to a question from Commissioner Kah, the witness stated that she has gone to the hospital to get medicine, but that illness still disturbs her. Then, Commission Kinteh asked if she saw people with guns in Kololi, to which she replied that she did not. After being asking about her experience at the hospital by Commissioner Bojang, Therese Gomez added that she was not scanned at the hospital and she did not disclose to them she had been forced to drink the concoction. When Commissioner Imam Sey asked what had been her husband's reaction to her **abduction**, the witness looked down, began crying and said that her husband was dead³².

³²It was unclear from her response if her husband was still alive in 2009.

After the witness regained her composure she gave her concluding remarks. She again declared that she is not a witch, and pointed out that a witch would not have the courage to come on TV and submit themselves to questioning.

She pleaded with Gambian citizens to unite as one to make sure nothing like this happens again.

She said she prays for the TRRC's work to continue and encouraged others who have experience pain as she has to come and testify before the Commission. She concluded by saying that testifying has helped her deal with her suffering.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhumane and degrading treatment leading to death

Yahya Jammeh

However, she said that those people who drank last were not affected as severely as those who drank first.

WITNESS NAME: Mam Jarra JATTA

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 14th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The effects of the witch-hunt on Kumba Jatta

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Daughter of Kumba Jatta

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Daughter of Kumba Jatta

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Daughter of Kumba Jatta

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Mama Jarra Jatta introduced herself to the Commission as the youngest daughter of Kumba Jatta. She told the Commission that her father was from Kuntaur and joined the police force in September 1970. She said her father was her best friend and testified that of all her siblings, she is the closest with her father. She described her father as a rigidly honest police officer who never took a bribe from anyone and treated everyone equally before the law.

The witness explained that her father's reputation as a strict police officer unwilling to bend the law for anyone also earned him a number of enemies. She narrated two stories of when she publicly confronted people who insulted her father to her face. She added that her father was aware of his enemies, and as a precaution wore a number of talismans as she said is customary in Balanta culture. She said she saw members of the security services refuse to shake her father's hand because he was wearing too many talismans.

Mam Jarra Jatta testified that her father was 59 years old in 2009 when he came home late and told his family that his talismans had been taken away from him by people who came from Guinea Conakry. According to the witness, Kumba Jatta told his family that the men were dressed in red and came with their drums. He told them he was sitting in his office at Police Headquarters in Banjul when then Inspector General of Police, IGP Ensa Badjie and Regimental Sergeant Major, RSM Abdou Colley came into his office accompanied by the men in red and plain clothed officers.



The men told him to give up his talismans, to which he refused. The men told him to undress in front of them and repeated their order to relinquish the talismans that covered his body. He complied, except for one talisman that he kept in his police uniform. The witness said she was aware of this talisman because she would prepare his uniform in the morning and one day asked him about it. According to the witness, her father told them he could not give them this particular talisman because it had belonged to his father, which resulted in a slight tussle in which they seized his last talisman, and stuffed them all in a bag.

Mam Jarra Jatta told the Commission that turning over his talismans made her father very upset and he alleged it was the work of his enemies. When asked who her father's enemies were, the witness responded that her father told her that Jesus³³ wanted to make him **suffer**, and that then President Yahya Jammeh had sent the men. He apparently also added that RSM Abdou Colley was also one of his **enemies**.

The witness stated that her father told them that he had been ordered to report to Baba Jobe's house in Kololi or Kotu. Apparently, the witness' mother advised her husband not to go, but he said he was going to go to make himself clean. The next morning the witness' father woke up early, took his bath, and dressed himself in his kaftan. The witness added that her sister asked where he was going and he replied he was going to Baba Jobe's house. According to the witness, her sister pleaded with him not to go, but he

³³We assume the witness was referring to Ensa Badjie who is also known as Jesus.

repeated that he was going to go to make himself clean. Her sister pointed out that he had already acknowledged that these people were his enemies but he said he was going regardless.

Mam Jarra Jatta told the Commission that her family waited for her father all day. At one point they received a phone call from him during which he hurriedly told them he was at Baba Jobe's compound in Kotu before hanging up the phone. The witness' mother called back and told the person who picked up that she wanted to speak with Kumba Jatta but the person said that she could not speak with him at that moment.

The witness recalled that her two older sisters, Mariama Jatta and Abi Jatta, were back for holidays. They were called and they told the witness and her mother they were going to find Baba Jobe's house and bring their father home. Mam Jarra Jatta stated that her mother cautioned this was unsafe especially for Mariama Jatta who was a soldier in the national army.

Nonetheless, the witness continued, Mariama and Abi Jatta went to Kotu and found Baba Jobe's compound. When they first tried to enter they were stopped by the Green Boys who denied them entry. The witness' eldest sister apparently responded by saying they would come in by force if need be, and the Green Boys relented. The witness told the Commission that her sisters found their father lying on the ground and called out to him but before he could respond the Green Boys interrupted and questioned whether they were truly Kumba's daughters. He said they were, at which point the witness' sisters said they wanted to take their father home. The Green Boys replied that they were given orders to keep him overnight because of the medicine and that the witness' sisters should return the next morning between 8 and 9. The witness told the Commission this information was all relayed to her and her mother when her sisters returned home.

Continuing on with her testimony, Mam Jarra Jatta stated that her family did not sleep the entire night as they were consumed with thoughts of their father and his enemies – including then-President Yahya Jammeh. The following morning the witness' sisters went to pick up their father. The witness reminded the Commission that despite being in his late 50s, her father was still a very strong man.

However, after his ordeal at the compound, her father could not walk, speak, or do anything for himself and had to be carried home.

She highlighted that her father did not speak for a few days. When she asked him what happened, he replied that he had been given an unknown "medicine" that looked like "kubejara." He said that some of those who drank the concoction began talking wildly about taking down airplanes and cannibalism.

Mam Jarra Jatta further testified that after her father returned home, his body was very weak. He could not walk normally and complained that his whole body was in **pain**. The witness told the Commission that her father stayed at home for some time before returning to work, and even after resuming work he would take off more time than he had in the past. Eventually, he said he would be taking a year of leave, which the witness said was approved by the Gambian Police Force.

Mam Jarra Jatta told the Commission that as the years progressed her father became even weaker. He began to lose weight and his memory, was **constantly sick**, and had to have people help him with everything. He went to a series of hospitals in Banjul and Serrekunda to try to get help. Each time he went to the hospital, the staff would tell her father that he had high blood pressure and diabetes. After spending a few days in the hospital, the staff would tell him that the symptoms had subsided even if he had not taken any medicine. According to the witness this has happened multiple times, most recently at a clinic in Kanifing.

The witness reiterated to the Commission that her father was not sickly before drinking the concoction. She said that sometimes when he gets sick now his family has to lock the door of the compound to prevent him from wandering around town. There have been occasions where he has exited the compound and been found hours later sleeping on the side of the road. Sometimes friends of the family or taxi drivers will call and say they have found him and bring

him back home. Other times, the witness has had to take the family car out to search for him at police stations and around town. Sometimes, the witness added, his **illness** will make him behave **aggressively**.

The Deputy Lead Counsel then displayed an image on the screen of Kumba Jatta sitting at a table in his police uniform. The witness identified the photo as being taken when he was with the African Union in Darfur from 2006 to 2007. Another photo was displayed of her father when he was still strong before drinking the concoction. This was followed by a recent photo of her father in which he is significantly aged and clearly in ill health. Another photo was displayed of the witness' father getting a promotion before the incident. The witness identified RSM Abdou Colley in the background of the photo. A video that had been recorded earlier in the week was played in which Kumba Jatta attempts to respond to questions but is having difficulty understanding the questioning and enunciating his words. However, due to technical difficulties the rest of the video could not be shown.

The witness said that her family has experienced **stigmatisation** as a result of her father's incident. For a while, she testified, people would sometimes run from them on the street. In the past when her father's vehicle would break down people would come and assist him, but since the incident people are less willing to help.

She told the Commission she knows that people call her family witches and have told taxi drivers not to pick her up or come to the home.

Mam Jarra Jatta said that on multiple occasions people have implied in conversation, or even sometimes explicitly called her, a witch. She said this was, and remains, very **painful**.

The witness concluded her testimony by deplored her father's current condition. She told the Commission that her father spent his life serving the nation and deserved a medal for his efforts.

She said that all his friends have abandoned him, leaving just his family.

Mam Jarra Jatta testified that, Kumba Jatta used to use his salary to pay school fees and lunch money for other people, but none of them have repaid his past kindness. The witness did acknowledge a man named Sheikh Mbaye who lives in Atlanta, in the United States who has helped the family. She told the Commission that her father was invited back to Darfur by the United Nations, but declined, saying he would rather stay in The Gambia and work to build his own country even though working for the UN would have been a significant salary increase.

She also said that confiscating her father's talismans was disrespecting his cultural traditions. She ended her statement by saying that she wishes The Gambia understood how much her father did for the country.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Yahya Jammeh

Aiding and abetting persecution, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Ensa Badjie, Abdou Colley

He told them he was sitting in his office at **Police Headquarters** in Banjul when then Inspector General of Police, IGP **Ensa Badjie** and **Regimental Sergeant Major, RSM Abdou Colley** came into his office **accompanied by the men in red and plain clothed officers.**



WITNESS NAME: Sonna BASS

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 14th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The witch-hunt in Makumbaya

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Farmer

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Elderly resident of Makumbaya

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Sonna Bass told the Commission that she is a widow, and before being **abducted** she was in good health and rarely, if ever, fell ill.

Sonna Bass then narrated that it was mid-morning and she had just finished showering and was still in her wrapper when a strange man entered her house. She was the only one in her house at the time as everyone else had gone to a funeral or were still at their fields. The witness described the man as being dressed in red clothing with mirrors. She later said she had no idea where the men came from.

Without speaking, he grabbed her by her neck and dragged her out of her house. She said she tried to resist as she did not know the man and did not want to be dragged out onto the public highway half naked, but he overpowered her. *"I felt like death had arrived. Someone that you do not know, to just come and terrorise you, you would think that probably death has arrived."*

The witness stated that her daughter saw her being dragged away and came running with some clothes for her to wear. The man in red allowed her to put on the clothes but maintained his grip on her hand. After she was dressed, he continued dragging her until they reached a bus that was parked at the Alkalo³⁴'s compound. Outside the bus she said she saw youths dressed in green drumming and singing. She also testified that there were multiple men dressed in red carrying mirrors who were roaming the community **abducting** people. She was not told where they were taking her, and felt scared and belittled as she boarded the bus.

Sonna Bass indicated that the bus was already filled, and once she got on board she recognised Alasan Jarju, Danjan Sowe, Wuri Manneh and Therese Gomez. Most of the people on the bus were around her age but there were some who were even older. Not everyone on the bus was from Makumbaya as the witch-hunters had gone to the communal gardens and the garage to **abduct** people. She told the Commission that while she was waiting on the bus, she was asking herself what would happen to her children if she were **killed** considering their father had already passed.

The witness stated that she could not describe the house they were taken to as she "was on the verge of death." Once they disembarked they were led by the men dressed in red into a house that had a cement floor but no tiles. They were served lunch but she said most people did not partake in the meal.

After the meal, Sonna Bass said they were made to form a queue by the men dressed in red outside a small room.

One by one, people went into a small room and when they came out they collapsed onto the floor.

The witness was towards the back of the line, and when her turn came to enter the room she was confused and scared. In the room she was forced to drink a mysterious bitter liquid from a plastic cup "to the last drop" and then led from the room.

³⁴The Alkalo is elected chief of the village.

Sonna Bass testified that after leaving the room she fell to the ground and lost control of herself. They were all confused and afraid, she said. When they asked for water to drink, they were told there was no water. She alleged that for two days they neither ate nor drank. The witness added that she told one of the men she had to use the toilet and he told her that he would have to accompany her and hold her hand while she urinated.

The witness stated that she spent the night lying on the cold cement floor. The next day people came to take them home, but some people “were almost like a corpse,” and had to be carried out.

When they were about to board the vehicle, they were forced to undress and be bathed in another liquid by the young men there, which the witness found extremely confusing and degrading.

She said she was never told why she was **abducted** and forced to drink the concoction.

The bus returned the **abductees** to their homes that evening. The witness was dropped by the side of the main highway where she was met by her son who had to help her walk home. Sonna Bass explained that she did not leave her compound for a whole month after returning home. Her whole body was in pain from the concoction they were forced to drink. Up to the present, her body still hurts and she cannot walk too far without getting winded. The Deputy Lead Counsel added that they received a communication from the witness’ daughter, which described how the witness acted mentally unbalanced after returning home, which the witness confirmed as accurate.

Sonna Bass told the Commission she went to the hospital for medicine but it did little to alleviate her suffering. She was also under significant pressure considering her husband had passed and she had previously supported her family by her farming, which was now impossible considering the state of her health. The witness mentioned that the nuns at Bakoteh extended a helping hand after the incident.

After the incident, she said, those who were **abducted were called witches by the community, which made her think very lowly of herself.**

The Deputy Lead Counsel then asked about the others who were **abducted**. She replied that she could not recount too much, but that Alasan Jarju, Danjan Sowe and a man identified as Kemo were beaten at the facility. She added that after drinking the concoction Danjan Sowe never spoke again and died soon after returning home. Alasan Jarju died later, according to the witness, as a result of the beating.

There were no questions from the Commissioners and the witness concluded with a very brief statement explaining she wanted to tell her story for the radio, and that she gives the load of her suffering to God.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

None

“I felt like death had arrived. Someone that you do not know, to just come and terrorise you, you would think that probably death has arrived.”

WITNESS NAME: Omar BOJANG

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 18th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Jambur

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Farmer in Jambur and assistant to his father, the Imam of the Jambur Mosque

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft, detained by Solo Bojang and the Green Boys, forced to drink hallucinogenic concoction

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Imam of Jambur and Farmer

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Omar Bojang told the Commission that he had never been involved in politics but recalled an incident that took place in 2001, just after the presidential election. He was lying down outside his house in the bantaba when the infamous Green Boys came looking for him. He recalled that there were many people who were asleep in the bantaba³⁵ when the Green Boys came. They found him in the crowd of people at the bantaba, pulled him out, and then they **beat** him with whips. Omar Bojang stated that he suspected that some of the men in the Green Boys may have known him but they **beat** him anyway. He disclosed that their leader was Laluwa Conteh from Faraba Banta.

After this event, Omar Bojang testified that his brother, Ousman Bojang told him that they should go to the police station and tell the police what had happened, so they went to the police station in Brikama together to file a report but unfortunately the police did not do anything in response to the assault.

Omar Bojang stated that he believed that the **police failed to help him** because they knew that he had been attacked by the Green Boys, adding that because everyone knew that **the Green Boys were linked to then President Yahya Jammeh, no one wanted to mess with them.**



The Deputy Lead Counsel asked Omar Bojang why he thought the Green Boys had targeted him. He explained that although he was a farmer and not a politician, he believes the Green Boys targeted him because he had never supported Yahya Jammeh. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked what led him to that conclusion and he replied that at that time, “*if anyone was against Yahya Jammeh they could be in trouble*”.

Returning to the subject of the Green Boys and the night of the attack, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness if he knew if Laluwa Conteh had held a formal position of authority in the Green Boys at the time of the beating in 2001. The witness responded that he thought that Laluwa Conteh used to lead the Green Boys but that he knew that he (Laluwa Conteh) led them the night that he was attacked. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if the police in Brikama recorded the incident, filed paperwork, or did anything at all to help. The witness replied that the police did absolutely nothing with his report about the **assault** committed by Laluwa Conteh and the Green Boys.

Omar Bojang testified that after this incident, he did not encounter the Green Boys again or have any problems with the authorities until another event that occurred shortly after the 2006 election. He recalled that on that day, he had been farming all morning. At around 1 pm, he decided to go home to fetch water for a bath. While he was fetching water and preparing his bath, he heard someone in a vehicle calling his name and yelling insults about his mother. He highlighted that the man was so loud that other

³⁵The center of the village, usually marked by a large tree in whose shade communal meetings are held.

people in the house also heard the stranger insulting the witness' mother and calling for him but no one could identify the man. From the other side of the bantaba, the man began to approach his house and when he saw what was happening, he instructed everyone to leave so that he could deal with the stranger.

Further recounting the event, the witness stated that the stranger, armed with a **knife**, approached his house and he (the witness) armed himself with a stick that he kept around for protection. When the attacker came close enough to him, the witness struck him on the hand and injured him. He added that after he defended himself, the stranger left.

Continuing on with his testimony, Omar Bojang explained that he filed a police report that day. The next morning, policemen arrived to take him to the police station so that they could get a full statement from him. After taking his statement, they informed him that the boy who had attacked him was in the hospital, being treated for a broken hand. Omar Bojang stated that he was then detained until after 2 pm when his then Member of Parliament, Paul Mendy, arrived, accompanied by Haja Fatou Ceesay, and spoke to the senior officer at the police station, Idrissa Badjie. After they left the police station, Idrissa Badjie spoke with Omar Bojang and asked him if he was having political problems and asked what he had done to get in trouble with the government.

According to the witness, Idrissa Badjie revealed that Paul Mendy told him that he (the witness) had mobilised people against the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction, APRC in Jambur during the recent election and that he was to be **detained**. Omar Bojang stated that he waited in the police station until Idrissa Badjie returned and spoke with him again.

Senior Officer Idrissa Badjie apologised for **detaining him and explained that he did not actually want to hold him but **that because it was a political matter he had to do what he was told or risk losing his job.****

He did not, however want to see Omar Bojang spend the night in jail. Knowing that the witness had a brother in Brikama, the then Senior Officer told him to go spend the night there and return to the station early in the morning. That way, if the politicians returned the next day they would think that he had spent the night in jail.

After listening to his story, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked Omar Bojang to answer a few questions to clarify the timeline of events. Together, Omar Bojang and the Deputy Lead Counsel established this timeline: a stranger came to Jambur in the afternoon and yelled insults at him about his mother. After he defended himself from the stranger with the knife, he was **detained** at the police station for one day without explanation. Only when he spoke with the then Senior Officer Idrissa Badjie did he realise that he had been **detained** for political reasons. During his conversation with the then Senior Officer, he realised he had been **detained** because of his efforts in mobilising residents of Jambur to vote against the APRC in the 2006 election.

At this point, the Deputy Lead Counsel then returned to the 2001 assault of the witness by the Green Boys.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked him if he had been **injured during the attack and he explained how he had been **beaten with whips from the waist to his neck that tore his skin and had to be treated in the hospital.****

Refocusing her questions, the Deputy Lead Counsel turned the conversation to the infamous witch-hunt that took place in 2009. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness what happened on the day when the witch-hunters came to his village.

Omar Bojang state he could not recall exactly what the date was but said that he remembered the day

extremely well. At the time, he had three visitors at his house who came from Casamance to pay him their condolences and respect to this mother who had recently passed. While he was spending time with his visitors, they heard the sound of drums playing in the village. They did not know why the drums were playing or what they signified but soon he heard from his younger brother that some people, who had been sent by then President Yahya Jammeh, had come to Jambur to pray for the community and had asked their father, the imam, to lead prayers in the bantaba.

The witness stated that his father asked his brother to go and lead the prayers for him and when his younger brother, Boubacarr Bojang arrived at the bantaba, representatives from Yahya Jammeh told him that they should all go to the cemetery where they would perform the charity. The witness added that once the group arrived, Yahya Jammeh's people dug a hole and slaughtered a red cock, which they put inside the hole. Then, they killed a red goat and put its blood inside the same hole. On top of that they poured an unknown liquid from a bottle in with the rooster and the goat's blood.

The people who performed the ceremony then pronounced that, now, anyone who opposed Yahya Jammeh in Jambur would be cursed. They then left the cemetery and returned to the bantaba.

Omar Bojang told the Commission that at this moment, he was in his house serving lunch to his guests. Suddenly, strangers started arriving at his house. He recalled that several of the strangers wore red clothes, carried mirror plates and were wearing horns. They were accompanied by Solo Bojang and the Green Boys. Soon his house was full of people. The strangers greeted Omar Bojang and told him that they had come for him. He tried to go outside but they told him to come back in because the people that they needed were inside his home.

Continuing on with his testimony, the witness added that the witch-hunters went to his sitting room and began checking the house, moving his furniture and going through every room.

When they got to the detached bathroom outside of his house, the witch-hunters called him to come outside where they accused him of making dangerous juju³⁶.

They said that people like him were the reason why the youth in Jambur were not making any progress. Then they raised up the concrete slab where he normally bathed, took something out from under it, proclaiming that it was bad juju that he had put there.

Omar Bojang stated that he tried to protest and asked them why he would put bad juju in his own bath but the witch-hunters only ordered him to come with them. They took him out to the veranda and asked him who his visitors were. He said he explained that they were his friends from Casamance and that they were only paying their respects to his mother who had recently passed away, but the Alkalo of Jambur, who was also there, lied to the witch-hunters and the Green boys that Omar Bojang and his guests were making bad juju with the intent to create problems for then President Yahya Jammeh and his leadership.

At this point in the testimony, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked a series of clarifying questions. Omar Bojang was asked if he lived at his father's house at the time of these events and if his father had been informed in advance if the witch-hunters were coming to Jambur. He clarified that he did not live with his father at this time and his brother was the one who told him what had happened at his father's house and at the cemetery.

When the Deputy Lead Counsel asked if it was normal for his father to be informed of visitors coming to Jambur, he agreed. Normally, his father was informed

³⁶A fetish, charm, or amulet; also synonym of witchcraft.

when visitors were coming to his village but on this particular occasion nobody told him the witch-hunters and the Green Boys were coming.

The Deputy Lead Counsel moved on to the events that took place at the cemetery. Omar Bojang clarified that his brother, not his father, was the one who accompanied them to the cemetery where the witch-hunters killed a red cock and a red goat. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked him what happened to the goat and Omar Bojang responded that the red goat was put onto a vehicle and taken away. He added that after the ritual, the witch-hunters told his brother and everyone else who was present that from that point forward, anyone who opposed Yahya Jammeh would be cursed. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness, if anything else took place at the cemetery and he responded that to his knowledge, nothing else of note occurred there. Continuing on, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked him if anyone was made to do anything else at the cemetery and he explained that his brother, as the representative of his father, was asked to slaughter the animals.

The Deputy Lead Counsel continued on to ask the witness to clarify several details about the witch-hunters and the men that accompanied them. When asked how many of the men who came to his house were wearing red, he responded three wore red and carried horns. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness if the Green Boys were present on the day of the witch-hunt and the witness confirmed that they were there. The Deputy Lead Counsel also asked what they were wearing and if the Green Boys were led by Solo Bojang.

The witness confirmed that they were led by Solo Bojang and that the Green Boys wore green trousers, green shirts, and green caps.

Probing further into Solo Bojang's involvement in the event, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness how he was able to recognise Solo Bojang and if he knew about what Solo Bojang's role was at the time of the witch-hunt. The witness told the Commission that he

recognised Solo Bojang because he used to visit with the imam in Kanilai who led prayers at the mosque in Yahya Jammeh's compound. Sometimes, during his visits, the witness would see Solo Bojang at the mosque and even brewed attaya with him on a few occasions. Answering a second question, the witness said that he was not sure what Solo Bojang's exact role was during the witch-hunts.

At this point in the testimony, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked Omar Bojang what the role of the Alkalo was and what his name was. Omar Bojang explained that the Alkalo's name was Kebba Jarju Bojang, and that he had acted as the host for the witch-hunters, the Green Boys, and Solo Bojang. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked him if anyone accompanying the witch-hunters were armed and he responded that when they came to his house to accuse him, he did not see any weapons.

When asked if he was surprised when the juju charms were found under the concrete slab in his shower, he explained that he was very surprised because he did not put them there. When asked why he believed the witch-hunters came to his house, the witness responded that he did not know but that they were joined by the Alkalo who was the one that pointed him out to the witch-hunters. Additionally, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked why his guests were also accused of witchcraft and taken with him to the bantaba to which he repeated that the Alkalo of Jambur told the witch-hunters that his visitors had been brought from Casamance to bring down then President Yahya Jammeh's government.

Continuing with her clarifying questions, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked Omar Bojang if he had visited any other houses with the witch-hunters and their entourage. The witness replied that he had not and was taken straight to the bantaba with his guests and that other people were being brought out by other witch-hunters and the Green Boys.

Omar Bojang told the Commission that as many as 62 people were brought there and made to sit on the floor while a group of witch-hunters were drumming.

The witness explained that he learned the number of people who were there from one Abdoulie Bojang (a current resident of Jambur) who was also there and counted the number of accused people that were placed in the bantaba as the events unfolded.

The witness told the Commission that his father, his father's younger brother, and his second brother were also accused by the witch-hunters and detained.

At this point, Omar Bojang was asked what time he arrived at the bantaba, how long he was **detained** for, and how he left Jambur that day. He responded that they were taken to the bantaba between 2 and 3 pm in the afternoon and were **detained** until after 5 pm prayers. After prayers, they were all put on a bus and taken away. At the time, they did not know where they were being taken but they ended up being taken to Kololi.

The witness then explained that the group was comprised of both men and women in nearly even numbers, there were no children in the group and that aside from Lamin Bojang, he (the witness) was actually the youngest person who had been **detained**. He stated that he was in his late forties at the time of the incident. Aside from the **detained** residents of Jambur, the bus contained a number of soldiers from the Green Boys and they were followed by a vehicle with more soldiers accompanying Solo Bojang.

The Deputy Lead Counsel followed up by asking Omar Bojang to tell the Commissioners what the names of his family members were who were **detained** on the day of the witch-hunt. He said that in addition to himself, his father Imam Karamo Bojang, and his two uncles, Arafan Yahya Bojang and Jarakunda bojang were **detained** with him.

At this point, the Deputy Lead Counsel focused on the events that took place in Kololi and asked the witness to describe what happened there. He explained that when the bus arrived at Kololi, the soldiers asked them to get out of the vehicle and to line up. He did not see what

happened to anyone else in line but when his turn came he was taken inside a room with an armed soldier and two of individuals dressed in red, adding that in the room there were two buckets. Both of the buckets were full of liquid but one had leaves in it that had altered the colour of the water and the other bucket was full of slightly cleaner looking water.

When he entered the room, the men dressed in red stirred the bucket with the herbs in it and took a one-liter cup, filled it, and asked the witness to drink it. When he started drinking it, he tried to remove the herbs in it but the men wearing red told him to chew the leaves and swallow them. Omar Bojang told the Commission that he did as he was told. After he drank the liquid, they asked him to remove his shirt, they asked him if he had on underpants, and then asked him to remove his trousers. He recalled that that the men then used the other bucket of water to bathe him.

After they were done, they asked him to put his clothes back on and then took him to a big sitting room with other people in it. The witness remarked that at this time of year, it was the cold season but they made the **detained** people sit on the tiled floor anyway. He said that he was not conscious for more than five minutes after being made to sit on the floor.

He was detained until 7:00 in the evening the next day, adding that he did not remember what took place during the time as he was unconscious but he was told by his father that at times, he would try to take people's shoes from their feet so that he could lead prayers as if they were all at the mosque.

Omar Bojang testified that it was not until the next evening, when they were being put on the bus to leave Kololi that he began to regain consciousness. When they arrived back at the bantaba in Jambur, he

was able to walk back to his house with some assistance but he remarked that there were many people who could not walk on their own at all and had to be carried.

The Deputy Lead Counsel then asked the witness about the long-term impacts of the event himself, his visitors, and other residents of Jambur who had been **detained**. He explained that he could only speak to what happened to himself and his guests. He stated that he began having problems in one of his eyes after the incident and eventually went completely blind in that eye. His visitors left The Gambia for Casamance after the incident. All of his guests experienced negative side effects from the events after the witch-hunt.

One of them became sick about one month later and then died within five months.

Another one of his guests, named Kebba Saidy, experienced frequent health problems after the incident and had been recently hospitalised in Ziguinchor Lamin Toure Hospital. His other guest, Amadou Tidjan Seydi from Karang (Senegal), developed hearing problems after the incident. Before the events of that day, all of them had been in good health. The witness, Omar Bojang, also told the Commission that in regards to the other people from Jambur who were **detained** at Kololi, he had heard that some of those people had died and others were sick but that he could not speak for them and that they would be the best people to help explain what happened to them to the Commission.

The Deputy Lead Counsel followed up on this by asking him how the stigma of being accused of witchcraft affected the people who had been **detained** that day. The witness told them that after the incident, people talked about how wizards and witches in Jambur had been taken away but that the truth was that the entire incident was actually a political fight.

At this point in the testimony the Deputy Lead Counsel opened the floor for other Commissioners.

Chairman Lamin Sise spoke to how wrong it was to that these humiliations and injuries were perpetrated by

Yanhya Jammeh's people and, to a certain extent, the state as well. He apologised to the people of Jambur that they had to suffer these indignities.

Commissioner Bishop Odico asked the witness if he and his visitors went along with the men dressed in red or if they were forced to go to the bantaba and then Kololi. Omar Bojang told him that he went willingly in order to try to protect his guests from any harm that might come from resisting.

In his concluding remarks, the witness addressed those who are close to the rulers and implored them to advise the leaders of their country to take a good course of action when the president or other leaders are considering taking actions that will harm The Gambia. The witness stated that he suspected that before the witch-hunters came to Jambur, that they must have sat down with someone to discuss what they were going to do and to receive approval for the witch-hunt.

Omar Bojang said that he often thinks of the TRRC slogan, "Never Again" and hopes that nothing will be done to take The Gambia backwards. He told the Commissioners that he prayed to God that this would never happen again.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Assault (of Omar Bojang)

Laluwa Conteh

Arbitrary detention (of Omar Bojang)

Paul Mendy

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death

Solo Bojang

Aiding and abetting persecution

Kebba Jarju Bojang



WITNESS NAME: Dembo Mamo BOJANG

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 18th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Jambur

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Resident of Jambur

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft/
Survivor of Jambur witch-hunt

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Elderly resident
of Jambur

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Dembo Mamo Bojang began his testimony by introducing himself and his family as natives of Jambur. He told the Commission that under the previous regime supporters of the United Democratic Party, UDP of which he was a member, and Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction, APRC had conflicts over politics.

The witness narrated how after it was announced that Yahya Jammeh had won the presidential election³⁷, APRC supporters led by the local party chairman Marafang Bojang, came to the houses of UDP supporters and began mocking them until a fight ensued. After the fight, paramilitaries³⁸ came and took the witness and his family to the Brikama Police Station. The police told them they would lock them up overnight, which the witness found confusing considering he believed the APRC supporters had started the fight.

Eight people including the witness, his brother, his children, and his grandchildren were packed in a cell for eight days. They were released on the ninth day, but were never charged before a court of law.

Dembo Mamo Bojang told the Commission that while they were imprisoned neither the Alkalo of Jambur nor Ousainou Darboe, the leader of the UDP visited them in prison. Once they were released, one of the conditions of their bail was to report to the station every morning. This became very onerous for the witness and his family, so the authorities said they did not have to report in the mornings but might be called in the future. The witness confirmed they have never been called since.

The witness further narrated that in 2009, a group of men came to Jambur claiming they could cure people. They came with a bus and three other vehicles. He said he was first made aware of their presence when they passed his house on the way to the Alkalo's compound. The witness said some in the procession, who he later alleged were not Gambian citizens, were dressed in red with cowrie shells in their hats and festooned in talismans. They were joined by youth referred to as "Green Boys," who the witness recalled from previous APRC programmes. They were also joined by three or four soldiers, of which he recognised Solo Bojang from rice growing activities on the then-President's (Yahya Jammeh) farm at Kanilai. He testified that a man named Ali Ceesay from Latriya led the strangers to the then-Alkalo, Kebba Jarju Bojang. The witness told the Commission that when he saw these men come to the village, he knew they had come "for reasons of politics."

The witness added that the Green Boys began beating the drums and girls started dancing at the bantaba. Meanwhile the men in red said they were going to the cemetery to perform prayers. The witness told the

³⁷The witness did not say which presidential election.

³⁸This is the term the witness used and there was no clarification as to what security service this actually refers to.

Commission he did not follow them to the cemetery, but other people in the community did. He said that he later heard that a hole was dug and a red cock and goat were slaughtered.

When the Lead Counsel asked the witness, who had authorised these people to come to Jambur, he replied that they must have been sent by Yahya Jammeh, reasoning that nothing happened in The Gambia at that time without the President's approval.

Dembo Mamo Bojang recalled that the men returned to the village and the Alkalo told the people who had assembled that they had come to cure people. The men went from house to house **arresting** people - however, not all houses were equally targeted. Initially, the witness testified, youth from the village joined the men in going house to house, but the youth's initial participation ceased when they saw their fathers and mothers targeted. The witness stated that he wanted to resist the men, but did not have adequate support compared to the number of men. He was **arrested** and taken to the bus where he joined his elder brother. He added that he told his brother they should fight those who were **arresting** them, but his brother disagreed.

According to the witness, those who had been taken by the men were left sitting in the vehicles until the late afternoon. He told the men guarding them to let them go so they could give the 5 pm call to prayer. The men initially denied their request, but after the witness protested further, Solo Bojang allowed the witness to go to the mosque and turn on the machine for the call to prayer. He stated that he prayed for Allah to protect him and those who were detained. After the prayer, two young men came in and told the witness it was time to leave.

The witness told the Commission that the bus took them to Kololi to Baba Jobe's compound. They were asked to sit at a table while someone took their names. The witness' companions told him that around 62 people had

been taken from Jambur. Food was brought for them. The witness recalled that he had an altercation with Solo Bojang over who was being served lunch but their conflict was settled by the imam of Jambur who had also been taken.

Continuing on with his testimony, the witness testified that after eating, he was told it was time to drink the medicine. They were brought to a building that seemed like a toilet. The witness further testified that he was asked to take off his shirt, but not his trousers, and remove his talismans. The women were allegedly also asked to take off their headwraps and their shirts.

In response to questions from the Lead Counsel, the witness confirmed that the women went into the room topless.

Once in the room, the witness said, they were given a cup full of a liquid concoction. According to the witness the liquid was similar to what is known in The Gambia as "Kubejara." They were told to drink the whole cup, including the dregs at the bottom. The witness stated that he protested, but he was forced to drink it nonetheless.

Dembo Mamo Bojang testified that after he drank the concoction, he felt dizzy and was urinating and vomiting constantly.

He told the Commission he saw similar symptoms in the people he was with. He said that the medicine made people drunk and unable to behave properly, adding that he could not control himself and had to lie down on the floor. However, when the Lead Counsel asked if people started speaking strange things, the witness responded that he did not see this among the people from Jambur.

Dembo Mamo Bojang told the Commissioners that they spent the night at Baba Jobe's compound in

Kololi lying on the cold floor. The next morning, they were told they would have to drink the concoction a second time but the witness protested, and the men at the house relented and did not force the witness and others to drink it a second time. He also stated that he demanded that no one from Jambur spend a second night at the house. That afternoon they were all taken back to Jambur.

According to the witness, some of the people who returned to Jambur were almost **paralysed**. A number of those who were ill eventually recovered, but many suffer serious health problems up until today, and some people died as a result of drinking the concoction. He added that among those who **died** as a result of drinking the concoction were his younger sister Manjiki Cham, his nephew Dembo Jariatou, one of his grandsons Lamin Dandan Ba, his mother-in-law Adama Camara, and Kaddy Jatta, Saikou Camara, Bouye Kotteh, Kosa Darboe, Masabu Bojang, and Mamadou Kumba. He told the Commission there were others who died but he could not recall them all. He added that Nanny Bojang, Sainabou Sanneh, and Masireh Bojang were perpetually ill, **disabled**, or house-ridden after the incident.

The Lead Counsel confirmed that ten people died as a result of the concoction.

The witness told the Commission that the ordeal left him in a weakened state. He said he cannot weed his compound and has to pay people to clear it for him now. Whenever he lies down his joints pain him, and his vision is blurred. He added that he used to be able to walk from Jambur to Brikama and Serrekunda and back in one day, but is no longer able after drinking the concoction.

The witness expressed confusion that the incident was a witch-hunt, telling the Commission that there were no witches or wizards in their community and that he does not even know how witches and wizards are identified. He also pointed out that the people came to Jambur saying that they were coming to heal people but no one had reported any sickness. *"It was because of power that we agreed to go with these people. At that time, the power that Yahya had, we would always go whenever he called for us".*

The Lead Counsel asked the witness about noted discrepancies between his written testimony and his oral testimony regarding his symptoms, to which the witness replied that some things could not be said in the context of the TRRC.

In the witness' final statement, he told the Commission that the TRRC was necessary to discover the truth of what happened in Jambur and why it happened, and tell The Gambia and the wider world, because even the residents of Jambur do not know why they were forced to endure this ordeal. He said after **the witch-hunt people spoke with hatred and jealousy**, and people were trying to **tarnish their reputation by accusing them of practicing witchcraft**. He added that Jambur is small and that since its founding, the village has not been accepted as a literate community, yet all of Kombo knows Jambur. He concluding by thanking the TRRC and said their work was ensuring that what happened in Jambur is never repeated in The Gambia.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death

Solo Bojang, Yahya Jammeh

He also pointed out that the people came to Jambur saying that **they were coming to heal people but no one had reported any sickness.** “*It was because of power that we agreed to go with these people. At that time, the power that Yahya had, we would always go whenever he called for us*”.

WITNESS NAME: Fatou FATTY

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 18th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Jambur

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Daughter of Nima Koteh who was accused of witchcraft and abducted.

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Witnessed her mother's abduction by witch-hunters

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Gardener

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Fatou Fatty told the Commission that she remembered the witch-hunting event that took place in 2009. She stated that on the day that they arrived in her village, they heard drums. A woman came to her mother and told her that some people were having a meeting and she needed to go. The witness and her mother left the compound and went to the venue where the meeting was being held. She added that when they got to the venue, the meeting was already underway and some people were playing the drums while other people were dancing.

The witness testified that after the dancing stopped, people were loaded onto vehicles.

The witness had no idea where they were being taken and she told the Counsel that she was afraid because, initially, she was told by someone that the people were being taken away to be killed.

It was not until later, after they had departed, that the witness heard that the people had been rounded up in a witch-hunt.

Looking for clarification, the Counsel asked the witness several questions. The Counsel asked the witness what her mother's name was. The witness testified that her mother was Nima Koteh, but that she usually went by, Mbui Koteh and at the time of the witch-hunt, she was



around eighty years old. When asked, the witness recalled that the woman who came and took her mother was named, Arama Bojang. She added that Arama Bojang was her mother's friend and neighbour and that sometimes they went and "did things together".

The witness further testified that Arama Bojang told her mother that people were gathering at the market for a meeting. She explained that at the time that this occurred, she was in the compound where she was married and that her mother lived in a different compound nearby. The Counsel asked the witness how she knew who came to take her mother to the meeting and the witness explained that a woman, a stranger, had been staying with Arama Bojang and one day the two women had come to collect her mother and take her to the meeting. When asked, the witness said that she was also present at the witch-hunt meeting. She explained that when she arrived, she saw people playing the drums and dancing and that her arrival coincided with the moment when her mother was forced to board the vehicle.

Describing the people who were dancing and drumming, the witness testified that some of them were wearing bright red clothing but that there were also soldiers among them. She knew that they were soldiers because they were wearing military uniforms and they had guns in their hands. The witness explained that apart from the uniformed soldiers and the people wearing red, she did not observe the presence of any other people. She did not know why the people had been playing the drums and dancing.

Fatou Fatty told the Commission that apart from her mother, she also saw many other people from Jambur who had been gathered at the site of the witch-hunt meeting but she did not count how many were there. When asked, the witness explained that the people were dancing when she arrived but that shortly after she got to the meeting place, they stopped and people were made to board the bus.

According to the witness, the people wearing red clothes were not from Jambur. The witness explained that some of the people who were dancing were the people who had been **abducted** and that someone told her that they were being taken away to be **killed**.

She believed that the villagers had been forced to dance because some of them were very elderly.

The witness said that the people wearing red clothes were also carrying jujus and horns and they that they used those objects to “work” on the people. When asked to further describe the people who wore “red-red”, the witness stated that she did not observe anything else about them.

When asked if the people wearing “red-red,” spoke to the **abducted** villagers from Jambur, the witness testified that the people wearing “red-red” were taking other people away and they would fight anyone who tried to resist them. When probed for further details about the use of force, the witness explained that some people refused to go and they were **threatened** with **violence**. The witness explained that some people were brought there from their homes while others came to the meeting place for the witch-hunt by themselves.

The Counsel asked the witness if the people were told where they were being taken and the witness responded that they were told that they were being taken to Kololi to be **killed** because they were sick. The witness testified that her mother was not sick at the time she was taken. In fact, she was in good enough health to spend time on the farm.

After she was taken and forced to drink the witch-hunter’s medicine, she became very ill and could not do anything by herself.

The Counsel asked the witness if she protested when her mother was taken and she responded that she did not because, in the moment when her mother was being taken away, she did not know where she was being taken to. It was after the bus left that she heard that people were **abducted** because they had been accused of being a witch or a wizard. They were taken away on a large bus, full of people who had been accused of witchcraft. The witness testified that the incident occurred around 5 pm.

Fatou Fatty explained that when her mother was being **abducted**, she did not enquire as to where she was being taken. She later heard that they had been taken to Kololi. When asked, the witness said that she got that information from “some people,” soon after the bus departed. She further testified that her mother was taken around 5 pm and returned the next day around the same time.

When her mother returned, she was dizzy, had a wound on her mouth, a broken tooth and, because of her behaviour, she seemed drunk or crazy. The witness testified that from that day until her death, her mother never recovered from her condition.

Her mother had trouble even with getting up to go to the bathroom and the witness testified that at the time she and her family thought, she was under “the spell of Satan”. The witness added that she would take her mother for treatment in Banjul.

The Counsel asked the witness if her mother had walked home by herself and the witness explained that she was not there when her mother returned and does not know how she got back. She just found her at home. Describing her mother's behaviour, the witness recalled that she had trouble holding onto objects and said incomprehensible things. The witness clarified for the Counsel that the exact words her mother said were unclear and it sounded as if her tongue was too heavy in her mouth.

The witness believed that when her mother drank the concoction, she may have become unconscious, fallen down and broken her tooth. The Counsel asked how the witness had heard about what took place in Kololi and the witness explained that she had heard that the accused people were forced to drink a liquid made of the leaves of Kubejara.

The Counsel asked the witness where she got that information from and she explained that she “heard it here”, and that “Kubejara is something that makes you mad when you drink it”.

The Counsel asked if the witness asked her mother what had happened to her but the witness explained that her mother could not speak, that her tongue looked limp and her words were unclear. The witness' mother remained this way until her death, ever unable to communicate with her children. At the time that she was taken away to Kololi, she had no trouble communicating.

When asked, the witness explained that she took her mother to the hospital within three days of her return from Kololi. They went to the hospital in the morning where she was diagnosed with diabetes. The witness testified that she did not tell the doctor about the incident leading up to her mother's sickness because she was afraid. They spent a month at the hospital and during that time her mother's condition saw no improvement. When they took her to the hospital, she did not even open her eyes. The witness reiterated that her mother's condition never improved before she died. The witness also testified that she believes her condition was caused

by the concoction that she drank because before she drank the medicine, she did not suffer from any health problems.

The Counsel asked if it was true the witness was later told that **abducted** persons had been given the medication as a cure for witchcraft and the witness agreed. The Counsel then asked the witness if she suffered from the incident, the witness agreed that she had and that hearing about what happened to her mother made her very sad.

She added that her mother suffered from the stigma of being accused of witchcraft.

When asked how her mother was treated by the community after she returned, the witness explained that there was nothing she could say about it, because she had never known her mother to be a witch. The witness testified that although she and her family suffered because of what happened to their mother, she did not worry about any **stigma** associated with the accusations because she personally knew for sure that her mother was not a witch.

The witness testified that she did not hear anything about anyone else who was taken on the bus with her mother. The Counsel asked if she knew what had happened to Arama Bojang, the woman who took her mother to the witch-hunt, and the witness replied that Arama Bojang did not get on the bus and go to Kololi.

The Counsel thanked the witness for her testimony and gave the Commissioners the opportunity to ask further questions. Responding to Commissioner Kinteh, the witness disclosed that her mother lived for less than a year after she was forced to drink the concoction.

The witness did not give any closing remarks.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

None

WITNESS NAMES: Fatou SOWE, Lamarana JALLOW,
Sukai JALLOW

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 19th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The witch-hunt in Makumbaya

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Lamarana Jallow,
petty trader/**Fatou Sowe**, gardener/ **Sukai Jallow**, not
stated

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft
and abducted



Fatou Sowe

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Not stated

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

After giving brief information about themselves and confirmed that all three of them live in Galohya, the Counsel began with witness Lamarana Jallow who stated that the day she was captured by some men, she had gone to the market where she is a petty trader. She explained that she was asked to board the bus and she responded that she would not because she was not from Makumbaya, she was from Galohya. But they took her merchandise and made her get into the bus with them. She said that at that time, her children who went to school at Makumbaya were on break and had come to the market. She recalled that her children were crying when they saw her **captured** and they also attempted to beat them. She added that she told them to go home and she will be back if she did not die.



Lamarana Jallow



Sukai Jallow

Turning to the witness, Fatou Sowe, the Counsel stated that she understood that she and Sukai Jallow were captured together at the same time but she would hear from her first and allow Sukai Jallow to add to it. Fatou Sowe was then asked to tell the Commission what she was doing when she was **captured** to which she responded that she was at home, separating the rice from other particles. When they came in and greeted her, she looked up and saw men in red clothes with horn accompanied by young men in green. They told her they had come for her and she asked them what she had done to be picked up. She was told that she had not done anything wrong but she was sick, that a spell was put on her by a witch. They told her they were going to give her a medicine, which if she drank it will cure her by the grace of God. She said that little did she know that the medicine they were going to give her was going to bring more complications for her.

Lamarana Jallow was asked who the men that **captured** her were and she explained that some of them wore “green –green”, and others wore red outfits with mirrors, some holding mirrors and others had big juju on their bodies. They would stand the mirror in front of people before asking them to board the vehicle. If they refused, the boys in green-green would come and **beat** them. When asked if she knew who the people wearing green-green and those in red were, she said she did not nor did she know where they came from except that the men in red were Fulas. She added she was not sure if they were Fulas from Gambia or Guinea. When asked, she responded that at that time, she did not know where they were being taken.

Fatou Sowe explained that at that time, her co-wife was there and she encouraged her to go with them because they said they were going to cure her. She then got up and followed them and she was taken to Makumbaya.

When asked if she wanted to go with them, the witness said that she did not but she had no choice because the people that came for her came with men armed with guns and others had pick-axes and stick. She added that she was afraid.

When asked if she knew the men dressed in red and adorned with horns or the ones wearing green-green, she responded that she has never set eyes on them. When probed further, Fatou Sowe disclosed that the men in green were the ones that were armed and some were soldiers and some were not.

The Counsel then moved to Sukai Jallow and started by asking her relationship with Fatou Sowe and if they lived together. The witness responded that they were cousins and they did not live together. When asked where she was at the time the witch-hunters came in 2009, she responded that she was at home, pounding coos³⁹. She also said that they did not live far from each other when asked. Continuing on her explanation, witness Sukai Jallow stated that when the witch-hunters came to her house and found her pounding, they called her to come to them. She said she responded that she was pounding but they insisted. She went and met the on the main road behind her compound. She added that they had pick-axes with them. She was told she had to go with them as she was not well. She asked them where they were going and they responded that it would not be for long, she was just going to drink some medicine and come back quickly. When she argued that she was not dressed properly, they did not allow her to change. She went with them and boarded the bus, which was parked at Makumbaya.

Fatou Sowe was asked where the bus was parked in Makumbaya, and to describe what, if anything, was happening in the area near the bus when they were **abducted**. The witness told the Counsel that the bus was parked at the Alkalo's compound in Makumbaya, Alkali Sagarr Kujabi. She testified that around the area where the bus was parked, there were people dressed in red, people dressed in green, and many people who had been abducted from their homes. When the Counsel prompted pointed out that other witnesses had testified that there were also people playing drums and singing near the bus as people were being abducted, the witness agreed that there they were there but as soon as they arrived, they felt compelled to get in the bus by the boys wearing green-green.

Sukai Jallow was asked to describe the bus and she explained that the bus was very large and painted green, similar to the ones used by the Gambia Transport Service Company. When asked, she said she agreed with the previous testimony given by Fatou Sowe regarding the location of the bus but added that there were people dressed in green-green who had pick axes and gave them instructions in Mandinka.

When Lamarana Jallow was asked, she confirmed that there were people drumming and dancing, adding that the marabouts, the same people who came to capture them, were there to sort out who was and was not a witch by pointing mirrors at their faces. When probed to clarify, the witness stated the drummers and dancers were not people from Makumbaya, they were strangers who came with witch-hunters. When asked, the witness testified that apart from Galohya and Makumbaya, they attempted to **capture** people in Kubariko but that many people had run away from the witch-hunters because they heard they were coming however, a woman named Marang Jallow, who was from Kubariko, was captured with them at the market in Makumbaya.

The Counsel asked Lamarana Jallow if anyone else was captured with her and Marang Jallow at the

³⁹Coos is a grain grown and used locally for porridge, couscous.

market and the witness responded that the arrival of the witch-hunters coincided with when people were beginning to naturally disperse but many who were found in the market were captured. Additionally, some witch-hunters followed those who had left the market up to the rice fields and captured them there. When the Counsel asked Lamarana Jallow if she knew anyone else who was captured, she said another woman named Chargee Jallow who lived in Galohya at the time was also captured by the witch-hunters.

Returning to Sukai Jallow, the Counsel asked her if she recognised anyone on the bus when she boarded in Makumbaya and the witness responded that apart from the people she was captured with, Fatou Sowe and Lamarana Jallow, she did not know anyone else on the bus. The Counsel then asked Fatou Sowe if she recognised anyone on the bus who had not been mentioned yet and she replied that she did not.

The Counsel asked Lamarana how she felt when she boarded the bus, was separated from her family, and taken away. The witness explained that she knew that her captors were heartless because when they captured her, her children were there and cried as she was taken away. Despite that, they did not have mercy on her, made her give her goods to her children and forced her to get on the bus. When asked, the witness testified that she did not know where she was going and she did not ask them.

The Counsel asked Sukai Jallow how she felt as she was taken aboard the bus. She replied that at the time, she put her faith in Allah. Asked how she felt when she was separated from her children, she said she was very unhappy but she was powerless to do anything to help them or herself.

The Counsel then asked the same question to Fatou Sowe and she said that when she boarded the bus she thought that she would be killed by her captors and that none of them would ever return. When asked, she expanded that she believed she would be killed because of the “situation in the country,” meaning that there were **killings** and **disappearances** going on in The Gambia at that time.

The Counsel asked her to elaborate and Fatou Sowe said that they had heard that people were being killed and that a close relative of hers was killed and buried in Barra by the State.

The Counsel asked the witness who her relative was that had been killed and she told the Counsel that he was from Niumi and that his name was Mody Sowe. When asked what circumstances surrounded his death, the witness said that she did not know, but that he was killed, “just like that.” When asked, if there had been an investigation into the murder of her relative, the witness stated that victim’s parents were still around but that she did not know if there had ever been an investigation.

The Counsel continued by asking Fatou Sowe if she knew where she was going when she boarded the bus. She replied that she did not know where they were going. She also added that she did not know where the Green Boys or the people in red came from.

The Counsel asked Lamarana Jallow if she knew where their captors came from. Lamarana said that she did not hear anything about it when she was on the bus. She went on to explain that they were informed that they were being taken somewhere but that, even though she asked where they were going, they would not reveal the destination. Eventually, they arrived in Kololi where all of the passengers alighted from the bus. Everyone got off the bus in Kololi and they were told to go into the compound to drink a concoction that was prepared for them. The Counsel asked her to estimate how many people were on the bus but the witness did not know how many people were there. She explained that she was distracted because she was angry with her captors who had shouted at her children earlier that day.

The Counsel then asked Lamarana Jallow what she observed in the compound in Kololi where they were made to drink the witch-hunter's medicine. The witness said that when they arrived, they were given food to eat and while they were eating their captors went to prepare the concoction. They were instructed to hand over all of their property to the Green Boys and were then taken to drink the medicine. The Counsel asked the witness what items she had to give up and the witness testified that she gave the guards 2,500 of her money. The witness did not indicate what type currency she was carrying.

The Counsel asked Sukai Jallow about her experience in the compound and if she was asked to do anything. She also testified that they were given food when she arrived and that they were made to give up their possessions after they ate, adding that she gave 700 dalasi to them. When asked to describe her experience, Fatou Sowe echoed Sukai and Lamarana Jallow's stories, adding that she refused to eat because she was already full and like them, she gave the captors her purse, which contained her money.

The Counsel then moved on to the moment when the alleged witches and wizards were made to drink the medicine. Lamarana Jallow explained that when it was someone's turn to drink the medicine, the guards took them by the hand and led them to another room where they made them drink the concoction. After drinking, they took them back to the other room and made them sit down. The Counsel asked if the captives were organised at all prior to drinking the medicine and the witness explained that they were sitting on the bare floor in a place where there were tiles on one side and no tiles on the other.

She said that some of the people who drank it before her became unconscious and fell down after they consumed it.

She recalled that some of the people who came out of the room after drinking the medicine were not themselves, they were not aware of themselves, and their personalities

had completely changed. Lamarana Jallow explained that many people were told to sit down, and if they fell down, they were left where they were on the floor.

When asked if they were forced to drink the medicine or if they drank it willingly, the witness stated that they were all led by their hand, taken into a room, and given the concoction. They were taken to drink the medicine by members of the Green Boys.

The Counsel then asked Lamarana Jallow to describe her experience after she drank the concoction. She began by first describing the concoction itself which she said the ingredients were pounded and mixed with water but was unable to say what was in the medicine. After they prepared the concoction, it was put into a cup and given to her to drink. The witness was also told to drink a second cup of the concoction but she refused and only had to drink one cup. After she consumed the concoction, Lamarana Jallow explained that she was very confused and unaware of her surroundings for a long time. She said that she did not become conscious again until around ten o'clock in the morning.

Sukai Jallow was asked by the Counsel to explain her experience of drinking the medicine as well. She testified that the concoction was brought in a bucket and she was given a cup of medicine to drink. Before it was her turn to drink, she observed that some people who had drank the medicine were laying on the ground like corpses. They looked like they were sleeping and were motionless. The witness testified that she was taken to a room that contained a bucket filled with the concoction. The concoction was green and had crushed leaves in it. She said she was made to drink a full cup and a half of the medicine from a normal sized drinking cup. After she drinking, she was made to chew the bitter leaves at the bottom of the cup and swallow them. The Counsel asked if chewing the leaves affected her mouth and the witness testified that the dregs were difficult to consume and made her gag. She said her body became limp and she lay down on the ground, sleeping until the following day.

The Counsel returned to Fatou Sowe and asked her to describe her experience with the concoction as well. Fatou Sowe said that she was unable to explain what the experience of drinking the medicine felt like but added that she never suffered from high blood pressure before the witch-hunt but that she has suffered from it ever since. She testified that everyone who drank the medicine became unconscious. She was not able to say how many people drank the medicine but that she was one of the last to drink it. When pressed to estimate the number of people who were taken on the bus she said there may have been fifty to sixty people. Fatou Sowe said that she drank the medicine around 5 pm and that she too was unconscious until the next morning. She testified to the Counsel that she was given the medicine by the same people who had accused them of being witches and wizards.

Fatou Sowe explained that when she became conscious the next morning, she realised that she was in a different room than she had been in the previous day. When she woke up that morning, one of the Green Boys confronted the witness and asked her how many people she had eaten in the past year. The witness told him that she did not eat people, she had never eaten human flesh, that she was not a witch, and that it was them that had accused her of being a witch. The Counsel asked her why she thought she had been accused of being a witch and the witness said she did not know because her accusers did not know her and she did not know them.

The Counsel asked her if she received any information in Kololi about why she had been accused of witchcraft, **abducted**, and made to drink the medicine. Fatou Sowe explained that when she went home, people would come to visit her and look at her condition. The Counsel clarified that they were asking if she knew who had sent them to capture alleged witches and wizards. The witness said she did not know who had sent the witch-hunters but she added that she had heard that they had been sent to look out for witches and wizards and they had said they were sent by the head of state who, at the time, was then President Yahya Jammeh.

The Counsel then asked Sukai Jallow what her experience was like after regaining consciousness. She explained that after drinking the concoction, she became dizzy and sleepy and lay down on the floor, unconscious until the next day. When she woke up, she was also approached by a Green Boy who asked her how many people she had killed and eaten over the previous year. The witness said she told him she had never eaten anyone. The Green Boy approached her repeatedly to tell her that she had to tell the truth. She told him that she had nothing to say. The Green Boy said that if she did not talk that he would not be able to help what might happen to her. The Counsel asked if the Green Boy was threatening her and the witness said that he was being **threatening**. When asked, Sukai Jallow said that she was not afraid because she had faith in Allah. After this exchange she was not given more of the concoction to drink.

The Counsel asked if she experienced any physical violence or beatings and the witness said that she was not beaten but that she did see some people being **beaten** and that one of them did not survive the attack.

When asked to elaborate, the witness stated that a man was taken behind a small house and beaten and that she could hear him crying.

She heard the Green Boys saying that he was a wizard and that he should tell them how many people he had eaten. According to the witness the beating was administered by two of the Green Boys who put the man in between them and attacked him.

The Counsel then asked Lamarana Jallow if the compound they were held in contained any toilet facilities. The witness testified that they did not go to the toilet there. The Counsel asked how people were able to relieve themselves and the witness said that they did not use the toilet but that some people urinated on themselves after drinking the concoction.

Lamarana Jallow stated that people were so afraid of the guards and the situation that they urinated on themselves rather than try to find a toilet.

The whole place was mostly locked up and so they never saw a toilet. She said they were told not to drink water after drinking the concoction because if they did, they would die. She further explained that they did not eat anything after the meal just after their arrival until they returned home. When asked, she replied that they were held in Kololi for two days. The Counsel asked if anyone was allowed to shower or change clothes and the witness replied in the negative.

Moving on, the Counsel asked Fatou Sowe if anything happened on the second day. The witness said that on the second day, she was asked how many people she had eaten and that the captives were also forced to take a ritual bath. The witness explained that just before they were released to go home, they were told to go and bathe with the medicine they had been given to drink.

They were forced to take off their clothes and stand naked in front of a young man who poured the water on them and rubbed the medicine all over their body.

The witness stated that the man was so young that he could have been her grandson's age. Afterwards, she was given her clothes back. The Counsel asked the witness how this made her feel and the witness responded that there was nothing they could do about it but that she worried that if a small boy was forced to look at their nakedness, he might end up in a bad way, that there would be a curse on him. After being forced to bathe, the witness explained, their captives announced that they would be taken home.

Then, the Counsel spoke to Sukai Jallow and asked if she was also forced to bathe. She said that she was made to bathe in the same way that Fatou was.

Lamarana Jallow testified that when she was made to take a bath, a young man told her to take off her clothes. The witness said that before she undressed, she told him that if he wanted to see the nakedness of an elder, she would help him. When she took off her dress, the boy poured the water on her. The Counsel asked how this made her feel and she explained that the medicine was very smelly and that you needed a second shower to get the smell off. The witness further told the Commission that the liquid they were forced to bathe contained the same green leaves as the liquid they drank. She believed it was smelly because it had been sitting around for a long time and had fermented. She added that the bathing experience made her feel very bad because she did not have any appetite and it also made her mouth very sore so that she had to drink some milk to soothe it.

Directing her next question to Sukai Jallow, the Counsel asked her what it was like when she was bathed by that young man with filthy water. She said that she thought that Allah might curse the boy for seeing her naked. After she took the bath, Sukai Jallow testified that she felt very itchy all over her body from the smelly liquid. She affirmed that she was not allowed to take a bath with fresh water and she had to arrive home in dirty clothes. The Counsel further asked what happened to the possessions that they had been given to the guards. She said when they asked for their money back, the guards asked them who they had given their money to, adding **that she never got her money back**. Fatou Sowe and Lamarana Jallow also asserted that they were not given back their money and that the guards insisted that they had not taken it. Lamarana Jallow also added that she even lost her shoes.

Narrating how she got home after she was released, Fatou Sowe recalled that they were brought back to Makumbaya because they were still weak and then

a young man in Makumbaya, who had a vehicle, gave them a lift and took them all to their homes. The Counsel asked what her condition was when she returned home and Fatou Sowe said that she had been accused of being a witch and that was how she was seeing herself. She added that her community received her with a lot of stares but that no one spoke to her about what had happened. The witness explained that she and the other witnesses were the only people from her village who had been **captured** and when they returned from Kololi they were labeled as witches by their community. She explained that no one said that to her directly but that people looked at them as if they were witches.

She recalled that she did not leave her home for a month because she was afraid to go out.

The Counsel then asked Sukai Jallow what long-term effects she experienced from drinking the medicine. She explained that she often had headaches and experienced pain in one of her legs, adding that she believed the medicine was the cause of her health problems and was still trying to heal herself at the time of the testimony.

The Counsel asked Lamarana Jallow what her experience was like in the community after she was released and returned home. She testified that when they came back, people came to stare at them and that some really believed that they were witches. She explained that sometimes when people accused her of being a witch she told them that they were right and that if they did not behave she would eat them because they had been given some medicine which actually made them more powerful. The Counsel asked if she used the situation to her advantage and she said that, yes, she did, and sometimes they actually would joke about being witches.

The Counsel asked what negative affects the accusations of being a witch had on her in her community and Lamarana Jallow explained that she was not greatly affected by the stigma and that when people asked her if she was a witch, she would usually laugh at them. The Counsel asked her if her children were affected at all by the stigma and she explained that when her children

encountered these accusations, she would comfort them and say that they should know she was not a witch because she had not eaten them and would not eat anyone else.

Commenting on her health, Lamarana Jallow told the Commission that it had seriously deteriorated and that she was still unwell at the time of the testimony. She stated that her hand was in bad shape and that she tired very easily. When she was asked what her other symptoms were, she said she put her faith in God. She added that although she had sought treatment nothing had helped her condition improve. The witness believed that the source of her health problems was the medicine she was forced to drink, explaining that she has had health problems ever since she was **captured** and taken to Kololi to drink the concoction. The Counsel asked her who she held responsible for what happened to her and she told them that it was destined by God. When asked one more time who was responsible for what she went through in Kololi she stated that she could only say it was destined by God.

The Counsel then asked Fatou Sowe what her health was like at the time of the hearing. She testified that she suffered from big problems. She said she used to be a gardener but now she was unable to work because she has general pain in her body and feet and suffered from high blood pressure ever since drinking the medication. Fatou Sowe stated that she had sought treatment at a nearby clinic. When asked, the witness said that she can still work a little bit, though it had become very hard for her to earn a living.

Asked who she held responsible for her condition, Fatou Sowe responded she held her **captors **responsible** and that they were sent by **Yahya Jammeh** and that she blamed him and his people for what happened.**

The Counsel then asked Sukai Jallow who she held responsible for what had happened to her and she said that she also blamed the former head of state, ex-President Yahya Jammeh.

The Chairman then thanked the witnesses for their testimony and expressed his condolences for their suffering. He then offered the floor to Sukai Jallow for a closing statement who said she was praying for the people doing the work of the TRRC. She stated that she did not expect to have the opportunity to tell her story and explain how she had been taken away by children and forced to do something she did not want to do. She added that she did not expect to have anyone listen to her story and the opportunity to testify for the Commission helped to ease the pain in her mind. She thanked everyone and thanked the almighty Allah and prayed that God would empower the TRRC in their work.

When asked if she had any closing remarks, Fatou Sowe extended her sincere thanks to Allah and said that if they had not had any consolation for their pain, they would have died. She said that with the help of God they were able to forge through and she extended her thanks. She appealed to Gambians to unite and added that nothing like this should ever happen again.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Yahya Jammeh



Streets of Essau.



WITNESS NAME: Sainey Ba BOJANG

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 19th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Jambur and the impact on the witness and his family

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Driver and UPD supporter

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Not mentioned

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Sainey Ba Bojang started his testimony by saying that he was born in Jambur, spent his entire life there with his three wives and 15 children who are all living in Jambur. Asked about his age, he estimated that he might be 75 years old.

The Lead Counsel mentioned that in 2009 some important event took place in Jambur during which strangers came to the village and took away sons and daughters of Jambur for some form of cure or treatment and asked the witness if he could tell the Commission about his event. Sainey Ba Bojang responded that what he has to say is very clear. He remembered that the day they came, he had taken his vehicle to Yendum to be checked. On his way back, just after he passed Busumbala, he heard drums and said to himself, “there is a big noise” in Jambur and went to the place where the music came from, which was the market/bantaba. When he arrived, he saw people and was struck by some who were wearing red and carrying horns, cowries and

other things on their bodies, adding that he knew immediately that those people were magical people, who he called “Batoutas”. Present on the scene were also Green Boys, wearing green and drumming. Later in his testimony he mentioned that soldiers were also there, referring to them as “our guards”.

Asked to explain why he had called the men in red “magical people”, the witness said he had seen people wearing such attire before and knew that they could do magic on things and people. He further added “*they can change things into other things, like they can take something and make it into milk and they can take that bottle and fill it with sand even though the bottle is filled with water*”. The witness went on saying that the men told the people of Jambur, that they were not witch-hunters and they were not there do to witch-hunting but that they had been told that the villagers had a sickness and were not well, so they wanted to take them to cure them. Asked to continue his narration step by step, the witness stated that when he saw them at the market area, he did not say anything and just went home to tell his family to stay indoors.

When he reached his house, he told his relatives that nobody should go and follow those people to the bantaba. He himself stood at the compound’s gate to make sure that no one left. At one point a group of people came to his compound led by former Alkalo of Jambur, Kebba Bojang, who called his son, Pabo and asked him where his father was. Pabo answered that he had not seen him, while in fact he was inside the compound with his family of ten people. Shortly after that, Solo Bojang came and hit the compound gate with the butt of his gun. The group of men looked into the compound and the people in red were beating drums. The men in red looked inside but did not say anything and left. Then, Alkalo Kebba Bojang came, looked inside and said “*my nephew, you are also going*.”

Kebba Bojang then instructed the Green Boys to take the witness. When he got up, all his family members grabbed him, crying and begging him not to go. Sainey Ba Bojang told the Commission that he told

them to let him go, reminding them that “*on the day of death nobody lives and on the day of living nobody dies*”. The Alkalo ordered him to go and told him that Yahya Jammeh had sent those people to cure the people who were not well.

The Lead Counsel asked the witness if we could give more details about Solo Bojang and the kind of work he did. The witness explained that Solo Bojang was a soldier and that he knew him before this incident, from the times he went to Kanilai to work there, adding that a lot of people did that at the time. He noted that in Kanilai, Solo Bojang would give them hoes, fertilizers, and rice. They then would spend four days there with him in the bush and when they came back from the rice fields, they would sit down and chat. He concluded “*that was where I know Solo Bojang*”. The Lead Counsel recapped saying that Solo Bojang was a soldier working for the Gambia National Army, who was stationed at Kanilai.

The witness proceeded with his testimony, saying that when the Alkalo told him to come with them, he saw Solo Bojang standing in front of his compound and called his name. They then left together to the bigger compound. The witness described in detail how he was ordered to board a vehicle, tried to refuse but eventually had to comply. The Lead Counsel asked the witness whether other people were in the vehicle, to which Sainey Ba Bojang responded that in fact, he was the last one to go on board adding that Imam Ba Dembo (who also testified at the TRRC) as well as other men and women were already inside. He mentioned that at this moment, he decided to put his faith in God, just as the others had done.

The Lead Counsel told the witness that the Commission had received information that around 62 people had been **arrested** on that day. The witness agreed, and said that it is possible because it was a big bus, filled to the extent that some people had to stand. The Lead Counsel asked how long they stayed in Jambur before the vehicle left and Sainey Ba Bojang responded that they departed at 5 pm. The Lead Counsel then enquired if the witness knew where he was taken. The witness answered that he did not, noting that had he known, he would not have gone because “*what he had found there really surprised*

him”. He recalled that before the vehicle departed the Alkalo came, stood at the door of the vehicle, and told them “*go, you are going to be cured*”.

The witness continued saying that when they arrived at their destination, he heard people saying that this was Baba Jobe’s compound. He explained that he had never seen that place before. Asked whether the name Kololi rang a bell, the witness responded that he could never forget Kololi until he dies because he had never seen a place like that anywhere. The Lead Counsel asked whether the witness came across anybody who shouted something to them when they were on their way to Kololi.

The witness said yes, and recalled that as they entered the compound, he heard a woman saying “you people, you are going to be maltreated. You have now entered the period of maltreatment.”

He explained that the woman’s compound was opposite Baba Jobe’s, and that she put her hand on her mouth saying “*they have brought you people to also suffer here on mere lies*.” At this time in his testimony, the witness repeated that he and the others had been told that they would be cured and that is why he had agreed to go to Kololi, noting that if they had said that they were “*collecting witches and wizards, that would have been a different thing*”. He swore by the Almighty Allah that they never said that they were witch-hunters. The Lead Counsel asked if the witness went voluntarily with them or if he was forced to go. Sainey Ba Bojang responded that he did not go willingly as he would have never left his 15 children behind.

When asked to tell the Commission what happened when he arrived at Baba Jobe’s compound, the witness said that they entered the vicinity with the bus and when they got out, they were asked to sit in formation and were informed that they were there to drink medicine. Here again, the witness called Solo

Bojang by his name, telling him “Solo, have you missed going to Kanilai?”. Asked if he recognised any other person involved in the **arrest** of people of Jambur apart from Solo Bojang, the witness referred to a man they called Manjago Bojang, who was from Kombo South. He mentioned that this man had been sympathetic to him because they had the same (last) name. He used to come and chat with him.

The Lead Counsel asked what happened after that. The witness recapped that when they were asked to alight, they put their legs like the way they did when Kunta Kinte was taken away⁴⁰. That was how they arranged them. He noted that while they were not given any lunch, others had received something to eat. The witness remembered that there was somebody who also called Solo Bojang by his name and asked him for lunch because some had not received anything. The man even wanted to get up but their imam told him not to do that and not to “start anything”. The witness said that they were given leftovers, but that he did not touch it.

Sainey Ba Bojang told the Commission that around 6 pm, Solo Bojang told them to “get up” and started writing their names down. He remembered that he asked them to stand in a line and that he was holding a **gun** at that time. Solo Bojang told them that they were there to be cured, they were going to drink medicine. The witness then recounted what happened to a man whose name he could not remember that stood in the line before him and went inside to drink the medicine and then came out.

“Whether he was possessed by a jinn or I don’t know, or whether he had seizures but when he came out he just fell down. When that happened, they just took him up and dragged him into the house”.

The witness said that when it was his turn, he went inside and found a man there who wore trousers just like the ones the Fula griots used to wear: big trousers with different colours with things adorned on it. The man was sitting down, his head was bent down and when the

witness came in, he greeted him in Fula, hoping that he would see his face, but the man did not raise his head and just nodded. The man then gave him a cup filled with liquid and asked him to drink it. The witness explained that the liquid was mixed with green leaves, which looked like from the “kubejaro” plant. He drank the liquid and wanted to take the leaves out of his mouth, but the man told him to chew them. He noted that while saying that his head was still bent down.

The man then told him to take his shirt off as he was going to bathe with that other water. He asked if he the witness had any underwear and the witness said yes, he then told him to remove his trousers but the witness refused to obey. The witness noted that this was when the man took the witness’ juju away, took the cup and added some water and returned it into the bucket and according to the witness the water then became frosty and white. The witness added that the cup he used to give him the medicine to drink was the one that people used after going to the toilet, adding “those people were very bad”. Then he used the same cup to pour water over him.

Sainey Ba Bojang explained that his underwear and trousers were all wet, because he had refused to remove them. When the ritual was over, he put on his shirt again and tied his juju around his waist. The man told him to go and sit down in the big hall. Asked if he ever saw that man’s face, the witness said that he did not because he kept his head bent. The Lead Counsel asked if the witness was familiar with the name Lamin Sowe. The witness responded that Lamin Sowe was the leader, and was recognisable by the uniform he wore. He specified that the man who had given him the medicine inside the toilet was not Lamin Sowe but his assistant. Describing Lamin Sowe, the witness said that he was limping, adding that “the way he walks, one would think that he is a lion”. Asked to describe what happened when all the people had undergone the ritual, the witness said that they were dumped on top of one another, men and women all put in one place.

⁴⁰The witness is referring to Kunta Kinte a character in the 1976 novel Roots: The Saga of an American Family by American author Alex Haley. According to the book, Kunta Kinte was a Gambian man who was enslaved and taken to America.

The Lead Counsel asked the witness how he was feeling at that time when he drank the concoction.

Sainey Ba Bojang explained that his sight became blurry and that he saw “just something like a haze” and could not recognise the people around him.

He went on saying that his eyes did not function properly and even when he closed one, he could not see anything with the other. He said that he used to be a driver but could no longer drive because it was as if he was seeing smoke all the time. The Lead Counsel asked whether the witness remembered what happened to him immediately after drinking that concoction. He responded that after drinking the medicine, which was around 6 pm, until the next morning, he did not even know where he was, “*all my body became mixed up*”. He added that he even might have done things he was not aware of. Asked if others told him what he did, he responded that they did not because they were in a similar state of mind since they too had drunken the medicine. The witness confirmed that he might even have gone unconscious. The first thing he remembered, was that his son came and that he tried to give him lunch.

When asked whether he had heard the story about him and the light bulb, the witness laughed out loud and admitted he had. He explained that they told him that he tried to jump up to get hold of the bulb and that was the time they caught him. The Lead Counsel put it to the witness that soon after that he became unconscious, did not know what happened and woke up the next morning trying to give lunch to his children who were not there. The witness stated that it he was indeed seeing his son who came to collect lunch from him, but that in fact, just as what happened to him when he jumped up to get the bulb, this was just a hallucination, adding that he himself was not aware of what was happening.

The Lead Counsel asked the witness if anything else happened. He said yes and narrated that when daylight came, they were told to go and drink the medicine again

and Solo Bojang called him. However, when he went to drink the medicine again, the soldier (Manjago Bojang) who was there said to him “*my relative, you are not going to drink this medicine here again*.” Then the witness’ elder brother Dembo Mamo got up and protested: “*you people said you are going to cure us, we’ve drank some medicine, now it is enough. We’ve drank this medicine now we are not aware of anything and we are not going to drink it anymore*.” Another man, Adama Bojang, got up and said by the Almighty Allah nobody was going to drink that medicine again, that the people were tired and should go home. Having heard this, Manjago Bojang stood up, called a vehicle and told them that they could go and drove them back to Jambur.

On the way, the witness said, Manjago Bojang was talking to him “to make him easy so that he would not feel anything” and when they reached the bantaba, the bus stopped. The witness noted that when they alighted, some people were unable to walk and had to get assistance to get back to their homes. He added that even those who were able to walk on their own were **suffering** from the effect of the medicine for a week, adding that they still feel it up to today. Asked to give more details on how the scene unfolded when they reached the bantaba and alighted from the bus, especially regarding the reactions of their loved ones, Sainey Ba Bojang explained that when they saw them some were happy to see as they had received no information about their whereabouts. The villagers were just told that the people had been taken away to receive a cure. He stated that some people had come to Kololi during the night to enquire about the fate of their relatives and had seen how those who had drunk the medicine were behaving. Asked to describe how the people reached their homes, the witness reiterated that some were able to go by themselves to their compound, while some had to be carried.

The Lead Counsel asked the witness what impact the concoction had on the people of Jambur apart from the intoxication. The witness answered that he could

not explain all of their difficulties to the Commission, adding that there were certain things they cannot talk about in public because if they did it would just **harm** them more and make them **suffer**. He added that some had ailments in them from drinking the medicine and those died.

Asked who these persons were, the witness listed: Dembo Jariatou Bojang, Saikou Camara and his wife Adama, Mangikey Cham and Lamin Jammeh senior. In total, around 11 of them died.

The Lead Counsel asked the witness if the following people had died as well: Mama Jamba, Lamin Jammeh, Dembo Jaring, Bureh Korta, Wassa Darboe, Momodou Kumba and Lamin Dangdangba and the witness confirmed that all these people **had passed away**. The Lead Counsel asked how about Nanny Bojang and the witness responded that Nanny Bojang is alive but sick. The Lead Counsel asked about Masireh Bojang and the witness stated that she is alive but she is now “*completely out of the way, she cannot function now*”.

Asked to describe the effects the medicine had on him, the witness reiterated that his sight was affected and that he cannot see anymore. He added that he also sometimes lacks water and blood in his system, and he generally is sick and his chest hurts. The Lead Counsel then mentioned that he and the witness had spoken before the testimony and that there were certain things that they would not discuss in public, disclosing only that he always has to buy a particular pill in Brikama.

Proceeding, the Lead Counsel asked the witness if he had been a United Democratic Party, UDP, supporter when this incident happened. The witness confirmed this fact, and specified that he was UDP’s propaganda secretary and had been in the party for 10 years. He noted that Jambur was a UDP stronghold and that Yahya Jammeh never won any election in Jambur. He added that all Jambur was voting for UDP except for 10 people. But at one point,

“the misunderstanding torn the village into two. He recalled that that was when difficulties came to the village, to an extent that “wise people” had to sit down and tried to bring them together. The witness then launched into a lengthy explanation of basically the political disputes that ensued among the people of Jambur despite the wise people’s counselling including being falsely accused of and arrested for beating one of his nieces, Maimouna. She had accused the witness of insulting the parliamentarian Paul Mendy, from the APRC and had hit the witness on his head with a can. The witness explained in details how he was arrested but released just before the elections.

The Lead Counsel asked whether the witness was released on any particular condition. The witness said no, no deal was made. The Lead Counsel asked the witness what happened in that election and the witness responded that Paul Mendy won. The Lead Counsel asked the witness whether Paul Mendy won because he and his group voted for him. The witness answered that he won despite their support, since he was supporting the independent candidate. The Lead Counsel thanked the witness and informed him that he had no further questions for him.

The floor was given to the Commissioners and Commissioner Samba asked the witness how his relationship with his niece who was responsible for his **arrest** and subsequent detention at the police station was. Sainey Ba Bojang answered that it is better today than it has ever been.

The floor was given to the witness to make his concluding remarks. Sainey Ba Bojang stated that he firstly wanted to thank the members of the TRRC, whose work he had been following. He stated that everything in this world comes to an end and that whatever was bitter has now come to an end and knew that eventually only the truth will survive, noting that the TRRC was there to establish the truth. He further stated that in Jambur, everyone is from one father one mother and in fact the whole world is one

father and one mother. He also noted that anyone that is coming from God comes with their own burden, which is why he has accepted that they are here to tell the truth, adding that their load is light because what Allah says is what they are doing.

The witness called on people to reconcile with one another, reminding them that politics comes and goes and noting that the whole world is involved in politics not just the people of Jambur.

He called on the inhabitants of Jambur not to go through the same scenario as before, inviting them to meet in good faith and joke together.

He concluded his statement saying “you farm your rice until it is time to harvest it, that is when the parliamentarian comes to harvest it”, wondering if any parliamentarian had ever done anything to earn their votes. Lastly, he highlighted that people should be free and that if his wives decided to all be in different political parties, he would be happy about it.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, leading to death

Yahya Jammeh, Solo Bojang, Lamin Sowe

Aiding and abetting persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, leading to death

Kebba Bojang



WITNESS NAME: Masireh BOJANG

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 20th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Jambur

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Farmer

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Retired

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Binta Jamba told the Commission that she joined the Masireh Bojang told the Commission that she is in her 90s and that she is one among the oldest people in her village, Jambur. The Deputy Lead Counsel said that the TRRC was very grateful that the witness wanted to come in person and tell them about what happened to her. Asked about the events that occurred in 2009 in her village, Masireh Bojang recalled that one day, as she went out to sell her groundnuts, a man grabbed her by the hand and told her to come along. When she asked where he was taking her, he showed her a vehicle. Once inside the vehicle she asked where they were taking her, but received no answer.

The witness explained that she was taken to a place in Kololi. There, she and others sat for a while before being led by the hands to a toilet where they were made to drink a medicine. She noted that the medicine was poured in a (empty) tomato tin and then given to them to drink. Later in her testimony, **Masireh Bojang** explained that those who **refused** to drink the entirety of the **concoction** were **beaten**. She said that as soon as she **swallowed**

that medicine, **her stomach started troubling** and **paining** her. She continued feeling pain until she went home, and since she could not sleep, she went to see Dodou Kah at Morry Kunda and his wife took her to the **hospital**. She noted that she had to go to the hospital twice. She added that until today she has not fully recovered and has “this **sickness**” in her body.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness if she could describe the man who pulled her into the vehicle, to which Masireh Bojang responded that she would not be able to recognise him. The Deputy Lead Counsel told her that this was perfectly fine and asked her if she remembered who else was taken into the vehicle. The witness said they were many, in fact the vehicle was completely full but because she was in shock and in fear, she did not pay attention to the others. But she recognised Dodou Kah, Dembo Manneh and a woman who she called “Nanny”. She recalled that when they went back, Nanny needed to stay close to a toilet all the time.

When asked to describe the place in Kololi she had been taken to, the witness recalled being disembarked under a mango tree and that there was a big hole filled with water. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if the witness remembered if they had to spend the night. The witness told her that they did, and stated that she slept on the bare floor, not having been given a mat or anything else to lay on. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness how she felt while she was at Kololi. Masireh Bojang responded that her stomach started hurting as soon as she drank the medicine and noted that she has been suffering ever since. She recalled that right after having been given the **concoction**, she no longer **understood** **what was happening around her** and explained that all the people were **lying** down under the mango tree. She noted that at one point, she was even rolling on the ground because of the pain and this lasted until they left Kololi the next morning. When asked if she was able to observe what happened to other people, the witness responded that she could not because she was in so much pain herself and growling on the ground.

Masireh Bojang explained that they were not given food during their stay in Kololi. When asked if they were required to bath, she responded that she did not remember this. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness if she knew what led to their release from Kololi and she responded that it was because someone had died in the village. She explained that when the death was announced all the people from Jambur started **crying** and **screaming**, which triggered their release.

The Deputy Lead Counsel recalled that the witness told them that her stomach continued to trouble her and that she had gone to the hospital on two occasions. The witness said that the doctor did not tell her anything and just gave her an injection. Masireh Bojang reiterated that she was still **suffering** from the consequences of having drunk the concoction and that in fact not only did her stomach hurt, but her entire body, including her eyes. She explained that she cannot do anything or go anywhere since. She confirmed that she was not able to farm anymore and when the Deputy Lead Counsel enquired whether she was still selling peanuts, she responded that she had to stop that as well after that incident. The witness concluded that she “got **total sickness** from that place”.

The witness was then asked by the Deputy Counsel if anyone had mentioned to her that people who were taken to Kololi were suspected of being witches and wizards. The witness said she used to hear people saying it but she that she does not talk about it. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked how it made her feel when she heard people saying that, to which she responded that “it gave her a **problem**”. The witness stated that those accusing her of being a witch “are useless people” and when they tease her with that she does not answer, until they “get tired and keep quiet”. She said when her grandchildren tell her that she is a witch, she just insults them because they are “useless people”.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness if she was able to tell if other people from Jambur also suffered health conditions like her. The witness mentioned Nanny as well as Sainabou Sanneh, who are both bedridden. The Deputy Lead Counsel thanked Masireh Bojang for coming and said that she did not want to prolong the session

any longer because she came a long way to testify, despite the fact that it was tiring and uncomfortable to be sitting for such a long time. She then passed the floor to the Commissioners.

Chairman Sise thanked the witness as well and regretted that she had to endure so much **suffering**. He noted that there were two things they could not take from her: her beauty and her good appearance. He asked her to tell her grandchildren that people will now send kola⁴¹ to her and she will not insult them. As there were no further questions and no final statement by the witness, the hearing was adjourned.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

None

⁴¹Sending kola or kola nuts means to ask for a woman’s hand in marriage.



WITNESS NAME: Momodou Kah BOJANG

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 20th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 Witch-hunt in Jambur

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Driver for the Cooperative Union, Farmer, Elderly resident of Jambur

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Elder of Jambur Village

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Momodou Kah Bojang began his testimony by telling the Commission that he was born and raised in Jambur. He worked as a driver and for the cooperative union, and later was a farmer. He explained that he did not know his age and that his documents had been lost but he was among the eldest residents of Jambur.

The witness testified that one day in 2009, he had heard that there were people in the village but he did not see them nor go to their meeting place. When he left his compound to go to the shop, he was accosted by soldiers and Green Boys and allegedly told he was going to be cured.

He stated that he told them that he was not sick but they told him he must go with them regardless and warned him not to cause any trouble in the village.

He later explained that the soldiers and Green Boys had been invited to the village by then Alkalo Kebba Jarju Bojang.

Momodou Kah Bojang narrated that he continued to resist, but the men replied that many others had already gone to drink the medicine and that as an elder, he should not create trouble. He later added that the soldiers and the Green Boys said they were acting on orders from then President Yahya Jammeh. He explained that he was very angry at that moment and was not paying attention to other details. Despite his protest, he was cajoled into boarding a vehicle parked by the mosque, feeling **belittled** and **powerless**.

The witness stated that the bus took them to Baba Jobe's compound in Kololi where they found a storied building and a small building akin to a toilet off to the side. Earlier in his testimony the witness had said that at this compound, he first saw men dressed in red clothes. He was told to sit down and some of the people there spoke to him and offered him food but he asserted that he was so angry that he refused to speak with them or eat the food they offered. He later told the Commission that it was in Kololi that he first heard they had been **abducted** as presumed witches and wizards and were going to be given "medicine"⁴² to cure them.

Momodou Kah Bojang went on to explain that after people finished eating they were told it was time for the cure to be administered. The witness and the others brought from Jambur were made to line up. Once he reached the head of the line, which was in the small toilet-like building to the side, the witness found two men and two buckets. One of the men filled up a cup and told the witness to drink. After drinking the liquid, the witness attested that they asked him to take off his shirt, told him to bend over and then poured a liquid on his waist and head.

He said that after he drank the liquid, he went to where everyone else who had already drunk the liquid was sitting and lying on the floor. When asked, he said he could not describe how other people were in the moment, he was too concentrated on looking

⁴²They were given kubejaro, a local hallucinogen.

after himself but from the moment he drank the liquid, he was urinating continuously. "I didn't know what was happening. I didn't know what I was in. I didn't know what was going on in my environment. It's only Allah who helped me ... But where I was, I don't know."

The witness stated that it was not until the next morning that he became conscious and could see around him. Soon after, waking men told him that it was time to go home and soon after, a bus took them back to Jambur. The witness attested that while he was of sound mind and could walk himself back to his house when they arrived back in Jambur, he could not speak to others' condition.

He told the Commission he is still afflicted by the urination problem and sometimes feels intense pain from his waist to his legs and has to be picked up and carried, adding that this pain only started after he was **forced** to drink the concoction at Baba Jobe's compound. The witness repeated that he was furious throughout the whole ordeal.

When the Counsel asked the witness if his community treated him differently after coming back from Kololi, he responded that today everyone, even his grandchildren, refer to him as Alhaji Kololi. He clarified that he was not angry about his nickname, but he is still angry that he had to go through the experience.

When asked what further implications the experience had for him, he said "it has given me a bad name ... they took me for something I did not do".

Momodou Kah Bojang asserted that over ten of the people who were taken from Jambur died as a result of the "medicine." He specifically mentioned that one Mamadou Kumba Bah died of stomach complications and Amie Bojang has been sick since the incident.

The witness continued that after the ordeal, the youth of Jambur became angry that their parents were accused of witchcraft and **abducted**. He stated that then Alkalo Kebba Jarju Bojang blamed these angry youth for burning down his compound. He said he did not know if the

compound was really burnt as he did not go and see it for himself. At least one young man, Morro Gassama, was **arrested** by the police and held for up to three months, but the witness did not know more as he did not attend the trial⁴³.

When the Counsel asked Momodou Kah Bojang if he could remember any of the young men who were arrested, he began to ask the audience for assistance with the names. The Counsel interrupted to remind the witness that he was the only person testifying and could not call on the audience for assistance. The witness responded that if they wanted to know more, they should ask the community, after which the Counsel ended her questioning.

There were no questions from the Commissioners.

Momodou Kah Bojang concluded his testimony by praying for the community of Jambur and the nation of The Gambia to avoid the recurrence of the events he described. He pointed out that what happened can destroy people's characters and demanded those that partake desist. He concluded by asking people to be mindful of their neighbours.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Aiding and abetting persecution, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Kebba Jarju Bojang

He told the Commission that when "someone who is powerless, and a powerful person, when they join, it is the powerless man who suffers."

⁴³See The Point Newspaper article [Arson charges dropped for Jambur](#)



WITNESS NAME: Ansumana SARJO

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 20th November 2019

EVENT(S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Makumbaya and the impact on the witness

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Professional driver and millet pounding machine operator

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Alkalo of Makumbaya, former professional driver.

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

The witness, Alkalo Ansumana Sarjo, stated that he was born in 1959 in Makumbaya. When asked, the witness said that he could not recall the exact date of the witch-hunts in Makumbaya in 2009 but he could recount what happened. At the time of the witch-hunt, the witness said that he was living with his wife and children.

The witness explained that at the time of the witch-hunt, he was at his second job, pounding coos, near the then Alkalo's compound after working as a driver for Makumbaya Farm in the morning. He said he was initially unaware that the witch-hunters had come to town because his workplace was very noisy and he did not hear anything going on or hear about anything from anyone. He said that he learned about the witch-hunt when he turned off the machine towards the end of his work.

He explained that a local soldier, Dembo Jarju, came to him and told him about the good thing he was doing for the village because people used to have to take their

coos to Brikama or Serrekunda to have it processed. He stated that he could not be sure if Dembo Jarju came with the witch-hunters but he also could not say that he had not come with them. The Counsel asked the witness to clarify if he suspected that the local soldier Dembo Jarju was part of the witch-hunter group. He explained that he suspected it but he did not tell him that.

When asked, the witness explained that he encountered two witch-hunters about 15 minutes after he got to work. They had come and stood behind him for a moment while the machine was running. He said the machine he operated was very loud so he did not realise they were there however, he felt something, turned and that was when he saw the two men standing in his shop. One of them was talking but he signed to him that he could not hear and continued pounding as he had to finish pounding because it could damage the machine if the process is not completed.

He explained that when he turned off the machine, one of the men asked him in Fula where the lady that came into his shop was. He said he replied in Fula that he did not know which was the truth because when he is operating the machine, he has to face it and concentrate on what is going on and will be unaware of what is happening behind him. Apparently, they had **chased** the woman from the market where she worked and she had run away from them, came into his shop without him being aware and left her pan there and ran off.

The men then told him that if they lady does not come, they will take him instead.

As he tried to explain again that he did not see her, they got into an argument, and then they left. They returned with a third person about 20 minutes later.

The Counsel asked the witness to describe the men who were looking for the woman at his jobsite. He explained they were wearing traditional Fula clothing and hat, which looked like a top hat. Their clothes

were all red, decorated with mirrors and they also had small bells tied to their legs. He added that this type of outfit is worn during wrestling and for other cultural activities. When asked if they had anything else with them, the witness replied that they had a large mirror which they were pointing at the walls of the shop including the inner room and when he asked them what they were doing, they told him they were looking for the woman that had come in there. The Counsel asked the witness if they were speaking a Gambian dialect of Fula and if they were Gambian. The witness replied that their dialect sounded like it was from Guinea Bissau or Senegal and that they were not from The Gambia.

Going back to when the men came back, the witness explained that three of them came back after about 20 minutes. He estimated that this was around 11 am to noon. He was having lunch with three friends in his workshop when they came.

They started dancing, pointing their mirrors at them. They started with one of his friends (now deceased) and asked him to spread his palm. After looking at his friend's palms, they let him go. They then asked him (the witness) to spread his palms and after looking at it, told him that he would follow the woman they had asked about earlier as he had a sickness. The witness said he asked them how they could think that someone who has been working for years doing the hard he does could be sick. He told them that he was quite well but maybe they were ones who were sick. They got offended and an argument broke out. They then asked told him to go with them but he refused as he did not know where they were taking him. When the argument got heated, they rushed at him and one of his friends suggested that perhaps they were talking about a stomach problem he (the witness) used to suffer from. The witness said he responded that that they did not see anything in him, that they had told him that if he did not tell them where the woman they were looking for was, they would have to take him instead.

One of his friends advised him to go with them because if he failed to go, they might summon the Green Boys to **torture** him and as an elder in the community, it will be a shameful thing for him in the community. The witness

said he took heed and decided to go with them. When they got to where the bus was parked, he asked them where the medicine was that he was supposed to was take but they just told him to board the vehicle. He said he believed he was the last or second to last person to board the bus which took off around 3.30 pm.

The Counsel stopped the witness to probe further and asked the witness to name his friends. He named them as Idris Kujabi, called Toffin Kujabi, who had since passed away, Swandi Maka, and Modou Corr. The witness also repeated that one of his friends convinced him to go with the witch-hunters because they might summon the Green Boys to **beat** him up but admitted he had not seen the Green Boys until he was taken to the bus.

The Counsel enquired if the men who came to his shop were dancing and the witness explained that when they came into his workshop, they were pointing their mirrors everywhere, doing some ritual movements that looked like dancing. When asked if the men were playing the drums, witness said no, adding that there was heavy drumming going on at the bantaba (where the bus was parked) and it was audible where he was as it was a short distance away. He stated that did not know who was playing the drums and that there were a lot of Green Boys hanging around the bus. When asked if he encountered more of the men dressed in red apart from the ones that came to his shop, he responded that there were more, some of them had gone into the village and the rice fields to pick up people who they had accused of witchcraft. The witness went on to affirm that the bus, which he described as a green with a front that looked like a pig's head was filled to capacity. He added it was different from the typical buses that people drove at the time. The witness also mentioned that, a man, who was his junior, was filming the incident with a camera but he did not know or ask why.

When asked, the witness stated that he recognised several people when he boarded the bus, including a native of Makumbaya, Maram Bah, the woman

that came to his workplace when she was chased by the witch-hunters, adding that she was the source of all his troubles that day. The witness also confirmed that he recognised another woman called Wuday Ceesay and over 20 other people who were **captured** and put on the bus but was reluctant to give their names in public because he did not want to bring shame to anyone. The witness however agreed to provide a list of the names in private and proceeded to give them to the usher when asked.

The Counsel asked the witness to estimate the number of people which he said he could but added that the bus was completely full with people standing in the aisle. He also said it was difficult to know how many Green Boys and people in "red-red" were at the witch-hunt because they did not ride on the bus. The Green Boys were in three other vehicles and the people dressed in red were in another vehicle which were all black and he believed that they were government vehicles.

The witness explained that before they departed, his wife spoke to the cameraman who he previously mentioned, and asked him to take care of her husband who was on the bus. He said the cameraman was called Morro Ceesay and he was from Faraba. The Counsel asked the witness at what point his wife found out that he had been **abducted**. He replied that his wife told him that she was working in the rice fields that day when his friend, Modou Corr called and told her about the incident.

Ansuman Sarjo continued to explain that they left Makumbaya around 3.45 pm and reached their destination a 5 pm. The witness said that when they got to their destination, there were people from Kubariko and some from Gallohyo who were there from the night before. He told the Counsel that he knew where he was as he used to work in the area, that it was located just before arriving to Senegambia, on the right-hand side after the traffic light. When he was asked if he was talking about Kololi, the witness responded in the affirmative. He said he thinks he would be able to take someone back there.

The witness stated that when they arrived, they got off the bus and went into the compound, which aside from some flowers around the compound, was completely empty. They were made to sit down and their captors brought them lunch. Initially, the witness did not want to

eat until someone came to him and said to him "*if you don't eat, you are going to die here*". When asked who that person was, the witness stated he was not sure but he was a person from around the area and apart from him, they found other people there when they arrived. When asked if he knew whether other people had also been **captured** from other parts of the county, he responded that he did not know because he never spoke to them and never really met them.

Moving on, the Counsel asked the witness what happened after they ate to which he responded that they were taken to drink the medicine. He testified that other people were given the medicine before him but he did not see anyone behaving in an unusual way. He added that when he went into the room, an old man before him who could have been a hundred years old or more was told to take off his clothes. He said he told them he would go out to give him privacy but ended up staying in the room with his back turned while the man drank the medicine.

Describing the room where the medicine was distributed, the witness stated that it was a small house and that although there was no toilet it was clearly a room for bathing. When the witness entered the room, he said that he looked around once but then his attention was focused on the pan where the water was which he described as the kind you use for fish with a cover. In addition to the pans, there were several people serving the medicine. The people in the room were wearing the red-red outfits while the Green Boys were sitting outside and looked like they were guarding the people that had been **captured** and brought in. The Counsel asked him to describe drinking the water and who gave it to him. He said that when you went into the room there was no way to refuse drinking the medicine. The witness said he was given a rubber cup with a handle to drink out of and the cup contained around one litre of medicine. He testified that when he was made to drink the medicine, the man who gave it to him recognised him and said that he was the Fula from earlier. The witness said to him that he was not a Fula and then the man gave him the cup to drink.

The witness explained that he locked up his teeth when drinking medicine to strain out particles from the liquid like he normally does and after drinking the entire cup, he threw away the dregs. When he did that, the man rushed at him as if he was about to **slap** him and the witness caught his hand. He asked him what was the matter and the man told him that he should not have thrown away the dregs. The witness said he told the man that even when he prepared medicine for himself, he would not drink the dregs and that he certainly would not drink them from medicine prepared by a stranger. He later said that he would not have swallowed the dregs even if they threatened to **kill** him. The man then scooped another cup of the liquid and gave it to him to drink. The witness stated that he believed that the people before had already drank the most potent part of the medicine before they arrived which he thinks is why he is able sit and narrate his story.

When asked what happened after he drank the concoction, the witness explained that he may have been the last man to drink the concoction. They made them go outside where he said he saw people putting down their heads like sick chickens. They were taken into the hall where some people laid down and some went to sleep.

He said he did not sleep but experienced a state which was like being between life and death.

He added that he regained consciousness around 10 am the next morning after having drunk the medicine between 6.30 and 6.40 pm the previous day. When he woke up in the same place, he sat the night before (somewhere around the stairs on a tiled floor), he was told to go and bathe with the medicine shortly. The witness said that he was not given an opportunity to clean himself, drink water, or pray. He had no water or food after the lunch upon arrival at the compound. He testified that he did not even think about drinking water because of the effects of the medicine.

On the morning of the second day, the witness said they filled up a cup of the same medicine and were made to drink it and they poured the concoction on him while he was clothed. In total, the witness was made to bathe

twice, once on the first day and again on the second. The Counsel noted that he had not told them about what happened during the first bath and the witness told them that he only was made to take off his shirt.

After drinking the medicine around 10 am the next day, he and other people stayed there until 7 pm when they were let go. He said they arrived in Makumbaya around 10 pm and noted that at this stage he did not have any strength left. He recalled that when they embarked on the journey back home, as soon as the engine was started, it felt like something in him was ignited and that was the last time he felt "any peace in his body". He started running in the bus, saying that the driver was not a good driver, that he was going to **kill** them. He said a close friend whom he saw when he got in the bus would pull him back when he was running around in the aisle of the bus and help him back to his seat. He clarified that his friend was not among those who had drunk the medicine at the house though he was not clear how or why he was there. Ansumana Sarjo told the Commission that on that day from Kololi to Makumbaya his condition was, "*God only knows*". He said the back of his clothes was ripped off and by the time he arrived at home he had lost his shirt and shoes somewhere. Someone gave them to him the next day.

The witness said when they got back, he went to a shop because it was around dinnertime and he thought his family would have already eaten. He bought bread and attaya⁴⁴ and headed home but while walking home, the loaf of bread felt as heavy as a big bag of rice which he had to use both hands to carry and later put it on his head. When he arrived, he asked his wife to brew the attaya and ate the entire loaf of bread, asked for another loaf, which he finished and was still asking for more.

Later on, even some of the elders who came to visit him ended up crying. He added that only Allah knew what happened to him and that it was Allah who cured them.

⁴⁴Green tea.

The Counsel asked the witness if he knew of what happened to the others who were captured and if all of them survived. He said some of them, maybe two or three people passed away but that the rest of them are still alive.

The Counsel went on to ask the witness if he received any important visitors after he was released from Kololi. He said two days after the incident, a young man from Makumbaya, Kebba Jammeh came to his home with Halifa Sallah. He said Kebba Jammeh informed Halifa Sallah that the witness had been **captured** in the witch-hunt and when Halifah looked at him, he nearly cried because of the condition he (the witness) was in compared to when he last left his office. Ansumana Sarjo explained that Halifa Sallah interviewed him and that he told him everything, much in the same way as he was doing with the TRRC and showed him his tattered shirt.

The witness went on to testify that two or three days after Halifa Sallah's visit, he saw a police vehicle come to town with Kebba Jammeh in it. After that, while he and his friends were drinking tea, he saw a car coming. When his wife saw it, she told him that some police were coming and suggested they run away. He said he asked her why they should do that. They had not done anything wrong. She responded that there had been too much trouble that year already but he said he would hear what they had to say. The vehicle stopped in front of his house and after identifying him, they asked him if Halifa Sallah had spoken to him the day before and when he replied in the affirmative, the police officers took him in a vehicle to the local police station where he waited for some time. They then told him his case would be taken to Banjul. He was taken to the Police Headquarters in Banjul and then to the National Intelligence Agency, NIA Headquarters.

He and several others were there until 7 pm without explanation. When a man who was passing him kicked his leg and apologised, he took the opportunity to ask him what was going on. The man told him that the person who brought them had gone out and that they would tell him what was going on when he got back. The witness said that after his evening prayers, Halifa Sallah arrived with Ensa "Jesus" Badjie. The witness said that when Halifa Sallah recognised the witness, he said to him,

"Alkali, you are here again?" He told him yes and Halifa Sallah told him he was sorry and after another short exchange, his conversation with Ensa "Jesus" Badjie and Halifa Sallah ended.

Around the middle of the night, police officers came to take their statements about why they had spoken with Halifa Sallah. The witness said the police only took his statement, they did not take anyone else's statement and when he began to talk about the Green Boys, he was told not to. They were released shortly after but were not given any assistance to get home. He said he did not arrive home until dawn, adding that when they were told to come to the police station, they were not informed that they should bring money to back for the transport back home. The witness stated that the **hardship** and difficulties he experienced that year, only Allah knew.

Ansumana Sarjo told the Commission that after the witch-hunt, he suffered from continuous stomach **pain**. Later on, he became very weak and lean, vomiting a lot. The witness stated that his wife was his primary caretaker until she met his nephew who, when she told him that he needed help, came from Casamance with some money and took him there for three months to be treated. He was eventually able to come home but had to stop driving and operating the pounding machine.

In an emotional voice, the witness explained that he was a farmer before; he had a good job as a driver, a tractor and an international driver's license but after what happened to him in Kololi, he could not drive anymore and became very weak. He gets tired very easily and has no strength and, in the morning, he must drink lots of water to help him.

The Counsel asked the witness several follow up questions including who Halifa Sallah was and why he thought Sallah interviewed him. The witness said he knew Halifa Sallah was a politician and a journalist. When asked why Halifa Sallah was interviewing people, the witness responded that he (Halifah) was interviewing people that were **captured** and made to drink the medicine.

The Counsel asked the witness about his relationship with Ensa “Jesus” Badjie to which he responded that he did not know him before he saw him at Police Headquarters in Banjul. He only heard his name there and there and when Ensa Badjie testified at the Commission. The witness said that he was unaware of Ensa Badjie’s position or why he was at the NIA at the time the witness was **detained**. The witness explained that he did not interact with him at all at the NIA and they did not know each other.

When asked how much time he spent at the NIA, the witness said he left around 1 am and he walked the rest of the night to reach Makumbaya. The Counsel asked if he ever found out why he had been taken to Kololi and forced to drink that medicine and the witness told them that initially he did not know and he was only told that he was sick and needed to be healed however, afterward, he learned that they had been **captured** because they were accused of being witches and wizards.

The Counsel asked him if he had any information about who sent the witch-hunters to Makumbaya to **capture** him and the other victims. The witness replied that he never found out exactly who sent the witch-hunters. The Counsel asked if he believed that the government was involved in the witch-hunt and the witness replied that no one can say that the ruler is not aware of what happened even if the leader did not actually come into the village.

The Counsel asked the witness if he knew who was the leader at the time, he replied that after he got out of Kololi he tore his voter card up and never voted for the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction, APRC again.

The Counsel asked if the witness held the APRC government responsible for what happened to him and he said that it happened in their time and that the ruler at the time was Yahya Jammeh.

Before the Counsel opened the floor to the Commissioners, she asked to clarify more about the soldier who he first saw on the day he was **captured** (Dembo Jarju). He

said that he did not see him again after he left his work place until when they got to Kololi to drink the medicine and he asked him if he was among those captured and he said yes and that is where their conversation ended.

Chairman Sise thanked the witness and told him that his children should be very proud of their father for testifying.

Commissioner Jones asked the witness if he was the only one who was made to bathe and drink the concoction on the second day. He said that he was not sure because he was made to leave the area after drinking the concoction and did not see what other people did. Commissioner Kinteh asked the witness how his shirt got so badly torn up. The witness explained that he was fighting with the Green Boys at the time because of the suffering he saw others being put through.

The witness was then invited by the Chairman to give his closing remarks. He closed his testimony by giving thanks to Allah because they came in peace to the Commission and they would disperse in peace and for the witness, that alone was happiness. The witness’ first advice was to himself, which essentially was that people should know that nothing can stop destiny. He, among other things, urged Gambians to unite and try to help each other, to forget about what had happened and look to tomorrow. He added that if good people do more good than bad people, the bad ones will not be able to do anything to them. He said that the same goes for all villages and provinces. He said that the country was struggling to unite. He thanked the security personnel who were guarding the country. He said they should be given their rights.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Yahya Jammeh, Dembo Jarju



WITNESS NAME: Abdoulie BOJANG

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 21st November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The student demonstrations of 2000, the killing of his son during the demonstrations and the impact on him and his family, the 2009 witch-hunts in Jambur

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Owner of a private security company

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Father of a student killed in the 2000 Student Demonstration, collected names of victims and evidence of both the student massacre and the 2009 witch-hunt

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Owner of a private security company

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Abdoulie Bojang began his testimony by describing his long career working as a police and security officer in The Gambia which started in 1977. He said he also worked as the operations chief at the U.S. Embassy in Banjul and now operates his own security business.

The witness testified that one of his 16 children, Lamin A Bojang, **tragically** passed away when he was **shot** on 10th April 2000 during the student demonstrations. He stated he had set out on a trek to Basse with his wife to attend a meeting scheduled for 10th April 2000. Before they left, his son had asked him to bring him a bracelet from Basse. A few hours in the meeting, he was informed that there was a demonstration by a group of students and

there was some damage to the Standard Chartered Bank in Serrekunda. He however continued with the meeting and was not very concerned because to his knowledge, demonstrating was something you could do without a problem and he did not expect death to come out it.

On his return journey from Basse, he tuned into a radio station and heard Ebrima Sillah, a journalist at the BBC at the time, and Minister of Information at the time of testimony, report that **shots** had been **fired** at the demonstrators and some students were **killed**. When he got closer to his home, he called his niece, Mam Faye Bojang who told him that people had been burning tires and confirmed that shots had been fired but she did not tell him if anyone had been **killed**. When asked, he said that some of his children were going to school, including his first son, Lamin A. Bojang, who was attending Nusrat High School.

He narrated that when he arrived home, he found people gathered in his compound but they did not say anything to him. He said he assumed that his son may have been wounded or hiding somewhere. In an emotional voice, the witness explained how he sent someone to look for his son at a friend's house and when he was told his son was not there, he got on his motorbike and headed out to the hospital in Banjul to see if his son was wounded. The hospital was very busy and there were many **wounded** children there, crying. He checked all the rooms of the hospital, noting that people were wailing all over the place. Crying, the witness explained how he had asked the nurses if they knew where his son was and after looking at each other, they told him his son was there but that he was not allowed to see him. He said he told them he would come back in the morning and went home to share this information with his wife.

They spent a sleepless night wondering why he was not allowed to see his son. The next morning, he went back to the hospital, expecting the worst and asked the nurses and the doctor to see his child. He went with his camera and the bracelet his son had asked him to bring from Basse. Dr. Ceesay then told him that his son had passed away.

He asked to see his son's body and they led him to the mortuary. When he saw his son's body, the boy's head was covered with a nylon bag with blood oozing out of it. He placed the bracelet on his son's arm and took a photograph.

He said he then asked to be given his son's body but was told to come back the next day because the doctor's remarks were not completed. When the Counsel asked him why he took a camera with him to the hospital, the witness replied that because he is a security officer, he believes in keeping records and reference.

When asked, Abdoulie Darboe confirmed that the doctors explained to him the circumstances of his son's death. He asked to see his son's face and when the bag was removed, he saw he been **shot** above the ear on the right side of his head. The witness was also asked if he got to find out who was responsible for what happened to his son and he explained that he had done did his own **investigations** which revealed that the students were demonstrating against the security personnel for the **torture** of a student from Brikama which led to his **death** and the **rape of a female student** at the stadium at the time⁴⁵. The Counsel asked the witness if he knew where his son was when he was shot. Crying as he testified, the witness responded that he found out from students and other sources that they were on the highway from Westfield Junction heading toward Iceman, before the Police Intervention Unit, PIU head office. He added that he believed his son might have been the tallest among the student as he was a very tall boy, taller than him. The witness also confirmed that he was given his son's body, two days later.

Abdoulie Bojang told the Commission that the PIU was responsible for **killing** his son. He also said he did receive condolences from the government, but there was a rumour going around that people who opposed the sitting government at the time had sent their children to protest on their behalf. The witness said he was deeply offended by this and asked why he would send his son to protest while he was away in Basse on business?

Abdoulie Bojang testified that he did not know any of the other students who were **killed** during the demonstration but he was able to learn the names and phone numbers of the other victims and their parents. When asked why he felt it was necessary to discover the names of the other victims and their parents, the witness told the Counsel that it was for future reference and that although he did not know any of those people, he knew that one day, there would be an opportunity for them to testify. The Counsel showed the list that the witness had compiled and he confirmed that it was the original one he had written. The Counsel then showed the list to the rest of the Commissioners.

When asked how it felt going from one victim to another and enquiring about their families, the witness said that he communicated with them when the parents were all gathered at the mortuary. There, he got the names of the deceased and the phone numbers of their families. He explained that the atmosphere at the dead house on that day was very wild. People had been planning on going inside to take the body of their children but they were stopped and told the autopsies were not complete and the doctors needed to find the causes of **death**. It was during this time that he spoke with the parents and eventually even with the people at Brikamaba and compiled the list of victims and victims' families.

He said there was one child among the dead that he was very concerned about. He did not know his name and no one came for the boy. He had been shot in the jaw and it was completely shattered and his tongue had fallen onto his chest, making the boy unidentifiable.

No one knew where he was from or if anyone was looking for him and he believed that up to today, the child has not been identified or his family found. He added that the victims of the shooting were all 18 years old or younger.

⁴⁵The witness is referring to Ebrima Barry, a student who died after being tortured by members of the Gambia Fire and Rescue Service and to Binta Manneh, a 15-year-old student athlete from Brikamaba who was raped by a man in uniform when she came to represent her school at the national interschool sports event at the Independence Stadium in Bakau in 2000.

The witness explained that he stayed in contact with the parents he connected with at the mortuary and tried to meet again to get justice for their children. He said he attended two meetings before he realised that there were people who were not a part of what had happened and he did not go back. He did not know who they were but the strangers were suspicious people who the witness believed were from the state intelligence agency. When asked, he said that during the meeting, the strangers did not do anything suspicious but because the witness was familiar with the parents, he recognised who was not supposed to be there.

Abdoulie Bojang stated that he believed that the law was completely broken in the case of the student protests because they had filed the paperwork and had their proper police escort. He added that they should have been able to protest, meet with a government representative, receive promises from them, and then disperse, but the government of former President Yahya Jammeh attached evilness to the act of demonstrating and he strongly condemned this attitude. When asked, the witness agreed that the State failed in its duty to protect the students who were lawfully protesting and that the state was responsible for what happened to them.

He explained that the families of the victims held meetings in order to get to know each other and to solicit the services of a lawyer but unfortunately, they were unable to achieve their purpose because of the suspicious people who were turning up at the meetings, and they felt **threatened**. The witness explained that during the Commission to look into the causes of death during the student demonstration, the formation of the demonstration, and what happened in the demonstration, he had made some very harsh comments at the Commission and one day, while he was working at the bank, the then Crime Management Coordinator, one Gaye Sowe called him. He was with the then Assistant Inspector General of Police, Sankung Badjie. They asked him why he attacked the police as a former police officer. He said he told them it is his civil right and that he had assumed that they would join him to make sure the law prevails but instead they called him to make sure he did not testify at the Commission.

Abdoulie Bojang said that at the Inspector General's Offices, Gaye Sowe asked him to withdraw his testimony at the Commission but he refused.

The witness confirmed he was referring to the Commission of Inquiry that was set to look into the events of the demonstration at that time.

The witness continued his testimony, saying that during the Commission of Inquiry into the student demonstration, the police told the Commission that no shot were fired at the students which he said was false. They lied because they did not want to take responsibility. Ultimately, the Commission ruled in favour of the students and that the security officers were responsible for what happened to the students. He explained that President Yahya Jammeh actually came on television and agreed with the findings however, he said he had indemnified the security officers that were responsible for **killing** the students. When asked how he felt about the President's statement, the witness said there was nothing he could do but could only hope that true justice would come someday.

When asked about the condolences he received from the government, the witness said that he got two letters, one from the then Permanent Secretary, which was signed, and another from the then President's Office which was not signed. He said that to him, it felt like a joke. The Office of the President also sent him 5000 dalasi. He could not take the money because he believed in justice and he could not return it to the government so he gave it to the families for funerals and for prayer mats so they could pray for the dead.

The witness shared the letter he received from the Department of Internal Affairs, dated 29th May 2000, and titled, "*In Observance of the Forty Days Charity for Those Students Who Lost Their Lives on 10th and 11th April, 2000.*" In the letter, the then President

expressed condolences for the death of his son and support for him in his hour of grief. The letter mentioned that special prayers were being made in mosques and churches around the country and he was given a sum of 2,500 dalasi. The letter was signed by the then Permanent Secretary M.K. Jallow. The witness said that he did not feel that this, or any other efforts by the government, made adequate compensation for the tragedy. He said he never witnessed or heard of prayers being made by the government on behalf of the students either.

Speaking about the impact of his son's death on himself and his family, the witness said that the impact on his family was too much. Expanding, Abdoulie Bojang stated that Lamin's colleagues were all working in high positions now. He added that Lamin was his next of kin and by now, his son would have been a dynamic, fully-grown man, and would be supporting the family. His death was a great loss for the country and for his family and his wife was **devastated** by their son's death, as was the rest of the family.

When asked to elaborate on the impact this incident had on him, Abdoulie Bojang said that he was falsely persecuted by the police because of his involvement in standing against the student massacre and the government and security forces that were responsible for it.

After describing the tragic events of the 2000 Student Protests and the death of his son, Abdoulie Bojang, moved on to testify about the witch-hunt incident that took place in Jambur in 2009.

He recalled how he learned about the witch-hunt, explaining that he said he was at work in Serrekunda when a man called Haruna Bojang, the former Alkalo of Jambur called him over the telephone on Wednesday, 28th January 2009 between 4 and 5 pm and asked him

if he was aware of what was happening at home. He said Haruna Bojang told him people had been **captured** by witch-hunters who were going to give them something to drink. The witness said he asked where but Haruna Bojang did not know.

He said he took his vehicle and went to look for the **captured** people and the witch-hunters until sundown. He looked in Kololi and Manjie, going from street to street but he could not find them. When asked, he said that he felt the need to search for them because of his previous experiences with human rights abuses. He said that having grown up in Jambur, he knew there was no one practicing witchcraft there and because of the culture and history of his community, he also knew that no one would have willingly gotten involved in witchcraft.

When asked, the witness told the Counsel that at the time of the witch-hunt, he believed that incident could have been politically motivated. When asked why he thought so, he explained that the Alkalo of Jambur at the time was his cousin and that traditionally they had passed the role of Alkaloship through the midline. At some point they heard that his cousin was going to be removed by an order from Yahya Jammeh who passed his orders through the local government, the Commissioner, and the Chief. This was highly unusual then as he had never seen an Alkalo removed. Usually, the Alkalo held their position until they died where the village would select someone to take over and govern.

Returning to the events of the witch-hunt, the witness explained that the victims of the witch-hunt were arrested on Wednesday and released on Thursday night. After Haruna Bojang told him that they had returned, he came back home to Jambur to find that his senior wife and his stepmother, Masireh Bojang were not well. His stepmother had been one of the people who had been **captured** and given the medicine to drink and she was experiencing serious stomach pains. The witness said he asked her what had happened and to tell him who else was captured. His stepmother gave him some names including

Awa Nya, Mo Camara, and Baina Jatta. He said he then started talking to the other victims, recording the names, visited them, and investigating the incident to make sure that the evidence would be preserved for a future date.

Abdoulie Bojang stated that after President Yahya Jammeh left the country, he helped in the forming of the Victim's Centre at Kololi for people and their families who had been victims of human rights abuses. The witness also testified that before the former President left, people would not talk about what had happened because there was a lot of distrust in the community. He said he spoke on behalf of many victims from Jambur at the Victim's Centre and had asked representatives from the Centre to come to Jambur because many people there had been affected by the witch-hunts and many of them were too old to make it to Kololi. When they came, he gave them list of the names of victims of the witch-hunt and information he had collected and when he heard that the TRRC was coming to Jambur, he went back to the Centre to get a copy of his original list to help with the TRRC's investigation.

The Counsel told the witness that according to the elders that testified, there were around 60-62 people. The witness acknowledged that his original list may have been slightly different from later testimonies because he was working with the best information that he had at that time and some people who were initially **captured** were released before they were taken to Kololi. The witness explained that when he recorded the names of the victims, he organised them into two lists of the deceased and the survivors. The witness submitted a copy of the list of victims to the Commission, which was signed by him and dated, 18th November 2019 as evidence. The Counsel noted that initially he had provided the names of 31 survivors but that on the morning of the hearing he added one more. On the list containing the deceased, he provided 18 names. The witness also submitted a newspaper from 9th to 10th February 2009 with the headline "*Jamburians Narrate Their Ordeal: 60 Taken Away Including the Imam and Elders.*" These items were also added to evidence by the Counsel.

When asked, the witness spoke about the larger impact of the incident on the community.

He noted that the destruction caused by the witch-hunt in the community was enormous and because the victims were mostly community elders, including the imam, it made it more difficult for them to communicate with each other, deal with conflicts in the community, and mend relationships through traditional methods and leadership.

He also added that several of the elders who passed away played major roles in developing, caring for, and in leading the village of Jambur. In addition, many of the victims were the heads of their families and are not able to support their families anymore.

The witness testified that the village of Jambur became highly politically polarised because of the influence of a former leader. He testified that before they became politically involved, the community had been extremely close and full of harmony but that eventually, political disagreements caused conflict in Jambur. After the witch-hunt, the witness said he helped to bring unity back to the community by calling upon the leadership of the women and the Village Development Committee, VDC. He bought 2 kilograms of kola nut in the name of the VDC to give to an old woman who was the de facto leader of the women in the community. When the VDC took the kola nuts to her, she called together all the women of Jambur and they decided to come back together in respect and in community.

The floor was then open to the Chairman and the other Commissioners. Commissioner Kinteh asked the witness about the events of 10th and 11th April and enquired if the witness recorded the names of any of the victims who were not taken to the hospital, giving the example of a child who was trampled

when the students were gathered around the gate of a compound and panicked. The witness said he did not include names of the other victims because he did not know about them until at the TRRC hearings and after the establishment of the Victim's Centre, he did not see their names there either, but he sent his condolences to them because he saw the testimony of the students and their families.

Commissioner Kinteh also asked about the unidentified boy who was not claimed at the hospital. The witness said that sadly, the boy was not identified and was buried by the board of health.

As the hearing came to a close, the witness gave his final remarks. After thanking Allah, he advised his community and the country to continue to love one another and to remember that the inquiry of the TRRC cannot be politically motivated so that it can serve those that suffered. He advised people of the village to not allow any leader to pitch them against each other and to remember that a leader should work for their people and is there to help the people.

Abdoulie Bojang noted that in the past, when looking at the things that had happened in the country, they used to blame the men with guns. He advised the men with guns not to allow themselves to be controlled completely by those in power. He said that the right to demonstrate peacefully must be respected and that the purpose is not to destroy property but to bring grievances to the leadership of the country. He also said that guards who **shot** the people had said that the demonstration where his son was **killed** had been causing trouble but that this was not true. He stated that the government was wrong during the student demonstration and expressed his anger at what happened.

The witness told several similar stories to illustrate the differences between good and poor governance and the corruption that was rampant under the government

of former President Yahya Jammeh and also spoke about his encounters with untrained and corrupt police officers. He implored the leaders of the country to help hold the government accountable and guide it and urged the people of The Gambia to come together, to develop the country.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Obstruction of justice

Gaye Sowe, Sankung Badjie



WITNESS NAME: Alieu MBAYE

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 21st November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Jambur and the impact on the witness and his family

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Building constructor

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Unemployed

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Alieu Mbaye began his testimony by detailing his education background and mentioned that he used to be a building constructor but is now unemployed. He explained that he had a project in Jambur and had met and married his second wife there. He therefore bought a compound in the village in 1994 and settled in Jambur in 2009, after having lived several years in Serrekunda.

Counsel Jahateh asked the witness if he remembered the day of the witch-hunting campaign. The witness responded that he forgot the day itself but he knows that it was in 2009. He narrated that one morning, he went to visit his friend Salifu Jawo. While they were brewing green tea, they saw a woman coming from the market running. He asked her why she was running and she told him that there were people who came to the village who claimed to be witch-hunters and added “*it is not safe*” and continued her way.

The witness recalled that after five to ten minutes, a lot of people came to his friend’s house, among them were Green Boys, two soldiers as well as men wearing red clothes with mirrors and adorned with horns. The men

first spoke to Salifu Jawo, and as he responded to them in Fula, the language they had used, they asked if he was Fula, and when he said that he was, they let him be. They then turned to the witness and asked where he lived. When he pointed in the direction of his house, they told him to take them there, which he did.

When they got to his compound, the witness led them to the parlour. The house had three bedrooms and a sitting room. They went into his bedroom and took their mirrors and pointed them in all directions. They went to the children’s room and turned their mirrors there as well and pointed their horns at different areas of the room, while he was still standing in the parlour. The men then noticed a juju hanging on the top of the door and asked the witness to give it to them. Alieu Mbaye said that he responded that he found the juju there and refused to put it down because he did not put it there in the first place.

They argued until a soldier pulled out his gun and told the witness that if he did not bring the “juju down”, he would shoot him.

The witness remembered that one of the Green Boys came to him and said “*brother, this is nothing. Just bring the juju down, do not put yourself into problem.*” So, he brought down the juju and wanted to give it to the man who had asked for it, but the man refused to take it and ordered him to hold it, which he did. He was then told to accompany them to the bantaba.

The Counsel interrupted the witness to ask some follow up questions. Asking if he knew who the men dressed in red were, the witness said that he did not know but from the type of Fula that they spoke he thought that they were coming from Mali “*and those areas*”, admitting however that he did not know exactly where they were from. The Counsel asked the witness what came to his mind when he first saw them, taking into account the way they were dressed and the manner they comported themselves. The witness answered that he thought that they were

witches because of the type of clothes they were wearing, which were adored with cowry shells and the fact that they were holding horns in their hands; one of them even holding a big mirror. The witness noted that he had never seen anyone dressed like that. The Counsel asked if the witness could tell them what they were doing with the mirror. The witness stated that the man holding the mirror would come and stand near you where so that he can see you inside the mirror then the other man will come, look at you and look inside the mirror.

The Counsel then asked the witness if he could them who the Green Boys were. The witness explained that he did not know them but noted that they were many, up to 30, boys and girls. The men in red were three in numbers: one of them was the drummer while the other two were going around and point out which people should be captured. Asked if anyone else was part of the group, Alieu Mbaye responded that Kebba Jarju Bojang, the village Alkalo, was also present as well as a soldier called Solo Bojang. The Counsel asked if the witness knew Solo Bojang and what position he occupied. The witness stated that he did not personally know Solo Bojang but he heard him being called, explaining that this was how he got to know his name. He added that Solo Bojang was wearing camouflaged uniform but he did not know which section exactly he belonged to. The Counsel asked what Solo Bojang was doing when the group was going around and **capturing** people. Alieu Mbaye responded that Solo Bojang was following them because he was a powerful man, he was there “just to exercise his powers”.

Asked if he was implying that Solo Bojang was the one giving protection to the group, the witness responded that he did so together with the Green Boys.

Alieu Mbaye explained that the man who had pulled out a gun while they were at this house when he had refused to take the juju down, was in fact Solo Bojang himself. Asked about the role of the Green Boys, he responded that they too were “exercising their powers”, explaining that they were ordering the **captured** individuals to sit down and preventing them to get up.

Continuing with his testimony, the witness said that when they arrived at the bantaba, others were already there, sitting on the ground. When his group of **captured** arrived, the men asked him to go around in circles raising the juju in the air, which he refused to do. At this moment, Mama Jamba Bojang, an old man who was his in-law got up and took the juju from the witness’ hand. After Alieu Mbaye explained to him what had happened, the old man reminded the Alkalo, Kebba Jarju Bojang, that it was him, Mama Jamba Bojang, who had gone to Casamance with others to get that juju and that he (the Alkalo) himself had one too.

Asked about who was present at the bantaba, the witness answered that the Green Boys and Girls were there, some of them were holding sticks standing at the road junctions but those at the bantaba were clapping, singing and beating the drums. When asked, the witness said that no one from Jambur was at the bantaba, except for those who had been **captured** and he gave the Commission a confidential list of those captured.

Proceeding with the questioning, the Counsel asked the witness what the purpose was of him having to go around the bantaba with the juju in his hand. He responded that he did not know and emphasized that it was their idea. He added that at that point, being made to do that in the presence of everyone made him want to **die**. The Counsel asked why the witness felt that way, to which he responded that it was a “very ugly thing to do”, coming to stand in front of a person claiming that he is a wizard and saying that he has a juju which is harmful to others, “this was truly painful”. Describing the repercussions associated with being labelled a wizard in a community, the witness stated that it is a clear **defamation** of character. He explained that people are afraid of witches and wizards, meaning that if one is accused of being one, no one would allow their children to come near them and will never tell you anything concerning them, concluding that “wherever you go they will look at you with bad eyes. That is the impact”.

Continuing, Alieu Mbaye said that after he had been forced to go through the ritual of brandishing the juju around, he was asked to sit down. His father-in-law Mama Jamba Bojang said he should go home but the Alkalo intervened and insisted for him to stay there. His father-in-law told the Alkalo that wherever they would take the witness, who had married his daughter, he, Mama Jamba Bojang, would follow then. Asked about what happened next Alieu Mbaye explained that he was taken to Kololi in a big white and grey bus. Regarding the number of people taken there, Alieu Mbaye explained that he came to know that they were 65 because when they drank that concoction, Solo Bojang came into the room with a piece of paper and wrote down all their names one by one.

The Counsel told the witness she was assuming that the people on the confidential list he submitted to the Commission were on the bus with him and that they were also included among the 65 people counted by Solo Bojang. Alieu Mbaye responded in the affirmative. Asked to give more details about the place they were taken to in Kololi, Alieu Mbaye said that they were driven to Baba Jobe's compound. Asked if he knew who Baba Jobe was, the witness stated that Baba Jobe was very close to the former President Yahya Jammeh. Describing the place, the witness explained that it was a residential building with a storey house in the middle, a swimming pool on the left and a round hut with a small garden and an outside toilet on the right. The house had a big entry hall, where they were told to sit on the floor.

Alieu Mbaye went on to say that they brought in lunch but that he did not eat, as he had no appetite. Asked to explain what his feelings were at that moment, the witness said that he was angry. He added that he was thinking of his children who would also be affected by the accusation made against him that he was a wizard. He knew that his family would suffer when they would learn about what happened to him. He stated that these were the things on his mind. He added that he also thought of his friends and this also pained him. The Counsel then wanted to know if he could have left the Baba Jobe's compound, to which he responded that while he was allowed to walk around freely within the compound, he could not leave, and agreed with the Counsel when she concluded that they are **detained**.

After lunch, they were told that it was time to drink the medicine. They were asked to go outside the house and told to line up to enter the toilet one after the other. The concoction was in two medium drums in the toilet room. They used the cup that people use for the toilet to scoop the medicine from one of the pans and gave it to them to drink it. He described the concoction as a liquid made of green leaves, adding that the cup – a “one kilo” cup - was filled to the brim. They were **forced** to drink the whole cup. Alieu Mbaye remembered that while he was drinking, he felt how the medicine was scratching his throat.

Asked to describe the state of the toilet, the witness stated that it was **filthy and smelly**. The Counsel noted that it was unhygienic as well since they were made to drink the concoction out of the cup that people usual use after having relieved themselves in the toilet. The Counsel then wanted to know what happened after he drank the medicine. Alieu Mbaye responded that they told people to take their shirts off and bend down, and then they scooped water from the other barrel and poured it on them. Some were even made to bathe with it. The witness clarified that it was not the same liquid as the one they had been forced to drink. He explained that there were two drums: one filled with greenish water, the other with a brown liquid. The brown liquid one was the one they used to bathe them with, while the one mixed with green leaves was the one they had to drink. Further describing the liquids, he said that the one they drank was slimy, and while it was not “that bitter”, it did not taste good either. The brown liquid was smelly and when they were done bathing with it, they were smelling.

Alieu Mbaye said that after that was done, they went back to the house because it was the cold season. He noted that after 20 to 30 minutes “*that was when everything went bad*”. People started to lie down on the ground, because the medicine “*was powerful*”. The Counsel asked whether it was the effect of the medicine that made them behave like that and the witness said yes. The Counsel asked the witness if the drug had any effect on him personally. The

witness responded that it did not affect him that day but that he started having problems later. The Counsel asked the witness to describe what happened around him.

The witness explained that what happened around him was “very, very sad because those old women and old men, they suffered there very well. People started talking by themselves like mad people. Someone was there who was attempting to bring down the light bulb. Someone was there shouting saying ‘let no one eat his couscous’. People were talking just like that by themselves, talking and saying things that were not real”. The Counsel concluded that they were acting as if there were not “*in their right mind*”, which the witness confirmed and also confirmed that it was because of the medicine that they drank. The Counsel concluded that these were some of the mental effects of the drug and asked the witness to describe which physical effects the drug had.

Alieu Mbaye responded that they were all sitting in the hall and many of them could not even get up to reach the toilet and therefore some people urinated on themselves while some had diarrhoea,

adding that because these are elderly people, he did not feel comfortable disclosing their names.

The Counsel thanked the witness for the information and acknowledged that it was a source of great **shame** and **embarrassment** and that the Commission did not need to hear about individual cases, but rather to understand what the general situation was. She recapped, saying that basically the witness was saying that people urinated and defecated upon themselves because they were unable to physically get up and go to the toilet and no one offered any assistance to do so. At this point, the witness clarified that there was a toilet and that in the beginning there were people getting up by themselves and going there but that later nobody was able to move from where they were sitting. The Counsel asked if that happened during the first day and the witness said yes.

The Counsel then asked the witness if he slept there until the next day. Alieu Mbaye explained that he slept on the tiles on the floor, like everybody else. When the Counsel asked if those people who had urinated and defecated on themselves, slept in their urine and defecation, he witness explained that there was one lady, one of the **captured**, who was helped by God because nothing happened to her and she helped the others. He told the Commission that she had three wrappers on her and so when someone needed one, she would take the soiled one, give one of hers and wash the dirty one. The Counsel asked if the people who **captured** them and brought them there made any attempts to offer them a bath or clean them up. The witness stated that the people who took them there they did not have anything to do with them again after dumping them at Baba Jobe’s compound.

The witness then recounted an incident that happened the next day, as he was sitting near the swimming pool, with a young man called Buba Sibi and an imam called Ba Karamo Bojang, who is late now. He narrated that the imam told them that he had been a wrestler and that he made jujus for famous wrestlers. The imam told them that one of them, called Double Lez had asked him to make one for him before his combat with another wrestler called Erkil. He made it for him and said that in that wrestle match, Double Lez won the combat.

Alieu Mbaye explained that while the imam was telling that story, a soldier, who had been sitting behind them, got up and came and turned to the imam inquiring “oh you made that juju for Double Lez?” The soldier then added that “it was people like him that they were looking for”, people like him who make jujus to **kill** other people, to make others go crazy or harm them. He asked the imam if he knew that Erkil became sick after that fight and died, adding that this meant that he, the imam, had killed him. As he went on **insulting** the old man, the witness reminded him of the age of the imam and that he should let him be. The soldier told Alieu Mbaye to shut up and

called him a bastard. He said he decided to keep quiet. The Counsel asked if he witnessed anyone else being insulted or mistreated, but he said no.

The Counsel then enquired whether the witness knew the reason why that concoction was given to him to drink and was made to bathe in it. The witness stated that maybe it was because of what they saw in them or what they wanted to prove. The Counsel asked if they succeeded in proving it, to which the witness responded that they did not.

Asked how long they stayed in Kololi, Alieu Mbaye explained that they had arrived around 5 pm and were released the next day after 12 pm, reaching the village around 6 pm to 7 pm. The Counsel asked if before they were set free, they were given anything to eat or drink to which he responded that they did not, saying that after “*that medicine you will not drink water and you will not eat any food and if you do any of those two you will die*”. The Counsel asked what the witness’s condition was when he left Kololi both physically and mentally. The witness answered that his head was very heavy and his limbs were stiff. He continued saying that when he finally reached Jambur, all the young men came to his house to get information from him about their parents. He explained that he had arrived before the others, because he went home with Buba Sibi’s son Sarjo Bojang, who had come to pick him up with a private vehicle. The others were released the same day but later.

The witness explained that after he was released, he became **severely sick** and bed ridden for two months and when he finally went to the hospital, they told him that he was suffering from high blood pressure. However, the medicine they gave him, did not help at all. So later, an herbalist was called to his house, he noted that at that time he was not able to walk, he could not even stand up. The medicine the herbalist gave him made him even sicker and he started vomiting. He described that he was “vomiting some objects, that looked like small beetles”.

Responding to a question about his state of health before the witch-hunt, he said that he had lived 20 years without getting sick. The Counsel asked what the witness would say was the cause of his ill health. He answered that it

was because of the medicine he drank. The Counsel asked if the witness ever got to know who was responsible for sending the witch-hunters to Jambur and making him go through that horrific ordeal.

Alieu Mbaye responded that “it all came from Yahya Jammeh because if you are arrested and a soldier was involved plus the alkali, you will know that that is the government”.

The Counsel then asked the witness to tell the Commission what impact this had on his family and his children. The witness responded that his children were very bitter, angry and unhappy but that they could not express it, adding that nobody helped them. He added that he continues to suffers from high blood pressure and generally feels unwell and that certain things appeared on his body. The Counsel asked if he was willing or comfortable showing them and he agreed to do so, saying that the things that appear on his body look like stones that swell on his chest and pinch him inside. The Counsel suggested that these were lumps and the witness agreed, confirming that “*that medicine caused all that for me*”. He added that it happens that he sometimes vomits “*just like this, without being nauseated*”.

The Counsel thanked the witness for his testimony and said that she was really sorry for what he has gone through. The floor was then opened for to the Commissioners to ask questions. The Deputy Chairperson, Commissioner Sosseh told the witness that they are truly sorry for what he had gone through and still is experiencing.

Commissioner Samba asked whether the witness has ever gone to the hospital to explain what exactly had happened to him and the complications that resulted from it. The witness responded in the affirmative, explaining that he went to the Brikama Hospital, adding that at the time he could not even raise his hands up. He told them that he was one of the victims that had been taken to Kololi but the man

he saw at the hospital was not at all interested in what he was telling him. The man just tied a blood pressure machine on his arm and told him that he was suffering from high blood pressure, that was where it ended and he was given some medication. But for him to investigate or make other efforts to know exactly what was in the medicine he drank, he did not do that.

Commissioner Sosseh asked what happened to his father in-law. The witness responded that when his father in-law went (to Kololi), he did not drink the concoction because he had come by himself. But he did spend the night there and, in the morning, he told the witness that he was going to Banjul and would be back. However, said the witness, he was released before his father in-law came back.

Aliou Mbaye was given the floor to state his final remarks. He said that what he wanted to tell the villagers and all the Gambians that they should stand together and be united in order to develop their country. Quoting a Wolof proverb, he said “*a thought should always be positive*”, saying that if this is done, the country will move forward and people will have peace. He concluded expressing gratitude because the TRRC has healed him. For the last ten years his heart had been bitter, but he hoped that now that he had been given a chance to tell his story, the people who are supposed to listen to what happened to then, should give them support. He ended his testimony, praying to Allah to continue to provide peace in this country.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, leading to death

Yahya Jammeh, Solo Bojang

Aiding and abetting persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, leading to death

Kebba (Jarju) Bojang

He explained that people are **afraid of witches and wizards**, meaning that if one is accused of being one, no one would **allow their children to come near** them and will never tell you anything concerning them, concluding that “**wherever you go they will look at you with bad eyes. That is the impact**”.



WITNESS NAME: Wuday CEESAY (known as Nanding)

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 21st November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Makumbaya and the impact the accusations had on the witness

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Gardener

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Quarry worker

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Wuday Ceesay started her testimony by stating that she is 65 years old. She was born in Casamance (Senegal) but moved to Makumbaya “the year that Yahya Jammeh came into office” (1994). Asked what she was doing for a living, the witness responded that she is a quarry worker.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked whether the witness recalled the witch-hunt that happened in Makumbaya. The witness answered that she could not recall the exact day, but could testify that it did happen. Before moving on to that incident, the Deputy Lead Counsel wanted to know what the witness’ relationship with other members of the community was before the witch-hunters came to Makumbaya. Wuday Ceesay stated that their relationship was good. The Deputy Lead Counsel then asked the witness how many children she had before the witch-hunters came to the village and how old her oldest child was at the time. She answered that she had six children with her oldest child going to school but was already “a little bit old” and the youngest, a girl, was also already attending school.

The Deputy Lead Counsel informed the witness that since the witch-hunt campaign happened in 2009, the witness must have been 55 years old. The witness agreed that it was the case and explained that at that time she was working as a gardener. She used to leave to the gardens to water her plants just after the early morning prayers and be back home between 11 am to 12 pm.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness to tell the Commission what happened on the day the witch-hunters came to Makumbaya. The witness narrated that she was at the garden when she heard drumming from the village. She did not go see where it came from but returned home. As she was about to prepare the soup for her lunch, “they” entered her house, “standing there with mirrors”. Wuday Ceesay recalled that they passed their mirror around her face twice and told her that they have caught her. She asked them how they have caught her to which they responded “old woman, we are not prepared for a lot of talk, let’s go.” The witness explained that she did not want to follow them but as they insisted, she realised that if she did not comply “she was going to suffer”. She added that they did not tell her where they were taking her.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if the witness remembered how many witch-hunters came to her home. She said they were four. Asked to give more details, Wuday Ceesay explained that one of the men spoke Fula to her, a language she did not understand, another one spoke Mandinka and the two others did not speak at all. She added that the Fula was not the Fula spoken in The Gambia but that she did not know from where they came. The Deputy Lead Counsel enquired if the witness understood their conversation, because one of the men was speaking Mandinka, which the witness confirmed.

Responding to the question how the men looked like, Wuday Ceesay said that the man who spoke in Fula was wearing red with patches of white on the cloth, adding that he was wearing a shirt and trousers as well as a red hat. She also remembered that he was holding a cow’s tail in his hands which he was shaking. He was the one holding the mirror. The

three others were wearing trousers and t-shirts and were part of the Green Boys. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked whether the person who spoke in Mandinka was wearing green or red. The witness said that he did not dress in red, but could not remember the colour of his clothes.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness how she felt when those four strangers entered her home. The witness replied that it surprised her. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness if she could tell them whether she spoke to anyone when she left the house with those four men. The witness narrated that when she came out, one of her neighbours told the men that they should take all of them, that they (those men) are the good citizens of this country and it was their type that people are looking out for in this country. The neighbour went on saying "*try and distinguish people from one another so that we will know who is who*". The witness said she did not respond to that and just passed.

Wuday Ceesay added that at this moment she said to herself that when one is accused to be a witch nobody supports you.

When asked, she confirmed that her neighbours believed that she was a witch.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if at any point the witch-hunters told her who hired them. The witness narrated that the witch-hunters told her that people were captured because "many of his relatives died." When asked who they were referring to, Wuday Ceesay said that that they meant Yahya Jammeh and remembered that the one who told her that was a senior military officer working for the former President. She added that this senior military officer was from Makumbaya as well.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness to tell them where they took her after she left her home. The witness stated that they took them to Kololi in a green bus which was full. The Deputy Lead Counsel highlighted that the witness had provided the Commission with some names earlier.

They arrived in Kololi after 5 pm prayers and were asked to sit in an open wide space, women were seated on one side and the men on the other. They were given food (groundnut soup), and once everyone had eaten, they began to take the men for them to bathe. The Deputy Lead Counsel interrupted and told the witness that before she went any further, she just wanted to seek a clarification and asked if the area they took them was fenced or was it just open. The witness said it had a wall. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if the witness knew whose compound that was. She answered that it was Baba Jobe's compound adding that she did not know who he was but had heard that name from others. The Deputy Lead Counsel then asked the witness if she could remember seeing other people apart from those who came from Makumbaya for example police or soldiers. Wuday Ceesay responded that there were soldiers but no police officers. The Deputy Lead Counsel enquired if the soldiers were carrying weapons, to which the witness responded that she did not see any guns with them. The Deputy Lead Counsel wanted to know if the Fula man and the Green Boys who came to her house were also present and the witness responded in the affirmative.

Going back to the narration of events, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked if the witness recalled anyone taking down the names of the people who came from Makumbaya. The witness responded that she did indeed see an individual, the one she had said was from Makumbaya, who was recording the names of those coming from Makumbaya. The witness also recalled that everyone was asked to give in any personal items they were carrying with them, such as money or phones, but that it was returned to them when they left.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness to tell them what happened when they were calling people to go inside. The witness stated that they started with the men. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if the witness knew what happened to them. The witness responded that something happened to them eventually "*because as a human being, when you*

drink something you are not supposed to drink, you will do something which you are not supposed to do". When asked to explain further, Wuday Ceesay said that she saw them doing things that they had never seen them do before.

She said that it looked like they had become **mad, some for instance started pinching people and others behaved as if they had wings and they were about to fly. Some even fainted as a result of what they were given to drink.**

Explaining what happened to her, Wuday Ceesay narrated that she was told to go to the bathroom where two men were standing, one of them being the Fula man with the red shirt. She noted that at this point in time she was so terrified that she did not pay attention to the way the other one was dressed. That man was scooping the water and giving it to the Fula man to give to her to drink and to bathe with. The witness then said that after she took her bath she came out and wanted to **vomit** but she could not vomit.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness to give more details about the bath. Wuday Ceesay said that she had to remove her dress, adding that she kept her wrapper, and the man in red then took water and poured it on her. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked how that made the witness feel at that point. The witness stated that she was not comfortable with the situation and said that if a man her son's age was holding her that way, it was because of their leader, Yahya Jammeh because he was the one who sent them.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if the witness felt that it was Yahya Jammeh who allowed those people to do that to her to which she responded "yes indeed".

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if she was given anything to drink and the witness said that they did not give her anything else except that water, of reddish colour in a full B&B tin. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if the witness knew what kind of liquid it was, to which the witness responded that she was not certain but that she thought that it must have been kubejaro. Asked if she felt she could refuse to drink the concoction, Wuday Ceesay responded that "whether they like it or not", they were **forced** to.

Speaking about the effects of the medicine on her immediately after she drank it, she said that in the first moments it did not have any impact on her. She explained that she did not spend the night at Baba Jobe's compound and that they were taken back to Makumbaya at 12 am at night by bus. Asked how she behaved before being taken back, Wuday Ceesay said that she just kept quiet and left everything in the hands of God. She added that she felt that she was under the control of Yahya Jammeh and was worried because her children did not have food to eat.

Wuday Ceesay explained that it was only when she got to Makumbaya that she realised the effect the concoction had on her. She started getting dizzy and saw things she had never seen. Referring to the way her neighbours had reacted when she was taken away, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked if the witness if she was **stigmatised** in any way after she returned from Kololi. The witness recounted that "it became a sad thing for her". She recalled that one day one of her neighbour's daughters gave birth and she, the witness, went to greet that daughter inside their house. Her neighbour however told her that she should leave and not touch the new born, which saddened her.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness if apart from that incident other people treated her differently because of going to Kololi, to which she responded that no one did, but that in fact she herself had become suspicious of people. Asked why that was, the witness responded that she did not want to be accused of being a witch by anyone and that was why she started to detach herself from certain individuals,

noting that some people did not abandon her. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if the witness' children suffered any kind of stigma as a result of what happened to her. The witness answered that it might have happened when they were outside but that she did not know because she would not go outside with them.

The witness gave one more example of the stigmatisation she suffered. She explained that she had a problem with her son's wife⁴⁶ who forbade her to chop the meat, as she suspected her of being a witch. The witness said that she would just tell her daughter-in-law "thank you" thinking to herself that she would leave everything in the hands of God. The Deputy Lead Counsel thanked the witness and the floor was given to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Sosseh thanked the witness and expressed her regrets for what had happened to her, stating that it should never have happened as she was just going about her business trying to make a living for her family when she was subjected to this horrible ordeal. Commissioner Sosseh asked the witness if she is still working at the quarry, which the witness confirmed.

In her final remarks, Wuday Ceesay called on the Gambian people and those of her community to forget about what happened during the regime of Yahya Jammeh, adding that the relationship that existed between them should continue.

She stressed that being accused of witchcraft is a “very dirty thing”. She noted that when someone is accused of that, that stigma stays on until the person dies.

She added that some would be unsatisfied with the fact that some of them went to speak to the TRRC.

She asked the Commission to give her a number she could call to report anyone who opposes her and says any bad thing to her. She noted that when Yahya Jammeh **captured** her in Makumbaya village, the people of the village could not do anything about it, but she highlighted that they were now making an issue about the fact that

she testified at the TRRC. She repeated that she wanted to get a number so that if anyone tells her something that hurts her she, she could report it and the Commission will know who said such things to her with her suffering.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhumane and degrading treatment

Yahya Jammeh

⁴⁶The translator said "husband's second wife" but in fact the witness referred to her son's wife (daughter in-law). This was also clarified at the end by Commissioner Kinteh.

WITNESS NAME: Ali JALLOW

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 25th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: Three witch-hunts in Sintet between 2008 and 2009

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Shop owner

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Son of abductee

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Elder resident of Sintet

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Mama Jarra Jatta introduced herself to the Commission Ali Jallow began his testimony by explaining he was born and raised in Sintet before attending school and working a variety of jobs outside the community. In 2008/2009, he was working at a small shop he owned in New Yundum but came back to Sintet every weekend to visit his family.

The witness described how the town of Sintet is divided into five clans⁴⁷ - Bako, Kabambu, Busumbay, Fula Kunda, and Tamba Kunda. Fula Kunda, where the witness comes from, consists largely of Fula people, Tamba Kunda is predominantly Jola, Busumbay is Fula and Jola, Kabambu is Jola and Mandinka, and Bako is a mix of all three. He insisted that despite these residential divisions, the community was united around a deeper notion of kinship.

Ali Jallow told the Commission that the first witch-hunting incident he witnessed in Sintet occurred in June or July of 2008. On that day, he was in his room when he heard a noise outside. He stepped out to find four men he later identified as Tambajiro, Solo Bojang, Sulayman Manga (also known as Solomon) and “Toffee” Manga approaching his house followed by a gaggle of civilians. The four men came into his compound and entered the kitchen. They looked around until **they found a talisman**, at which point **Sulayman Manga fired the gun he was carrying in the air** and the talisman was put in the bag “Toffee” Manga was carrying. According to the witness, Solo Bojang seemed as if he were just following along with the other three men. He learned the men’s names from a boy from Sintet who stayed behind at the witness’ house to drink some water after the incident.



The witness then moved onto the second witch-hunting incident in Sintet, which he remembered as taking place days or weeks after the first one. He was first made aware of the strangers in Sintet while he was on his way back to Fula Kunda from Bako. A passing motorcyclist told him outsiders had arrived and were telling people to gather at the health center. This message was repeated by a few other people he met on the path.

After stopping by his house in Fula Kunda, the witness testified, he made his way to the health centre. There he saw a number of pickup trucks pull up and men, some of whom were wearing uniforms, descend from the vehicles. He recognised Tambajiro, Solo Bojang and Sulayman Manga from their previous visit to Sintet. This time, he attested, they were also carrying cooking stoves. According to the witness, Tambajiro stood under a mahogany tree and began whistling and chanting. He then grabbed a handful of leaves, and entered the hospital.

More residents of Sintet arrived and everyone gathered on the hospital grounds. The area was then sealed by members of the Police Investigative Unit, PIU and soldiers - who the witness testified were **armed** - and the assembled people were told no one would be allowed to return home for a while.

The cooking stoves were lit and leaves and powder added, which caused a smoke to waft over the crowd, which everyone was forced to inhale.

⁴⁷It was translated as clans but his description sounded more like neighbourhoods.

The witness disclosed that some people were called to come closer to ensure they would inhale the smoke. The smoking went on for some time, but the witness was able to escape. When asked how by the Deputy Lead Counsel, he responded that he took advantage of the fact that everyone's attention was focused on a man claiming to be a ghost to slip out the back. The witness later confirmed that they were never told precisely why they were being forced to inhale the smoke.

The Deputy Lead Counsel then moved the questioning on to the third witch-hunting incident in Sintet. The witness said it was Monday, the 9th of March and he was on his way to a Quranic recitation when he was told that a group of strangers had arrived in Bako. He could hear drumming and singing from that neighborhood and decided instead of attending the recitation and he would return home to Fula Kunda. He told the Commission he was seated in his compound facing the road when he saw a group of PIU, Green Boys and men in red arrive at the junction near his house. None of these men were armed he remarked.

Ali Jallow testified that he saw the group go first to the imam's compound. One person in the group was carrying a large iron bar used for digging, which they used to break down the imam's compound door. He added that the man was shouting in Mandinka that the people in the imam's compound were the sons of witches and that they were hiding from him. He later suggested that he saw the men **abduct** the imam's wife at this point.

After breaking into the imam's compound, the group then came to the witness' house. Ali Jallow later described how one member of the group was wearing a red hat with hair sown into it, and red shirt and trousers with pieces of black cloth and talismans sown into the material. He told the Commission that this individual did not have a mirror, unlike what he heard about the other men dressed in red who came to Sintet. The man in red came into the compound and called out "elder" to the witness, to which the witness responded in kind. The witness later clarified that the man was speaking Pula Futa⁴⁸ and that he did not treat the man as if he were Gambian, saying that he resembled one of the peripatetic mystics from Guinea that would sometimes visit the community.

After entering the compound, the mysterious man passed through the witness' younger brother's room and then

went into the backyard where the witness' younger brother's wife was bathing. The strange man was apparently so embarrassed that he ran out of the backyard without saying anything to the woman.

Meanwhile, the witness' father, Alhaji Sutay Jallow, had just risen from a nap and was washing his feet in preparation for prayer. One of the strangers apparently asked the witness where his father came from. After the witness answered the question, one of the men made a sign to take the witness' father. When the policemen grabbed his father's hand, the witness, asserted, he grabbed the policeman, who cautioned him to "take it easy before we have a problem."

The witness then accompanied the policemen as they marched his father to the junction, where they were joined by more men dressed in red as well as his step-father Alhaji Abdoulie Sowe, grandmother and a young man named Alhajie Abdoulie who had also been **captured** from his compound. The men then began herding the kidnapped people toward the bantaba. The witness declared that his grandmother, who suffered from asthma, was having a difficult time walking more than a few steps at a time. He told the men they should take it easy with her, and advised her to sit on the ground and make them carry her. She apparently refused, explaining that if she sat down people would assume she was a witch. Instead she asked for a kettle of water, which the witness used to cool her as she walked. Afterwards one of the men who had **abducted** his father went back and captured the witness's brother's wife.

Ali Jallow explained that the elderly and middle age were disproportionately targeted, perhaps, he ventured, because the youth were all out of town working in Kombo. He initially said he saw around thirty people **captured** but there were some who he did not see. He later revised his figure to fifty in Fula Kunda alone. When further questioned on the number of people **captured**, he responded that the targeting of elders was more important than the number of people **captured**.

The people who were **abducted** from the witness' compound were taken to the health centre where a number of vehicles were parked. As witness

⁴⁸A Pulaar/Fula language spoken in Gambia and Senegal but mostly in Guinea.

approached the health center, he saw that some of the strangers were slaughtering something. At first, he testified, he thought that people from Sintet were being slaughtered, and he believed his father had been **killed**. However, once he got closer he saw it was a goat. Nonetheless, his legs were shaking and he had to sit down. The witness then explained that he did not recognise any of the people who came to Sintet apart from Solo Bojang.

Ali Jallow indicated that the people who had been **captured** were taken in the vehicles to Kanilai. However, that evening some of the people were returned. When the bus arrived in Sintet, the witness continued, he looked for his father, but did not find him. He asked the returnees for news about his father, but initially, no one would tell him anything, saying they had been told not to tell anyone what happened.

Later, one of the elderly returnees confided in the witness that his father had been forced to drink a concoction that had made him faint.

Another group of captives, including his stepfather Alhaji Abdoulie Sowe, was returned on Tuesday. He again asked about his father, but was met with silence. Later, his stepfather revealed that they had asked him what he had eaten⁴⁹, to which he responded: mangos and chicken. He then spoke to an uncle who worked as a teacher in Kanilai and told him to pass the message to his father that he should give a false confession – specifically that he had eaten the witness - in order to go free.

On Wednesday, Ali Jallow continued, he spoke with an uncle named Yero Sowe who told him his father refused to confess to being a witch. Yero Sowe then connected him with one of the men who had been dressed in red. They bargained over how much it would cost the witness to free his father, eventually settling on 5,000 dalasi. They agreed to meet at the gate later that night.

One of the witness' nephews who had a vehicle took him, Samba Bousel Bah, Jammeh Egge Bah and the driver/apprentice team to Kanilai that night around 11 or 12.

When they reached the gate in Kanilai, they were met by soldiers and one of the Pula Futa men. The witness and the Pula Futa man went into a small shop on the side of the road to do the exchange. The witness recalled that he tried to ask to reduce the price, which irritated the Pula Futa man. The witness paid the previously agreed 5,000 dalasi, after which the driver went into the compound while the witness waited at the gate. A man named Suteh Bah later told the witness his father had been bathed before being brought to the vehicle.

When they arrived back in Sintet, they were met by many people waiting at the witness' compound. The witness' father was not moving and those who had gathered thought he was **dead** and began crying despite the witness' pleas that he was in fact still alive.

Then, Ali Jallow continued, at 5 am around the morning call to prayer, the witness' father began moving. According to the witness, his father was disoriented, did not recognise the people around him and demanded to be taken to his room, despite the fact he was already there. The witness began crying, and his father slapped him. “*It was not the slap that pained me,*” he told the Commission “*it was his behaviour because I knew that he was not himself at this time.*”

Soon after, his father began vomiting what the witness assumed were the leaves from the concoction he had been forced to drink.

The witness also made pains to stress that his father was not the only victim in Sintet and that some people suffered even more than him. He said there were some people who were not even residents of Sintet who were **captured** in the sweep, including a bamboo harvester from a nearby village.

“*From that day, he was out of his head,*” Ali Jallow said, describing his father after he was forced to drink the concoction. Before his ordeal, he had moved around independently and contributed significantly to their

⁴⁹Likely a reference to the idea that witches and wizards “eat” people.

large compound. Afterwards, apparently he was unable to do so. The witness continued that he took his father to every hospital in The Gambia and all the way to Dakar looking for medicine to ease his pain.

He told a story of how in 2017, when his father was suffering from anemia, they went to the Senegalese soldiers stationed in Bwiam to ask for blood. The commander told them he wanted to donate but did not have clearance from the command. He then went to the Imam, who agreed to announce the request for a donor at evening prayers. Initially no one responded, but later the witness and his father were approached by two men who agreed to donate if the blood types matched. Despite the fact the blood types matched, the witness' father still passed away at home in April of 2017.

In response to a question from Commissioner Kinteh, the witness explained how an aunt of his named Hawa Bah spoke with Solo Bojang and paid 4,000 dalasi to have her mother (and others who were ill) returned to Sintet after only being forced to drink the concoction once.

In his final remarks Ali Jallow thanked the Commissioners and the Counsels. He pleaded with Gambians to look at the systems of politics in the country, especially the heinous acts of **murder** and theft perpetrated due to political motivations.

He decried the entrance of politics into religion, and insults in the media.

On the subject of witches, he said that the TRRC had shown him who the real witches are: “*Those who took guns and shot people, those who suffocated people and killed them, those are the witches and wizards.*”

He told a brief story of how while in Jarra Soma an old man said Sintet is where witches are from. He broke down and told the man that his father was one of those who had been accused of witchcraft and it was false. Ali Jallow thanked the Commissioners again, and thus concluded his testimony.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Solo Bojang, Tambajiro, Sulayman Manga

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death

Solo Bojang



Alhagie Bigi Sonko was captured during the 2009 witch-hunt campaign. He was beaten by soldiers with their batons and following his release, suffered bouts of illnesses before passing away.



WITNESS NAME: Karamo SANNEH

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 25th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Sintet

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Farmer

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Elder resident of Sintet

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Karamo Sanneh began his testimony by telling the Commission that he used to be a farmer and has been a resident of Sintet since 1970. He stated that in 2009, he was at the naming ceremony of his nephew's wife in Sintet when he noticed that community members were missing.

He asked where they were and was told that Yahya Jammeh had sent people to Sintet to arrest people.

At the time, all that he heard was that they had been sent to **capture** people but he did not know the reason.

When he returned to his house after the naming ceremony, his mother-in-law Bintading Manjang told him that they should escape from the people they heard had come to Sintet by crossing the border and going into Casamance, Senegal. The witness testified that he refused to go, but

later in his testimony he said that he saw her running out the back door of their house. She was stopped by a group of men including soldiers. He added that she pleaded with them but they dragged her towards a nearby pickup truck where she joined a few other women who were being guarded by soldiers and members of the Green Boys.

The women, he testified, were not there voluntarily and were clearly being forcibly escorted.

However, follow up questions led to confusion about whether the witness was narrating his mother-in-law's ordeal or what he saw happen to one of the community's imam (whose name was not divulged to the public) and the Deputy Counsel said there must be problems with the interpretation. After saying he did not see his mother-in-law get beaten, the witness described the men who did the **beating** as kicking the victims with their heavy military boots. He told the Commission that he wanted to tell the soldiers that the imam was ill but ultimately decided not to intervene.

The witness stated that he also saw a Laobe⁵⁰, identified by his family name Sowe, being **captured** by the soldiers and the Green Boys. He narrated that the Laobe, who was riding his bicycle with a tree trunk strapped to the back, successfully avoided a few of the soldiers until they kicked the man's bicycle as he passed in front of the witness' house. The soldiers then **beat** him mercilessly before taking him away.

Karamo Sanneh recalled that he was on his veranda shucking his maize when two soldiers and two men strangely dressed approached his house. He later said the men spoke Fula but not the same Fula that is spoken in The Gambia – instead he suggested they came from either Guinea Conakry or Mali. He described them wearing cultural trousers with sleeveless red shirts that were covered in blue and red pieces of cloth. They were also wearing red hats adorned with mirrors. One of the men stood

⁵⁰In Fula society in this region, this refers to the wood carvers caste.

at the entrance of his compound with a cow tail in one hand pointing a large mirror into the inner areas of his compound.

The witness told the Commission that the two soldiers and one of the men in red approached him and told him “my elder, if you don’t want to get beat, come up and go with us”.

He testified that he wanted to resist but he had seen what happened to the others. While they escorted him to the pickup truck, the two soldiers pushed him to walk faster. He boarded the pickup truck and was taken to an area with two tall trees known as Tabokoto⁵¹.

At Tabokoto, Karamo Sanneh stated, he saw two vehicles – a military truck and a bus that was reserved for the women - parked under one of the trees. He was taken to the military truck, which was so full he was forced to sit on the floor. Meanwhile, under the other tree, the Green Boys were drumming while Green Girls danced. The operation was being managed by a man he later came to know as Solo Bojang. The witness testified that Solo Bojang was ordering the soldiers around, and even the men in red followed his order regarding what to do after they had **captured** people.

The witness told the Commission that at Tabokoto, he saw his elder brother Malanka Gaye beaten mercilessly for telling Solo Bojang that there were no witches or wizards in Sintet. The witness specified that his brother was mentally ill, and when the beating began, his brother started insulting Solo Bojang and the soldiers. Malanka Gaye died within three years of this incident.

Karamo Sanneh explained that most people were **captured** around 10 am or 11 am but they were not taken to Kanilai until around 5 pm. In addition to residents of Sintet, the witness later stated, there were a few people from surrounding villages who had been in Sintet to see their relatives who were also **captured**. According to the witness, they were all kept in the vehicles without food and water. If they needed to use the toilet they were accompanied by the soldiers. At first the soldiers refused the witness' request to disembark to perform the afternoon prayers, but they eventually relented. Around 2 pm, his only son found him in the back of the vehicle and asked what was happening, to which the witness responded that he should run home to close the compound as he had left everything open when he was **captured**. He added his son left the area crying.

After leaving Sintet, the witness continued, the military truck took them to an area of Kanilai known as Woni. He stated that he overheard the people there saying that “Oga” had not returned home that day, and when he asked who was “Oga”, they answered it was Yahya Jammeh. He recalled that the area they were taken to had a bare concrete floor at the centre. On one side, it was similar to a stadium with steps for people to climb up and sit and on the other side there was a large storied building where he was told Yahya Jammeh lived. On the other side of the stadium, the witness said, was a pool that was full of crocodiles. He also saw a small building that looked like a toilet as well as a mosque.

After they arrived they were brought food, but the witness testified that he could not in good conscious eat as he had left his only son at home without food. The witness later said that about half of those who were brought from Sintet were released that day and picked up by Counselor Modou Bah.

After the others ate, the witness continued, they were taken to the small toilet-like building. Before going into the room, he was made to take off his shirt and they took his Nokia mobile phone and the 360 dalasi that he had on his person. In the room, he saw one of the men dressed in red who had **captured** him with

⁵¹Not to be confused with the Tabokoto in Kombo.

two large buckets of liquid. He was forced to drink one and a half cups of the liquid, which he said was made from leaves from trees known as “talo” and “kubejara” in Mandinka and did not taste good.

In addition to drinking one of the liquids, he was forced to bathe in the other liquid, which he said had a pungent odor. After drinking, they splashed some of the liquid in his face and hit him. He fell to the floor and everything went black.

He was then brought outside to sit on a large bench in a shaded area. The witness later said his phone was given back to him after drinking the concoction but he subsequently lost it in his drunken state. As the concoction began to take effect, he testified, “I did not know whether I was dead or alive, it was only the following day I came to be aware of myself.”

Continuing on with his testimony, Karamo Sanneh explained that the following morning, at around 9 or 10 am he was taken to sit under a small veranda with Solo Bojang and a man the witness believed to be the leader of the “Fula”⁵². The witness recalled that he sat down and as Solo Bojang made a phone call, the man in red sat behind him pointing a red horn at the witness. Solo Bojang called Yahya Jammeh and after speaking with him privately, put the phone on loudspeaker. He told the witness to speak with the then-President.

When he asked what he should say, the man in red responded in Fula, translated by Solo Bojang, that the witness should confess to Yahya Jammeh that he was a witch.

Karamo Sanneh told the Commission he refused, and instead told Solo Bojang that it was his parents who were the witches. Solo Bojang stood up and slapped the

witness to the floor and continued to strike him, “I thought that they themselves thought I was dead so they took me and threw me somewhere.”

The witness stated that after the attempted forced confession, he was then forced to drink the concoction again. At this point in his testimony, Karamo Sanneh lowered his head and began weeping as he clutched his heart. After he was given a few minutes to collect himself, the Deputy Lead Counsel apologised for asking difficult questions, to which he responded that he understood that this was her job, but that it still makes him upset.

“I know they had the power in their hands but I know a man like me wouldn’t have done that to me.”

The witness added that he spent two days at Kanilai. One of his nephews who had also been captured assisted him at various points in his ordeal. He told the Commission that he could not remember whether other groups were brought in while he was there. When asked why he believes he was eventually released, he said “I think they themselves felt sorry for me, I think they thought if they didn’t release me, I might die there.”

The day after he was released, Karamo Sanneh testified that his younger brother arranged for him to go to the hospital. After being subjected to a series of tests, he was given tablets and told to stay close to a toilet. He said his bowel movements were highly unusual and for a few days, and he could not eat any food and only drank milk. A decade later, he says he is still at the hospital in Bwiam every other week to get medicine and his body still pains as a result of the beatings he endured.

Karamo Sanneh later attested that 12 to 13 persons in Sintet died as a result of the incident, one of whom was his elder brother’s wife.

⁵²We believe the witness was referring to the men in red.

According to the witness, after drinking the concoction she sat down and faced the east and never spoke another word until the day she died. He added that his son also suffered from his ordeal as the witness was unable to work afterwards and could not pay his son's school fees.

Towards the end of her questioning, the Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness who he held responsible for his ordeal. He almost instinctively responded: Yahya Jammeh. *"It's like our time has not reached to die,"* he said, *"but Yahya Jammeh has already killed us".*

Commissioner Bishop Odico then asked the witness his son's age, to which the witness responded he was around 20 years old now.

In his concluding remarks, Karamo Sanneh implored Gambians politicians to avoid treating citizens as lesser, pointing out that the days of buying human beings are over and that they are not born any freer than anyone else. He pointed out that Yahya Jammeh originally told the Gambian people he would only be in power for six months, but it turned into 22 years. He blamed those people who went to school for peddling lies and spoiling the country.

He said people in his community should be mindful of one another, avoid stereotyping people strictly by their ethnicity, be open to forgiveness, and not let politicians turn them against each other. In Sintet, he reminded the audience *"we bury one another."* He concluded by saying that Allah would repay Yahya Jammeh for what he did to Gambians.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death

Yahya Jammeh, Solo Bojang

He almost instinctively responded: Yahya Jammeh. *"It's like our time has not reached to die,"* he said, *"but Yahya Jammeh has already killed us".*

WITNESS NAME: Fatou CAMARA

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 26th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Sintet

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Resident of Sintet, rice farmer

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Elderly resident of Jambur



SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Fatou Camara began her testimony by identifying herself as a resident of Sintet since her birth in 1957. She stated that she is married, has had nine children, and is a cultivator of rice.

She then told the Commission that the witch-hunters arrived in Sintet on a Monday morning during a naming ceremony for her son's wife's newborn. That morning, one woman from Sintet who had left early to sell in a neighbouring community called ahead to warn that she had seen people on their way to **abduct** people and make them drink "medicine." The witness later said that they had already heard of witch-hunting from relatives in the Kombos who told them that then President Yahya Jammeh had brought people to The Gambia to make Gambians drink a strange concoction.

The witness further added that as the news spread, people tried to run away but soldiers and paramilitaries had already surrounded the community and no one could escape.

Those who tried to run were chased by the soldiers and paramilitaries and had their feet kicked out from underneath them.

Fatou Camara specifically mentioned an elderly man who refused to come out of his hut and was subsequently dragged out into the open. When they started to **beat** him, his younger brother pleaded with him to comply with their orders to avoid further beating. She later added that

many people had their doors broken by the soldiers and paramilitaries. Meanwhile, men dressed in red were roaming the village, identifying people to be **abducted**.

Fatou Camara stated that she was in her compound when the paramilitaries and mysterious men dressed in red and carrying mirrors, who she claimed were from Mali, arrived. The strangers said they were looking for witches and began searching her house with mirrors. She later added that the men were speaking to her in Fula, a language she does not understand. She told them she did not want them in her house, at which point one of the men in red told her to come with them to Kanilai. She asked why, to which they responded they wanted to give her something. She also recalled that her husband was on the veranda but he was so surprised he was speechless. She later added that the paramilitaries broke down her co-wife's door, but she had already fled.

The witness told the Commission that she did not want to go, but was cajoled into boarding a white Toyota pickup along with an elderly man from her compound. She described how the pickup truck roamed the community looking for more people to pick up until there were 5 or 6 people and they were all taken to a bus parked between Sintet and Sintet Fula Kunda.⁵³ Outside the bus, they found the Green Boys and Girls drumming and dancing. On the bus the witness found her co-wife, who had been caught while running away, and her co-wife's daughter.

⁵³The Fula Kunda speaking side of Sintet.

Fatou Camara testified that they were kept on the bus until the time for afternoon prayers. When the people on the bus tried to disembark to do their prayers, they were told to stay put by paramilitaries who boarded the bus with their batons in hand. Eventually, two buses and one truck, all completely full with a mix of old and young, men and women, left Sintet bound for Kanilai.

In Kanilai, the witness continued, they were taken to Yahya Jammeh's military camp and brought lunch. They were told they needed to fill their stomachs with food in order for the "medicine" to be good. The witness attested that she only ate a little of the food, after which some people made their ablutions and performed their evening prayers.

Those who had been taken to Kanilai were then separated by gender, with more women than men being captured and everyone's name was written down by the soldiers. She said that the men dressed in red were there, as were the Green Boys. They were all forced to hand over any money and belongings on their person.

Fatou Camara testified that the first round of the "medicine" was administered between the afternoon and dusk prayers. People were called one by one starting with the men into a small room. When the witness' name was called, she went first into a hallway where her head wrap and shirt were removed.

She then went into a smaller room where she was stripped fully naked by young men she described as being age mates with her grandchildren.

She later told the Commission that the men responsible for this part of the operation were Fulas from the Futa.⁵⁴

While naked in the small room with two young men, the witness testified, she was told to bathe. Then one of the men poured the liquid between two cups until it became frothy and gave it to her to drink. After drinking the liquid, she was forced to chew as well as swallow the residual leaves and bark at the bottom. She stated that the concoction was not bitter, but did not taste good. She told the Commission she was forced to drink two full cups of the liquid.

Afterwards, the men threw a third cup of the liquid in her face, which the witness described as very painful.

The witness then dressed herself and walked out to the veranda.

Once the veranda, the witness testified, it was as if her legs were kicked out from under her. "*On that concrete floor you hear people falling down and you will be rolling around there like if an animal was slaughtered,*" she declared.

She said she remained on the ground "motionless, lying in one place like a corpse" through the night into the early hours of the next morning. She said the substance made her lose consciousness, "you will not know anything that is happening in your environment".

Fatou Camara attested that she regained consciousness on Tuesday morning. She said they were not given any food and instead taken to another room and told to sit down. The men in red and the soldiers began questioning people individually about participation in witchcraft. According to the witness, they asked: "*how many people did you kill? How many children did you kill, and how many of them did you eat? How many young men did you have go to the marabouts and destroy them?*"

The witness stated that she countered that she was not a witch and did not have any powers. They maintained that she was not telling the truth, and unless she told them the truth, she would not be allowed to leave. She claimed that some people gave false confessions in order to leave, "*some will say 'I ate two of my children,' or 'I ate three of my children'. They were so surprised and in doubt they just wanted to leave the place.*"

⁵⁴The witness did not specify if it was Futa Toro (northern Senegal/Mauritania) or the Futa Djallon (northern Guinea).

Nevertheless, Fatou Camara maintained that she refused to give a false confession despite escalating threats from her interrogators. In response to her resistance, they told her to go to another room, where she was forced to take off her clothes and drink the concoction again.

After drinking the concoction for a second time, she again fell to the ground.

She testified that she could not speak and her mouth became frothy and white. She added that she could not even lift her head from the floor and again was completely unaware of her environment.

She told the Commission she regained consciousness on Wednesday afternoon lying on the ground next to another woman. They looked around and noticed that some of the people who had been in the room when they lost consciousness were gone. She crawled out to the veranda where she saw a soldier and asked what happened to the people who were missing. He replied they had been taken home the day before.

The witness further testified that they were then questioned again and told that those who refused to speak would not be released. They allegedly pointed out that because they were still feeling the effects of the drug, they looked like witches. She maintained that she was not a witch and told them that she would rather be **killed** than confess to something that was untrue. Later on Wednesday, the witness was taken back to Sintet.

The witness told the Commission that none of the people who were abducted and forced to drink the concoction fully recovered.

Fatou Camara explained that one week after she returned, Yahya Jammeh sent a truck full of peanuts in their shells to the Alkalo of Sintet with the order to distribute the nuts

to the village. She added that she had not cried since returning to the village but when the peanuts came, she broke down and questioned Allah why she had been **brutalised** and treated like this. She took two days to winnow and open all the peanuts given to her but did not eat any of them. Instead, she gave them to her daughter to return them to the Alkalo. After the peanut distribution, it was announced that anyone who filled a large rice sack with salt and brought it to the bantaba could exchange it for two bags of rice. The witness said her bag of salt was loaded into a big truck at the bantaba and taken from the village.

Fatou Camara testified that many people who were **abducted** and forced to drink the concoction were taken by their family to the hospital in an attempt to alleviate their **suffering**.

She indicated that she never regained her health and since drinking the concoction has had to stop farming rice for five seasons.

This has caused her and her family to suffer as her children have retarded their affairs to look after her. She still has problems with high blood pressure, and experiences pain in her waist and eyes. She said she cannot walk even short distances without great **pain**.

The Counsel reviewed the witness' written testimony and asked about an operation that cost 50,000 dalasi, paid by her family. She replied that her younger brother in Busumbala helped her receive treatment but that she does not remember what hospital or what operation, "*in those days it looked like I was drunk.*"

The Counsel ended her questioning by asking the witness who she blames for her ordeal, to which Fatou Camara responded she blamed the people who took her to Kanilai. The Counsel then turned the questioning over to the Commissioners. In response to a short clarifying question from Chairman Sise, the witness confirmed it was her brother who paid the 50,000 dalasi for her hospital expenses.

Commissioner Sosseh asked if the witness was ever paid the two bags of rice for the bag of salt. The witness responded that she was not. The witness also said the abrupt end of the baby naming ceremony meant a large quantity of food was left uneaten.

In response to Commissioner Bojang's question, the witness said that she believed the 50,000 dalasi was spent across multiple hospital visits at different hospitals. She added that "*during those days even if I breathe the scent of this medicine comes through my mouth and nose.*" When it was hot outside she would start shaking all over, refuse to eat, and spend the whole day lying inside the house. This was why her brother insisted she go to the hospitals despite her fatalistic approach.

Commissioner Jones asked what happened with their belongings and money that they were forced to relinquish on the first day of the ordeal. The witness said their belongings were returned later.

Commissioner Imam Sey asked if during the naming ceremony, whether people were taken from there and the witness confirmed.

In her concluding remarks, Fatou Camara said that what Yahya Jammeh did - catching people in their villages, brutalising them, and leaving them with significant hardships - should never happen again. She appealed to those in government to "*tie their waists*" and avoid recurrence, "*if it is a seed, let's destroy the seed.*"

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Yahya Jammeh



WITNESS NAME: Mustapha FANNEH

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 26th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: Two witch-hunts in Sintet

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Marabout, farmer

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Marabout, elder of Sintet Village

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Mustapha Fanneh told the Commission that he had not heard about witch-hunting in Gambia before what he saw in his community. He recounted two occasions where Yahya Jammeh sent people to search for witches in Sintet.

The first occasion, the witness recalled that he was passing the school when he heard that a man named Tambajiro had come to Sintet on Yahya Jammeh's orders. Soon after returning home he saw Tambajiro walk around his compound, followed by a mix of soldiers, police and people wearing black. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked to clarify what colour the men were wearing, and after some back and forth with the translator, the witness maintained it was black and that the men were neither police nor soldiers. Tambajiro led the delegation into the witness' compound and began using a mirror to search around the area. He allegedly told the witness he was looking for witches and supposedly illicitly buried material. They then took his name and left the compound.

Mustapha Fanneh continued that soon after, he was sitting in his veranda when he saw a number of people pass to congregate nearby. One of the men in black came to his compound's gate and told him to follow the crowd. He complied and came to a smoky area where he found Solo Bojang. He clarified that he recognised Solo Bojang from the two times he had gone to work in Kanilai, seeding Yahya Jammeh's rice fields.

The people who were corralled were being forced to inhale smoke that was being carried around. Solo Bojang brought the smoke in front of him and forced him to inhale.

He was then allowed to return to his house.

The witness told the Commission that the next time that people came to search for witches in Sintet was far removed from this first incident. On that occasion, he was about to leave his house for the shop when he saw his child running towards the house saying that a group of people were coming to the house to catch people. He recalled that his wife was ill, so he hurriedly accompanied her and their children to the other side of the village and returned alone to his compound and waited at the gate.

Soon after, two people came to greet him, one of whom was dressed in what the witness described as a strange dress with mirrors and a cow tail. The men pulled out some papers and identified the witness from a list and told him to go to where the drums were being played. He said he told them he would not go until they gave him a reason. The man holding the list told him if he did not go, he would be **beaten** but he continued to resist, which caused a nearby soldier to plead with him to comply for the sake of Allah. He finally agreed to go with them as long as he was not followed by anyone.

Mustapha Fanneh explained that as he approached the drumming, he saw people dancing by a few

vehicles. When later questioned, he said he could only remember the drummers and dancers wore the colour of Yahya Jammeh⁵⁵. As they approached the scene, he hinted that he was dissuaded from resisting by the Alkalo's younger brother, who had also been targeted.

The witness testified that he saw Solo Bojang and went to shake his hand but Solo Bojang refused. After seeing another man there with a book, he asked Solo Bojang if they had also confiscated his books, to which Solo Bojang replied that he would find out in Kanilai. He said that soon after, he saw two bundles of his Quranic books that had been passed to him by his father brought onto the vehicle. He asked Solo Bojang if they were there for the books, or for him, after which he was taken to one of the buses parked nearby.

Mustapha Fanneh stated that he waited in the bus for a long time as the buses filled to nearly 100 people and he had no place to sit. The bus took them to one of Yahya Jammeh's residences in Kanilai. He claimed they were taken by a place for idol worship that looked like a short circular hut made of stones, then to an open area with shade overhead.

After they arrived, lunch was served. The witness said that many of the people ate, but he went without, adding that he went without food or water during the duration of his ordeal in Kanilai.

Mustapha Fanneh continued to explain that after lunch, Solo Bojang began calling people's names and one by one they disappeared into a small dilapidated building. The first two to come out immediately fell into a coma. He was the third person called.

He explained that first they asked him to undress so they could bathe him which made him angry because as an elderly person he should not undress in their presence. Nonetheless, he was eventually bathed and given a cup of a viscous liquid to drink. He added that there was a

police officer at the door of the room he drank the liquid in. After exiting the building, he said he did not fall into a coma as they others had.

The witness recounted that Solo Bojang then told him to return to be washed again, after which he was bathed and forced to drink the concoction again. He still did not faint.

The witness remembered that Solo Bojang, frustrated the liquid was having no effect, ordered two armed guards to stand on either side of him pointing their guns at his chest and back.

Solo Bojang then began interrogating and accusing him of using his Quranic books to kill people. The witness said that he told Solo Bojang to just kill him but instead he was told to go to sleep.

Mustapha Fanneh testified that after he woke up the next morning, Solo Bojang ordered that he be bathed and forced to drink the concoction for a third and fourth time. According to the witness, he was again surrounded by two soldiers pointing their **guns** at him when the liquid did not have an effect on him. He stated he told them he was thirsty, after which they ordered he drink a fifth and sixth cup of the liquid.

The witness continued that at dusk of the second day, Solo Bojang called Yahya Jammeh, who told him to put the conversation on speakerphone so everyone could hear. At this point, the Deputy Lead Counsel clarified that the conversation took place in the Mandinka language.

Further testifying, the witness stated that once he was on the line, Yahya Jammeh called out "killer," but the witness did not respond.

⁵⁵Yahya Jammeh is associated with the colour green everywhere in the country.

When Yahya Jammeh repeated “*killer*” again, the witness maintained his silence. After a third attempt, Solo Bojang instructed the witness to respond.

Mustapha Fanneh told the Commission that Yahya Jammeh then accused him of being the leader of the evil marabouts in the Kalaji area. The then-President ordered Solo Bojang to separate out the witness’ Quranic books that he uses for killing and put them to the side. In this task, Mustapha Fanneh said he was aided greatly by another marabout named Ousman Ceesay who was also there and corroborated that his Quranic books were not being used for evil purposes, thus saving some of the witness’ most treasured possessions.

He said he was then sent back to Sintet with his remaining books while some people from Sintet remained in Kanilai for another day. He confirmed that he spent only one night in Kanilai, and that he was forced to drink the concoction six times during his abduction. Despite claiming he did not feel the effects of the concoction while in Kanilai, he testified that when he returned home, he had no idea what happened or his surroundings, and his wife had to call their son in Kombo to assist her in taking care of him. He stated he still has chest pains today and he cannot hear out of his right ear.

Mustapha Fanneh told the Commission that soon after returning to Sintet, his son convinced him to go to a hospital where the doctor told him that he had serious heart problems and if he had not visited the doctor he likely would have died. Now, whenever he has heart problems, his son sends him money and he goes to the hospital immediately. He continued that since drinking the concoction, he is not able to even hold a plow.

He said he knows of 12 of people captured who died as a result of their ordeal.

The questioning was then passed to Commissioner Sey who asked if the ordeal affected his work as a marabout. Mustapha Fanneh replied that it had because some of his books were taken from him and with them some of his “grace”.

The witness gave short concluding remarks in which he asked Gambians to look to the future and desist from activities that they will be questioned for in the next life. He implored that people not be divided by politics, and asked that everyone treat one another as decent Muslims in order to benefit all in the future.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death

Solo Bojang, Yahya Jammeh

WITNESS NAME: Dado BAH

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 26th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Sintet; abduction of the witness, impact on witness and her family

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Farmer

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Not working

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Dado Bah told the Commission that she was born in Casamance (Senegal). She could not recall her date of birth nor her age because she is illiterate but the Counsel suggested she was about 60 years old based on what she had stated during the interviews held with her. The witness agreed. She further stated that she was a long-time resident of Sintet and was married with five children.

Discussing the witch-hunt in Sintet, the witness testified that the witch-hunters came on a Monday but she could not recall the year. When the Counsel informed her that they had received evidence to suggest that it happened in 2009, the witness responded that it was possible but she could not ascertain.

Continuing on with her testimony, the witness explained that the village in Fula Kunda woke up to the sound of drumming on that day, coming from Bako.

When they heard the drums, they were all shocked and afraid because they had had information that Yahya Jammeh had sent people to capture people in their village.

She was asked if she could tell them what she was doing that particular day when the witch-hunters came to town and she responded that there was nothing they could do but just wait.



The Counsel then asked the witness to narrate what she did before she was **captured** and she explained that she woke up in the morning and went about her normal routine. She prepared lunch then heard the drums again as well as the information that they had now reached Fula Kunda. She further stated that on that day she followed her grandson who was going to school on the road and to tell him not to be afraid if he saw these people and just continue his way to school. But she changed her mind and told him to come back home with her. As she was going, someone, who turned out to be “one of those who caught people” was following her.

She added that when they came back and entered the house, the man also followed them into the house. She turned, looked at him and he raised a mirror and said “Mother, look inside this mirror”. When she did, he said, “Okay, leave this child and come with me”. Meanwhile, her son’s wife who was seven months pregnant was lying down on the bed. She woke up and was **shocked** to see somebody wearing these “red red things”, standing in the middle of the house. The witness stated that it sent her into shock and her blood pressure went up. She was taken to the hospital, first in Sintet then in Bwiam and eventually to Banjul. As soon as she got there, she gave birth to a child, who was stillborn, the cause of which the doctor said was her high blood pressure.

The Counsel asked the witness if she could tell them what she thinks led to the stillbirth and the witness answered that it was the shock. She added that the

moment her daughter-in-law saw the man in “red red”, her blood pressure went up. The witness was asked if she could explain what was so **frightening** about his appearance and she responded that when she (the witness) saw him, just like her daughter-in-law, she went into shock too. Apart from the “red red” he was wearing, there were red horns and other “red things”, which were sewn onto the clothes.

The witness was asked what language he spoke and she said he talked to her in the Futa Fula language. She added that he was not from The Gambia Fula tribe but a Fula who came from Guinea (the Futas).

The witness also told the Commission that she had other grandchildren who were in the house at the time as well as one of her sons and the moment the witch-hunter prepared to take her away, they all put their hands on their heads and started wailing as they did not know what was going to happen to her.

They were afraid the witness was going to be killed or beaten.

Additionally, the man in red was accompanied by more than fifteen people including the Green Boys, soldiers and other individuals. The Green Boys, none of whom she recognised, had pickaxes, spades and instruments used to dig holes.

The witness was then asked who the Alkalo was at the time and responded that his name was Sarrsang Tamba. She was asked if she knew whether or not they had the approval of the Alkalo and she responded in the negative, adding that they just came to the village and did what they wanted because it was Yahya Jammeh who instructed them to **capture** her and others. The Counsel asked if she could tell them where she got this information from and the witness explained that this was information received prior to their coming.

Pressed for clarification on the exact source of information, the witness disclosed that she heard this from other villagers. Going back to the men who came to their village, the witness stated that the man who was

dressed in red as well as the men dressed in green and the military officials were all working together with Solo Bojang leading the team according to information she received. She specified that Solo Bojang did not come into the compound though. The witness was asked if she knew if Solo Bojang was actually in the village and she confirmed, adding that he was seen standing near the Alkalo’s compound.

Continuing on with her testimony, Dado Bah narrated that as she was being led away to a vehicle, she saw a lot of people being **captured**. In fact, she could attest that the whole of Sintet was **captured** that day. At this point, the Counsel stated that the Commission would not ask the witness to identify anybody as she had indicated that she did not wish to give any names nor write them down on a protected information sheet.

Proceeding with her testimony, the witness told the Commission that when they were **captured**, they were put in a Toyota pickup and taken to the two big trees near the hospital where a truck was parked. They were made to board the truck, which the witness had difficulty climbing into as it was high. She recalled that one of the Green Boys claimed she had deliberately refused to do so and looked for a stick, threatening to **beat** her if she did not climb. But fortunately for her, by the time he arrived, she managed to climb into the truck.

Instead of her, the Green Boy decided to beat the old man who was the next one to board the truck.

Dado Bah told the Commission that in the truck, she saw a lot of people from Fula Kunda and from Busongayeh (a small hamlet near Sintet Fula Kunda), Kabambu and Bako. She recalled that some people in the village who had heard about the witch-hunters had run and crossed the border into Casamance so they were not **captured**. Asked if she could tell them which particular people these were and the witness answered that these were Jolas, Yahya Jammeh’s tribe.

Dado Bah further explained that, before departing, she saw them slaughtering a red goat between the two big trees. She did not know the reason for this but when they were done, they dug a hole using the pickaxes and spades and decided to bury the red goat there.

The truck then departed and they were taken to Kanilai, arriving around evening prayer, where soldiers met them. The witness was then asked where she was taken to in Kanilai. She answered that she did not know the places in Kanilai because she was not familiar with the region, but she heard that they were made to alight behind Yahya Jammeh's compound. Asked if she could give a brief description of the place, which was supposedly Yahya Jammeh's residence. The witness highlighted that when they arrived there, there were two buildings in the compound facing one another and they were made to go into one of the buildings.

She also observed a pond somewhere around the area where they were made to drink and remarked that she saw crocodiles inside the pond.

Further testifying, the witness recalled that they were given some groundnut stew with meat once inside the building, of which she ate a little as she was still **afraid**. After having food, they were told to leave the place where they were made to sit down and go to the other house on the other side of the compound because that was the area where they were going to drink the medicine.

The witness explained that after drinking the medicine, those coming out would need to be guided and some would fall down as soon as they would let go of their hands. However, the witness highlight that she was not made to drink the concoction. Asked to explain how come and the witness narrated that one Sutay from her village who had a Gele-Gele van⁵⁶ followed them to Kanilai. When he arrived, some people were allowed to board his vehicle. The witness who was among the last people in the line to drink the concoction, manage to board his vehicle, which was full to capacity.

When further probed by the Counsel, the witness explained that she was sitting outside in the line, waiting to be taken inside to drink but one of the Green Boys came outside and said there was no medicine left so they had to wait. Fortunately for her, the Green Boy decided to leave to go and fetch water from the crocodile pond, which she highlight was dirty, in order to make more concoctions and she was able to slip out of the line unnoticed to join those who were boarding the Gele-Gele. She further highlighted that this was around dusk prayers so it was a little bit dark and it was on the day they were taken to Kanilai.

Continuing on with her testimony, Dado Bah explained that those on board the Gele-Gele where those who had not drank the concoction. All those left behind and who had drank the concoction, came back after two to three days. The witness stated that she went to see some of those who had come back and they were in very bad shape, specifying that they had all changed and were not their normal self. She added that some were unable to walk and other were unable to eat if not helped when given food, further affirming that this was caused by the medicine they were given to drink.

Dado Bah asserted that Yahya Jammeh was responsible for their state of health. She highlighted that he gave these orders for people to be captured, taken to Kanilai and given the medicine to drink.

Going back to drinking the concoction, the Counsel asked if apart from drinking the concoction, it was used in any other way. The witness replied no, they did not do anything. The Counsel repeated her question and asked if the interpreter could interpret it more accurately. The witness then responded that yes, after drinking the medicine, those who had drank were made to bath with the medicine.

⁵⁶Gele-Gele is a type of van/mini bus used as commercial transport particularly outside the city and in rural towns/villages.

She added that those who drank the concoction and were bathed with it, looked like dead people when they were brought out.

Asked about the impact this experience had on her life, the witness replied that she had stopped farming as a result of the high blood pressure from the **trauma**. The Counsel asked if she suffered **stigma** from her community as well because of the fact that she was selected to go to Kanilai even though she did not drink the concoction and the witness responded that when she came back, nothing happened to her because “they were all from the same family”. The Counsel explained that she was just taking a cue from her statement, which stated this incident had been a source of great shame and disgrace in her family. Asked what she meant by that and Dado Bah gave a confusing reply that seemed to indicate that she was only speculating and was referring to the other villagers who were captured in the surrounding areas, adding that they might look at her differently, which could be unpleasant.

Chairman Sise stated that notwithstanding the fact that she did not take any concoction or bathe with the water, the **trauma** of her **detention** and illegal arrest was a gross violation of her human rights.

The Commissioners had no questions, so the witness was given the opportunity to give her final remarks.

Dado Bah thanked the Commission for the opportunity to tell her story. She stated that from the day that they were captured up until today, nobody had asked them about their ordeal or the trauma they had suffered. She also prayed for the crimes committed by Yahya Jammeh never to happen again in the country.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Yahya Jammeh, Solo Bojang



WITNESS NAMES: Fatou DARBOE

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 27th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Sintet

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Not stated

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft and abducted

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Unemployed

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Fatou Darboe, a resident of Sintet Tambakunda, testified to the Commission that she was married with seven children, four boys and three daughters; the youngest was twenty years at the time the witch-hunters came to Sintet. She narrated that the day the witch-hunters came, she had gone to Kalagi to pay condolences to a relative there and that was where she heard that people had arrived in Sintet and were giving people medicine to drink. She said she took her leave to go back to her family, saying that she would prefer to be given the medicine than allow it to be given to any of her family members, even if she died. When probed, she said that the information she got was that Yahya Jammeh had sent soldiers to give people medicine.

When she got back to village, she found soldiers standing all around the village. She said they did not tell her anything as she got into the village. When she got into the village, she encountered a soldier and a person wearing red-red with a mirror and as she tried to walk past them, the man in red told her "come" in Fula. He took her hand and after looking into her palm, speaking in Fula, told the soldier to take her to the bus.

She said she asked him where they were going and they told her they were going to Kanilai. She said she was **shocked** and **afraid**. When asked, the witness said she did not resist as she was escorted to the bus. Describing the man wearing red clothes, Fatou Darboe said his outfit was red and white and he had a horn adorned with cowry shells, as well as a big mirror in his hand. The witness also testified that she did not see the soldiers carrying any guns.

The witness described the distance between from where she was **captured** to the vehicle as distant and said that on the way, she observed soldiers and the men with mirrors going into peoples' home, bring them out and take them to the bus.

When asked if she knew why they were doing this, she replied that "it was because of Yahya Jammeh".

When further asked if she knew what they were accused of, Fatou Darboe responded that they were accused of being witches, which she said shocked her as she was not a witch.

She explained that the bus was packed near the former Alkalo's house. When she boarded the bus the found people from her area onboard. The bus was filled to capacity with people having to stand. She stated that all of those **captured** were older women. When asked if men were captured as well, she replied that two other vehicles were filled with captured men. She clarified that the vehicles with the men were smaller than the bus. When asked about the ethnicity of the women **captured**, she stated that there were Mandinkas, Fulas and Jolas.

She also explained that drumming was going on around the bus by the soldiers which they said was drumming for the witches and those who refused to board the bus were **beaten** with the sticks they had with them. She recognised people from her own compound and others caught from the village among those in the bus. On the side of the soldiers and the people wearing red-red, she stated she had never seen them.

The witness testified that they were taken to a place which she heard was Yahya Jammeh's place. They (both the men and women) were made to disembark at a place with big light which they said was the soldiers camp. She recalled that it was a fenced, open space. They all sat down and the soldiers came and told them that those who had kola nuts should chew it, those who had money or a mobile should hand it over because if they drank the medicine, they will not be themselves. She said she had money on her but she did not hand it over. They were then brought food but she said she did not eat because she did not know what was going to happen to her if she drank the medicine. They then started calling people to drink the medicine. The witness estimated that it was around dusk when they started giving them the medicine.

When asked to recount the events from that point, the witness explained that they started with the men, calling them one by one to drink the medicine. She said Darjang Touray was the first man to be bathed in the medicine and made to drink it. After he came out from the room and wanted to climb back on the veranda, it looked like both his legs were pulled from under him and he fell down. He was not himself. When asked, she said he passed away about two years after the incident and according to her thinking, it was as a result of the incident.

Continuing her testimony, Fatou Darboe testified that one of her age-mates, Sangsang Camara immediately developed diarrhea after drinking the medicine, which destroyed her intestine and she died that same year.

She added that she believed her death was as a result of the medicine. Apart from the two she mentioned, the witness said she observed that anyone that drank the medicine fell down after drinking the medicine.

When it was her turn, she stated that she was taken into a bathroom where she found a soldier man who told her to get undress. She was shocked and thought to herself “somebody whom you know my son is even older than him, how can that person make me naked and bathe me?”

She added she agreed as she was afraid to refuse. He scooped some liquid and poured it over her head which fell over her naked. After that, he filled a one-litre drinking cup with the liquid and asked her to drink it which she did. The witness later added that after drinking the medicine, she was asked to open her eyes and the liquid was splashed in her face.

When asked, the witness said she believes the liquid she was given was a mixture of a plant called “kubejaro” and a very bitter plant called “tallo”. The liquid was greenish, had different leaves which left a bitter taste in her mouth. She added that only Allah knows how she felt after drinking the medicine. When asked, she said the plants she believed she was made to drink is used as medicine where she came from but if you do not know how to use it, it kills people.

The witness continued to narrate that after putting on her clothes, she fell down just by the door of the bathroom when she was coming out, **unconscious**. She spent the entire night in that state until the next morning when she was woken up by her sister-in-law, Sami Jatta (also known as Mattynding Sanyang⁵⁷) when they came to give them a second round of the concoction. However, she was still not fully conscious and had to be propped up against the wall. That is how she escaped drinking the medicine a second time.

When she regained consciousness, she was unable to do anything by herself. There was a change in her system. During the day, they were asked by the men with the mirrors dressed in red-red how many people they had killed. She said she responded that she was not a witch. The witness said that those who admitted to being witches were released. She spent two nights at the location but was not given the medicine again. When asked how she felt being away from her children, the witness responded that she was sad and unhappy because they violated her rights.

The witness went on to recall that she continued to deny that she was a witch but on the third day, she also admitted that she was one and that she had killed two people.

⁵⁷We believe this is Matty Sanyang who testified before the TRRC on 28th November 2019.

She explained that if she had not said that, she will not be released.

When asked, she said she was able to walk on her own and boarded the vehicle on her own.

Asked how she felt when she got back to Sintet, the witness stated that she was very unhappy because witchcraft tarnishes one's image and if you were accused of being a witch, people will look at you with those eyes until the day you die. That is what made her unhappy. On the impact on her children, she admitted that though they were not stigmatized, they were affected as well. She could not work after the incident and her children had to work to cure her and support her. She said that after drinking the medicine, she developed high blood pressure, she got exhausted easily and had arthritis on her body, including her hands.

Today, after ten years, the witness said that she is still very unhappy because the whole world was made to believe something that is not her character.

The Deputy Lead Counsel concluded her questioning and handed over the witness to Chairman Sise who, after thanking the witness for her testimony, commiserated with her about her experience which he said has imposed a lot of burden on her as well as the other victims. The floor was open to the Commissioners starting with Commissioner Jallow who asked the witness to clarify the ethnicity of the people who were made to drink the medicine. She responded that Fulas, Jolas, and Mandinkas were all made to drink the medicine.

The Deputy Chairperson asked the witness if there were members from her immediate family that were **captured** and she responded that her elder co-wife was also **captured**. The Deputy Chair followed up by asking if her family knew if she was **captured** as she did not get a chance to reach home from Kalagi. Fatou Darboe explained that initially, her family thought she was still in Kalagi but afterwards, they were told that she had been captured.

In her closing remarks, the witness said that she always prays that something like this never occurs again whether in The Gambia or abroad. She asked everyone to pray for what Yahya Jammeh did to never occur again. She thanked and expressed her gratitude to the Commission for the work they are doing and added that her rights were violated and she cannot do anything now. She prayed that Allah reward Yahya Jammeh with more suffering than the one she was made to go through.

Chairman Sise followed up and thanked the witness again for clarifying that the medicine they gave to people was not restricted to one tribe and it should be seen that the suffering was meted on all Gambians.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death

Yahya Jammeh

WITNESS NAME: Alagie Masanneh CAMARA

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 27th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Sintet

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Not mentioned

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): He went to Kanilai to demand that the people from his village who had been captured be released

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Farmer, Herbalist

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Recounting their first encounter with the witch-hunters in Sintet, Alagie Masanneh Camara told the Commission that the leader of the witch-hunters was a man called Tambajiro. He explained that a far as he knows no-one had been informed about their arrival. He added that the day they came, they were drumming and went around the village. When they reached certain places, Tambajiro would stop, saying that something was buried there and his men would dig the place as Tambajiro said that he would bring something out of the hole. The witness noted that he did not see anything: in fact, they saw him put his hands inside a bag, but they could not tell whether he really dropped something in the bag or not. When the witch-hunters were done going around the village, they all went home.

The witness explained that the witch-hunters came back another time, but this time a message was sent to the village prior to their coming to let them know that the President⁵⁸ had ordered that everyone converge at the hospital, which they did. Once they got there, Tambajiro came with “his people” as well as with soldiers and rounded the villagers up. He then placed a “long mobile” device at in the middle of the assistance out of which Yahya Jammeh spoke to them. The witness described himself as a curious person and therefore went close to the device to see what it was.

The witness recounted that President Yahya Jammeh asked the villagers if they still possessed the cooking stove, charcoal, medicine (dusk powder) and matches he had given them and they responded yes. Yahya Jammeh



then directed them to pour kerosene on those charcoals, so around 5 pm they started the fire. Yahya Jammeh called out the names of some people and enquired if they were present. When he was told they were present, he asked that they be called. They came forward and stood.

Alagie Masanneh Camara recalled that the medicine (dusk powder) was put in the fire and the smoke started rising. Everybody who inhaled that smoke had to take a step back.

But the soldiers would push the village back in front so that they remained close to the smoke, (and did so) until the smoke disappeared.

They were there until around the dusk prayers. When asked who Tambajiro had come with the first time he came to the village, the witness responded that he was accompanied by drummers and he recalled that one of them was called Sainey (he later said he was called Sarjo Tamba) adding that he had passed away since. Responding to the question who Tambajiro was, Alagie Masanneh Camara explained that he was a Jola and that he might have worked for Yahya Jammeh and he was believed to have the power to detect witches, which was the purpose of his visit to Sintet.

Describing the second visit of Tambajiro to the village, the witness explained that their “village owner” (a person who had participated in building the village)

⁵⁸At the time Yahya Jammeh.

had been tasked to tell the villagers, both male and female, to converge at the hospital. Once gathered there, their movements were restricted to a point that they were not even allowed to go to ease themselves. Alagie Masanneh Camara remembered a heavy presence of soldiers, led by a man called Solo Bojang, who was working for Yahya Jammeh.

Going back to the incident when **three people** were **forced** to stand near the fire, the witness explained that over the telephone he heard **Yahya Jammeh** accusing them of **eating** their own **children**.

Yahya Jammeh had told one of them that he killed his own son, who was working for him (Yahya Jammeh) and that he had sent his bodyguard to him on three occasions telling him to leave his son, but he refused. The witness added that Yahya Jammeh did not say much to the other person but also accused him of killing his own son, who was also working for him (Yahya Jammeh) at the time. The witness highlighted that the President further said that the biggest witches in Sintet were from Badjie Kunda and Tamba Kunda.

Describing how they felt, he explained that those three people dared not say anything even if they did not like what was happening. He however said that he was not scared on that day, even though he was in the midst of soldiers with guns. He added that there was no reaction from the crowd gathered there because everybody was in fear.

Alagie Masanneh Camara recounted that a week later, as he was in his home he heard and saw women running in the streets saying that people were coming to give them medicine to drink. The witness then called his wife, his children and his elder brother's wife and advised them not to go anywhere. The family decided to sit outside the compound's gate. When the witch-hunters came, they did not even greet him. They went around the compound, then came back and stood over him.

He explained that they then spoke to him in Fula, a language that he does not understand. One of them finally told him that they were not there to tell him something bad and that they had not found anything suspicious in his home. The man further told the witness that if it were only him, they would not have come to Sintet. Asked about their clothing, Alagie Masanneh Camara said that their trousers, shirt and hat were all red and white with mirrors attached to them. While they were many, only two came to his compound, a soldier and their leader. When asked how he knew that was their leader, he said when they went to the bantaba he was told that he was the leader. He was asked if he knew where they were from and the witness said he had travelled to Niger and judging by the way they talked he concluded that they were from that country. He further said the Fula they spoke was even different from the one in The Gambia. He also told the Commission he had seen men like them in Niger, but he could not tell whether they were witch-hunters.

According to the witness, the men then went to Dibba Kunda where the witness followed them because his younger brothers lived there. He added that his younger brother Fujanga Dibba was **captured** and they had said he would be taken to Kanilai to be given medicine. The witness insisted to go with him.

The Counsel asked if he could tell them what he saw them do in Sintet. The witness explained that nothing else apart from catching people, accusing them to be witches and wizards and telling them to board a vehicle. Asked about the age of those **captured**, the witness responded that they were all of his age or older, but that there were no young boys or young girls amongst them. He added that even their imam's wife was **arrested** but that he had pleaded for her release explaining that she was imam's wife and high blood pressure. The Counsel asked him if these people that were being **captured** went willingly with them. The witness said they were forced and they were unhappy. He further said they did not eat lunch and did not have water to drink, and those who had some water were even prevented from drinking.

Alagie Masanneh Camara explained that those who were **capturing** people were soldiers and the Fulas.

When asked to described the role of every individual, the witness responded that their job was just to make people suffer. Even if you walked slowly, they would either push you or beat you, with black rubbers (military sticks).

He was asked if he could tell them how many people he saw being beaten. The witness responded that the person he saw being **beaten** was his in-law Dajang Touray. The witness was asked if he knew why his relative was **beaten** and he said that it was because he had refused to go with them. The witness added that in the village of Sintet, he did not see anybody else being beaten apart from Dajang Touray but that he himself was later **beaten** as well.

He further narrated that after some time, around the afternoon prayers, a male goat was brought and they said they were going to slaughter him. The witness had offered to slaughter it, but they refused. They slaughtered it themselves, left the blood there and put sand over it and put the animal on the vehicle. The witness noted that he did not know the motive behind the slaughtering of that goat.

The witness was asked at what moment the slaughtering happened, to which he responded that it was done when people had already been **captured** and when they were set to leave. They slaughtered the goat at the bantaba under a big tree. He further said normally people face the East but when this goat was being slaughtered, they faced the West. The Counsel asked who slaughtered this goat. The witness said it was not a soldier but a civilian, wearing ordinary clothes. The Counsel asked if apart from the presence of soldiers and people in red, there were any other group of individuals present there. The witness stated that the group was composed of soldiers, paramilitary and civilians.

Alagie Masanneh Camara continued explaining that the captured people boarded a vehicle around the Fula

Kunda area, and were then brought to the bantaba where they were made to board one of the vehicles (a bus, a truck and one three double cabin) that were parked there.

The Counsel said they had received evidence that there was singing and dancing going on while this process was happening. The witness confirmed that they came with the drummers from Kanilai and said that he recognised a man called Sarjo Tamba among them. He added that the witch-hunting incident coincided with his daughter's naming ceremony and the charity for a young man who had died in the village and therefore, many people, including from other communities, were present that day. He added that this is why a lot of people were **captured** in Sintet on that day.

Moving forward, he explained that when the people boarded the vehicles, they did not leave until after the afternoon prayers and were later taken to Kanilai. He told the Commission that before they left, he spoke to Solo Bojang (who he referred to as Saul, but the Counsel clarified that he did indeed mean Solo Bojang) who was leading the soldiers. The witness said that he told Solo Bojang "you are taking away our people" adding that by the grace of God, he (the witness) would be going to check on them the next day. The Counsel asked him if he had any relationship with Solo Bojang that made him speak to him like that, the witness replied that he knew him from Kanilai where they used to work.

Alagie Masanneh Camara narrated that the next day, he went to Kanilai. He was asked who he went with and the witness said with his two sons Fujanga Dibba and Lamin Dibba⁵⁹, as well as Modou Bah and his father. When they arrived, he asked a soldier about the whereabouts of those brought in the day before, and was told that they were kept in a house.

He went there and said that he looked at a “lot of corpses”, later adding that they were “in very bad condition”.

⁵⁹This could have been an error in translation as later in the testimony, the testimony of the witness was translated differently, indicating that the witness came with Fujanga Dibba and his (Fujanga Dibba's) sons.

At this moment, the witness started crying and used his handkerchief to cover his face.

Still crying and shaking his head, he continued his testimony saying that “it was hard, it was hard”. He again covered his face with his handkerchief to hide his tears. He explained that when the soldier saw him crying, he asked him what happened before pushing him on his chest telling him that his superiors did not want anyone to come there. The soldier gave him a chair to sit and after a while, Solo Bojang came and the young soldier told him that the witness had come from Sintet to see his people. Solo Bojang told the witness to come and sit under the veranda.

At this point, the Counsel asked him to describe in which state the villagers were and how he managed to get access to them. Alagie Masanneh Camara explained that the soldier had indicated in which house the people were and he just went there.

The Counsel asked him to explain why their condition had made him cry. Alagie Masanneh Camara responded that nobody should treat “your fellow Muslim like that”, adding that the people were in a terrible state.

He remembered that he had to take a wrapper and cover one person, but that person threw it away. That was the time he decided to leave the room. It was as he was going out that the young soldier came, pushed him and ordered him to leave.

Alagie Masanneh Camara told the Commission he had never narrated this to anybody before. The Counsel asked him if the persons inside the house were men or women, to which he responded that all of them were women, noting that it was the way he found them lying there that made him cry. Responding to a question regarding the presence of the men in red who had taken them there, the witness responded that none of them were there when he arrived, which was around 7 am.

Proceeding, he further explained that when Solo Bojang came, around 9 am, the soldier told him “*the Chairman APRC*⁶⁰ man has come”. He explained that this was his (the witness’) nickname (later in the testimony he explained why he was called like this). A mobile phone was put in front of him and he spoke to the “Chairman”, Yahya Jammeh, who enquired what had happened. The witness responded that his people (Jammeh’s) had caught some of the witness’ people and he had come to get them. Yahya Jammeh denied catching his people and asked how this would have happened. The witness responded that the people who had sent were the ones who caught the villagers, on his orders. Yahya Jammeh then told the witness to discuss it with his men directly but the witness retorted that it this was not possible as he, Yahya Jammeh, had the sole power to make the final decision. Then Yahya Jammeh talked to Solo Bojang. He noted that they spent the whole day there and only came back to Sintet around the dusk prayers.

Asked in which language the witness spoke to Yahya Jammeh, he said Mandinka. The Counsel wanted to know who was present when he was having the conversation with the President. The witness mentioned an elder as well as some other people. He noted that the old man called Kanfandeh who had testified at the TRRC the day before, talking about his books, had been sitting next to him. The Counsel then asked him if he is also referred to as Mustapha Fanneh and the witness agreed. He remembered that that man told him, referring to his nickname: “APRC, the man who is sitting near you, he doesn’t eat people, he is worse than the witches” (he was probably referring to Solo Bojang).

The Counsel asked Alagie Masanneh Camara who had made the call to Yahya Jammeh. He said it was Solo Bojang who he referred to as a “very bad man”.

⁶⁰Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction.

He added that Solo Bojang even gave him his telephone number on a paper because some sisters of Yahya Jammeh who were residing in the witness' village (having married men from there) had ran away to Casamance, asking the witness to call him when they came back. He told the witness he would come with soldiers to **arrest** them. The witness told the Commission that when he left the compound, he tore the paper and dropped it, which made the audience laugh.

The Counsel asked if the witness had managed to get some of the people released. The witness said yes and explained that he returned with Fujanga Dibba and Lamin Dibba while other people boarded a bus, except for a person called Sansang (the translation was confusing as the person was first referred to as "he" and later as "she" indifferently). When the witness enquired if that person was coming along, Solo Bojang replied that they dared not allow him go with them in the condition he was in. However, he assured him that they would bring him the next day.

The witness explained that he believes that they mistook Sansang for their Alkalo Sarrsang because of the similarity of their names. He added that most probably the medicine that was supposed to be given to Alkalo Sarrsang was given to Sansang and after she/he drank it, she/he fell down and did not regain consciousness. He/She neither ate nor drank and died within a week. He was asked why he thought that there had been a confusion of identities. Alagie Masanneh Camara replied that he knew because

Yahya Jammeh had told him personally that if he (Jammeh) “laid hands on Sarrsang, what I will say will be different from this.

Because the ones I wanted to catch, they ran away, the ones I didn't need, they decided to catch those ones and bring them for me. So, judging from what happened to Sansang, he believed that the two names were mixed up because they almost sound the same. The witness was asked when Yahya Jammeh said that he would deal

with Sarrsang and the witness explained that this happened when he was in Kanilai and the mobile was placed in front of him. The Counsel asked if Sarrsang was part of the people that were **captured** on that day, to which the witness responded that Sarrsang ran away and left the area. He added that this was why Yahya Jammeh told him that if he laid hands on Sarrsang, it would be a different story.

The Counsel noted that the witness had told them about the condition of the women who were held in Kanilai. When asked what impact this incident had on his people, the witness responded that only God knows the suffering these people encountered.

He explained that after the incident, some women had stopped cultivated their rice farms, until this day. He also said some people left Sintet to get cured elsewhere.

The Counsel asked if apart from Sansang, whose **death** the witness had attributed to the drinking of the medicine, others had also died after having drunk the concoction. The witness replied that while he could not cite them by name, because they did not live in the same clan, he remembers that 13 people from Sintet died.

Commissioner Imam Jallow asked the witness if the three men who had been accused by Yahya Jammeh of eating their own children⁶¹ were still alive. The witness replied that they had all passed away, noting that he did not know for which reason, but added that their children were still alive. The floor was then opened to the Commissioners. Some of the questions, were as follow:

Commissioner Kinteh wanted to know if these children were the ones who Yahya Jammeh had said had been eaten. Alagie Masanneh Camara noted that there is a man in the crowd whose elder brother was a soldier and worked for Yahya Jammeh. That the man whose father Yahya Jammeh told to leave

⁶¹The Commissioner or the translator made a mistake and referred to “siblings” instead of children.

his son. The witness then explained that Yahya Jammeh had sent his protocol officer called Musa Jammeh to the man three times, asking him to leave his son but that he refused. Then Yahya Jammeh accused that man of eating his own son. When asked who that son is, the witness refused to reveal his identity. He added that a lady Yahya Jammeh accused of eating her son, had also passed away but he refused to reveal anybody's name because they are all neighbours.

The Deputy Chair told him he had said he was also **beaten** on one occasion and asked him to tell the Commission about it. The witness explained the incident he referred to was in fact when the young soldier had pushed him on his chest when he was in Kanilai (in the house where the women were **detained**). He noted that he still has issues with his chest, to a point that he sometimes cannot sleep at night. The Deputy Chair then asked why the then President had called him APRC. The witness explained that when Yahya Jammeh took over, during the early hours of the morning after his morning prayers, he (the witness) would stand at the junction and shout "Jammeh! Jammeh!"

The witness noted that some people called him a lunatic, some considered him to be a fool. They said all sorts of things about him but he never stopped supporting Yahya Jammeh, until the last election. He explained that he left the party because he heard Yahya Jammeh saying on the radio that Mandinkas are all "kafirs" (disbelievers), they should change their religion and come back to God. The witness further narrated how shocked he was and wondered what Mandinkas had done.

The witness recalled that Yahya Jammeh went on saying that that year he would kill Mandinkas like flees and only those who would be spared are those who fled to Mali.

The witness said that he disagreed with this collective blaming.

He further narrated that one day, he had a discussion with the stepfather of the Counselor Momodou Ba, who told him about the upcoming election campaign and told the witness that because he was a leaders, people would follow him. The witness made it clear to him that he had left APRC completely and wanted nothing to do with the party anymore. The man then called the chief and told him what the witness had said. The witness then begged him to let him talk to the chief directly. When the witness told the chief that he had completely left APRC, the chief reminded him of all the things Yahya Jammeh had done for him. He told him he had taken him to Mecca and noted that the witness now wanted to betray him. The witness told him Yahya Jammeh was the one who "started it" and stressed that he was out of the party for good and he even dislikes any person who likes Yahya Jammeh.

When giving his closing remarks, Alagie Masanneh Camara preached peace, togetherness and stressed the importance of respect. He prayed that what happened under Yahya Jammeh's regime would not repeat itself in the country. He urged Gambians not to be divided by politics and for them to love each other. He further praised the first President Dawda Jawara for all the good things he did and criticized his successor Yahya Jammeh for doing the opposite. He also prayed for the current government's progress and for peace to reign in their country.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Arbitrary arrest and detention

Yahya Jammeh, Solo Bojang

Persecution, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, leading to the death

Yahya Jammeh, Solo Bojang, Tambajiro



WITNESS NAME: Buba JARJU

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 27th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Sintet

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Mason

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Witness to witch-hunting activities, son of a woman who was abducted

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Mason

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Buba Jarju said he was a native of Sintet Village where he was born in 1973 and worked as a mason and started his testimony by saying that he recalled that the witch-hunters came to Sintet on 9th March 2009. When asked, the witness stated that he knew some of the victims of the witch-hunt in Sintet but that he did not want to disclose their names in order to protect their identities. The witness told the Counsel that he had supplied them with a written list of the names of victims that he knew. When the Counsel clarified that they had been specifically asking about his mother and asked if he would be comfortable sharing her name, the witness told the Counsel that her name was Samsa Kamerah.

He explained that his **mother had passed away and she was killed by the **witch-hunters** that **abducted** her and forced to drink their medicine.**

He further added that when they separated, his mother was quite healthy but after she returned from Kanilai on 10th March 2019, arriving after dusk prayers between 7 and 8 pm, she had to be helped into the house. He said she **passed away** barely two weeks after she returned from Kanilai.

Expanding further, the witness said that on the morning of her **abduction**, he and his mother were together attended a naming ceremony in a nearby compound that morning. He said he left his mother at the ceremony and went to work and while there, he received news that witch-hunters had arrived in Sintet. The witness testified that he had already heard rumours that witch-hunters were in Gambia and that they were making people drink some kind of medicine. He explained that the witch-hunters also went to his place of work, many of them carrying mirrors that they used to point at people and catch their reflection from many angles. He said the witch-hunters inspected him and his co-workers and told each of them to go back to work except one Fula man who was told he had a sickness in him and that they would take him away.

When asked how he heard that there were witch-hunters in The Gambia, the witness replied that the news of their presence reached his village before their arrival. The Counsel further asked if he witnessed any unusual activity between the first news of the witch-hunters and their arrival to which he responded that some people ran away from their village when they heard the news that witch-hunters were coming. Buba Jarju went on to explain that he could not remember their exact number but he thought they were three or four in number, dressed in red and had jujus sown on their clothes. The witness confirmed that they were carrying a mirror and testified that he did not understand what the purpose of the mirrors were because he had never seen anything like that in his life. He added that he could not understand anything that they were saying because he did not recognise the language that they were speaking. He guessed they were either from Guinea Bissau or most likely from Guinea Conakry but he was not sure.

When asked, the witness stated that he came to this conclusion because of the language they were speaking, which was Fula.

He said the strange men were accompanied by some other people wearing civilian clothes as well as uniformed members of the Police Intervention Unit, PIU. Nobody from their own village accompanied the witch-hunters. When asked, the witness said that, at the time, the Alkalo of Sintet was Sarsan Tamba. The Counsel asked the witness how the strangers knew how to get around the village and locate different places since they were not only not from Sintet but not even from The Gambia, he said that he did not know how they came into the village but they were directed to do so, having been given orders as well as information to carry out those orders. The witness added that he could not guess who may have given those orders.

The Counsel asked the witness to clarify that a Fula man from his work place was accused of witchcraft and **captured** at work which the witness affirmed. The Counsel asked him if he knew how the witch-hunters determined who was an alleged witch or wizard and he responded that he could not say how they determined who to capture but he explained that they would take a mirror and point it at someone and afterward they would say if that person was accused of being a witch or a wizard. The Counsel asked the witness if he was saying that the witch-hunters would approach people who they were accusing of witchcraft. The witness explained that not everyone who was inspected by the witch-hunters and their mirrors was accused of witchcraft. He went on to say that the people they accused were elderly men and women. The Counsel also asked the witness if he knew if anyone else had been **captured** from any areas outside of Sintet. The witness explained that the witch-hunt took place in Sintet but that there were people from other areas who were staying in the village who were also captured.

After the witch-hunters left him and his co-workers at their jobsite, the witness decided to go check his home to see what the situation might be there and found his wife there with his children. He said that at the time, he hoped that, maybe, the witch-hunters would not make

it to the compound where he left his mother at the naming ceremony which was the farthest compound on the eastern side of the village. He had hoped it would be overlooked. When he asked his wife if she knew anything about his mother and she told him she thought she was at the naming ceremony, he thought his mother was safe and returned to work to complete his job.

When he returned home after finishing work around 4 pm, his mother had still not returned so the witness went looking for her at the naming ceremony. There, he learned that his mother had been **captured** and taken to Kanilai but other than that, he did not know anything else. He said his younger brother, Ousman Jarju, who was a PIU recruit, confirmed that his mother had been taken to Kanilai. When asked, the witness responded that he could not say if his brother was in the village on the day of his mother's abduction however, his children had recognised his brother inside one of the trucks that was transporting people **captured** from Sintet to Kanilai.

When his mother did not return from Kanilai, he said he called his younger brother who was in Kanilai to ask him if she was coming or not, he told him (the witness) that she was with other people and that she would come back when "they" were finished with them. He said his mother did not return until after the evening prayers on 10th March 2019.

Buba Jarju testified to the Commission that when his mother returned, he was sitting at home.

A vehicle stopped in front of their home and in it was his mother and his younger brother Ousman Jarju and from the moment he set his eyes on her he felt very unhappy because she was in such poor health.

He said he asked his brother what happened to her and Ousman Jarju told him that she was not herself but many others had to go through it as well. His

brother also explained that he could not do anything about it because he had just entered the service and had no power. The witness testified that he greeted his mother and she tried to respond but he could not hear what she was saying. When they brought her into the house, she had to lie down. She was not able to eat dinner and her condition did not improve over the following days so they decided to take her to Bwiam Hospital. She was admitted at the hospital where she stayed for a few days before being discharged on 23rd March. They took her home and her condition remained the same. She died on the third day after they returned from the hospital, on 26th March.

The Counsel asked the witness how his mother's health was before she was **captured** and taken to Kanilai. He said when she was taken to Kanilai, she was quite healthy, though she had diarrhea on that day. He added that his mother had been a farmer and a gardener and she was strong enough to perform the tasks required by those professions. The witness went on to testify that when she returned from Kanilai, she had to be carried inside by him and his brother. She was not able to sit up, she could not eat or even drink water.

The witness said he learned about what happened to his mother in Kanilai from person number four on the confidential list he provided for the Counsel (the list of witnesses was then admitted to the Commission as evidence). He said this person told him that his mother had been given medicine to drink at Kanilai and after drinking it, she was not aware of anything again. Person number four told the witness that they tried to help his mother but that she **suffered** greatly there. The Counsel asked if this person had also told the witness about the circumstances surrounding his mother's **capture**. The witness explained that he had been told that his mother was captured at the naming ceremony and that they suspected that some of the people who were there knew what was going to happen because they ran away before the witch-hunters arrived. When they finally heard that the witch-hunters were coming, it was too late for them to get away so they hid inside a small house within the compound. The witch-hunters broke into the compound when they arrived and found the people hiding in the small house. He said he was told that the people who took them were the ones wearing red clothes.

The witness said he did not know why they had been taken and when asked, he responded that he believed that the witch-hunters were acting on the orders of others which he said everyone was saying that it had to do with former President Yahya Jammeh, in part because the captured people were taken to Kanilai where the President had property. The witness added that even though the witch-hunters were complete strangers, they sometimes asked for people by name, before **abducting** them. The Counsel asked the witness which people on the protective information sheet were approached by agents of the witch-hunt. He said that person number one was found in his compound by the witch-hunters. She was sweeping at the time and when they came, they called her by her first name and surname. She asked them how they knew her name but they just confirmed that she was the person they were looking for and then took her away. The witness added that this person was their grandparent.

The Counsel asked if the witness was given any information as to why people were given this concoction. The witness responded he did not know why. When asked what he thought was the cause of his mother's poor health after she returned from Kanilai, the witness explained that he believed that the medicine made her sick because she was physically and mentally strong before she was captured and after she was forced to drink the medicine she became extremely ill.

When asked who was responsible for his mother's ill health and death, the witness stated that it was the fault of “the head of the whole thing, the former President Yahya Jammeh”.

The Counsel asked the witness if he believed that the medicine that his mother drank was also responsible for her **death**. The witness agreed that he believed that was so.

Buba Jarju went on to testify that for the other people on the list, some survived and some **passed away**. He said that person number 17 passed away and many others suffered from very severe health problems. He said that one of the people on the list, number three, was his neighbour and was still sick at the time of his testimony. The witness added that person number 7 was also sick, and that, in fact, she had wanted to come to the Commission but she could not because of her poor health.

The witness went on to say that he **suffered** greatly because the death of his mother as she had been, "like his right hand". After his dad passed away, he had remained home with his mother who paid for him and his brothers to go to school. He said that everyone in his village knew that his mother was someone who worked hard and when she **died**, it impacted him seriously. After she passed, he could not go anywhere as he used to but had to stay in Sintet. He explained that as the first-born son, it was his responsibility to take care of the family compound and at the time, he had children who were going to school that all depended on him. The witness gave thanks to Allah that his children had, or were close to, completing school but stated that if his mother had not died, it would have been much easier for him to raise them.

The Counsel asked the witness if he suffered from any **stigma** as a result of what happened to his mother. The witness explained that the accusations of witchcraft **tarnished** his mother's image and that it was very **painful** for him. The witness expressed that it was very hard for him to testify and explain what happened to his mother and his family because he was afraid of how people would think of them because of the allegations. Buba Jarju stated that he was deeply disturbed by the allegations of witchcraft against his mother and the stigma associated with those accusations has negatively affected his mental health.

The Counsel handed the witness over to the Chairman and the Commissioners. The Chairman expressed his condolences to the witness and since the Commissioners did not have any follow up questions for the witness, Buba

Jarju concluded his testimony by giving thanks to the almighty Allah. He thanked and praised the people present for giving him an opportunity to speak about what he went through. The witness said that he would have carried that pain until his death because from the day his mother died up until the today, no one asked him about it. The government did not anything about it, and he and others were left with sadness. He further said that the whole incident was caused by the former head of state of the government, adding that nobody could do anything to the former President but that Allah would do something to him.

The witness said that everyone knows how sweet a mother is and that that he could have reacted to her **abduction** and **death**, but he knew that if he reacted, they would have done the same thing to him or even **killed** him, so he put his faith in Allah. The witness said that the TRRC was brought by Allah, that the TRRC was seeking the truth, and that wherever they are, they are revealing the truth and are finding out things they did know before.

The witness advised leaders to remember that they should listen to the people behind them. If they want to do something, one thought is not enough. If leaders listen to their advisers, they should fear Allah and remember that they are not better than the people who elected them and that though they were destined to lead by Allah, it doesn't mean they are better than anyone else. The witness stated that the former leader was selfish and if he had listened to people's advice he might have done things differently.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death

Yahya Jammeh

Aiding and abetting persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhumane and degrading treatment leading to death

Ousman Jarju (the witness' brother)

Buba Jarju stated that **he was deeply disturbed by the allegations of witchcraft against his mother and the stigma associated with those accusations has negatively affected his mental health.**

WITNESS NAME: Jarrah COLLEY

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 28th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Sintet

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Daughter of two people captured in the witch-hunt

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Daughter of two people captured in the witch-hunt

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Rice Farmer in Sintet



SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Jarrah Colley stated that she was born in Sintet where she works as a rice farmer and that she lived in Sintet at the time of the testimony. When asked, the witness said that her parents were also from Sintet.

When asked if she remembered the day the witch-hunters came to Sintet, the witness said she recalled it was a Monday in 2009 and noted that she was not in Sintet the time the witch-hunters arrived. On the day of the incident, she was visiting her elder sister, Fa Dabo, in Tabokoto. While she was there, she received a call from her ten-year old son, Abdoulie Dabo who told her that witch-hunters had come to Sintet, **captured** her parents, Bojang Dabo and Musa Colley and taken them to Kanilai. She added that her son told her the witch-hunters were sent by Yahya Jammeh. She said she left that night to return to Sintet despite her sister's concern over travelling in the night.

When she arrived in Kalagi, she could not find a car to take her to her compound and even though Kalagi was very far from Sintet, she decided to walk home so that she could help her parents. When she arrived at her compound, she saw the light was on inside her father's house. She went inside and found her father there. She asked her father where her mother was and he replied that they had both been taken but he came back. The Counsel asked the witness if her father came back from Kanilai on the same day that he was taken, the witness replied yes.

The witness explained that her father told her that he managed to **escape** that day because when he was **detained** in Kanilai, he met a man called Sutay Bah who

had come to Kanilai looking for his people. Sutay Bah offered to take him home but her father said that at first, he refused the offer because he did not want to leave his wife behind but seeing that he did not have another option, he decided to go. She said she asked her father about her mother's condition and he replied that he left her there and at that time, she was not made to drink the medicine.

The Counsel asked the witness if anything happened to her father while he was in Kanilai and if he had to drink the medicine made by the witch-hunters, the witness responded that her father did not drink the medicine and nothing happened to him in Kanilai. When asked if her father came back alone or if he was with others, the witness replied that he came back with several other people but she did not know their names.

The Counsel further asked the witness if her father told her how Sutay Bah was able to take so many people away before they were made to drink the concoction. The witness testified that her father did not know how Sutay Bah had managed to rescue several people from Kanilai but that he had only said that Sutay Bah was looking for his people and that when he ran into her father, he offered to take him away.

Next, the witness was asked to narrate anything else her father had told her. She said that her father told her that when the witch-hunters arrived at their compound, their mother ran from them and hid in

a small house on their property. He had said that the witch-hunter that came to their family compound was wearing “red-red,” and he had mirrors sown onto his shirt and even had mirrors on his face. The witch-hunter was accompanied by two paramilitary soldiers who stood at the gate of their compound.

She further explained that her father told her the man wearing red clothes forcefully opened the door to the room where her mother was hiding and made her come out. Her mother had asked the man to let her put on her shoes before they took her away but the man would not allow her. She also asked the witch-hunter for permission to put on clothes at which point, her father approached and asked what was going on. Her mother told her husband that the witch-hunter said he was going to take her away. When her father asked the witch-hunter why they were taking his wife, he explained that they were going to give his wife some medicine. Her father then asked the witch-hunter if there were responsible for her cure or if he was and at this point, the witch-hunter went into the house, closed the Quran her father was reading, gave it to him and told him that they were both going with him.

According to the witness, the witch-hunter was the only one wearing red and he was accompanied by two people from the paramilitary unit. The Counsel asked the witness if her father told her how her mother was dressed at the time of her **capture**. She replied that her mother was **forced** to go barefoot and that she was not allowed to change her clothes before leaving but that she did take a head tie which she wrapped around herself before she was taken from her compound.

She said that according to her father, they were not given any reason why they were being **captured** except that they said they were going to “treat” her mother. They did not explain to her father what the treatment was for or why his wife needed it. The witness testified that at the time of her capture, her mother was in good health and that there was nothing to really cure her of.

The Counsel asked if her father was told where they were being taken to and the witness testified that when her parents were taken from the compound they were brought to a place where several vehicles were waiting

and they were separated. Her mother was put onto a bus and her father was put in a truck. When asked if anything else was happening near the vehicles, the witness testified that her parents saw the Green Boys drumming and dancing. They were taken to the vehicles around 10 to 11 am and the witness said that her father believed they arrived in Kanilai around 5 pm.

The witness continued on to testify that her father told her that when they arrived in Kanilai, they were made to alight from the vehicles at the military camp and it was just before they drank the medicine that he was offered a ride and returned home. She said her mother did not come home that day, she remained in Kanilai for two nights, returning on the third day. During these three days, the witness testified that she did not have any information and did not go to Kanilai because she was not going out at all.

When asked why she did not go out during those three days, Jarrah Colley explained that she was very embarrassed because her parents had been accused of being witches and wizards and taken away.

The witness testified that her father was the one who told her that he and the other captives had been accused of witchcraft. She also explained that because her father had returned without drinking the medicine and her mother was made to drink it, it made it look as if her mother was a real witch.

The Counsel asked the witness if she knew if anyone else was taken from Sintet on that day. She told the Counsel that on that day in Sintet, some people from the Fula, Jola, and Mandinka tribes were accused of practicing witchcraft and taken away. According to the witness, not everyone who was **captured** was indigenous to Sintet. There was a funeral in town on the day of the witch-hunt and many people from Casamance had come to attend the services. Some of these visitors were also captured. The Counsel asked

the witness if any of her other relatives were **captured** on that day. She admitted that there were others whom she had provided their names in writing earlier as she was not comfortable mentioning their names. When probed further, she said her elder sister Bintanding Manjang, was also taken by the witch-hunters. She said she found out that Bintanding was also **captured** when she returned to Sintet with their mother.

Next, the Counsel asked the witness about the people on the confidential list of victims' names that she compiled for the Commission. Jarrah Colley explained that numbers one and two were extremely sick and numbers three to six had **died**. The Counsel asked the witness what condition person one and two were in at the time of the testimony. The witness stated that number one was so sick that she could not work or do household chores and that she needed a caretaker. Person number 2 was the witness' uncle's wife and she had previously been admitted to the hospital and was staying with her son. The Counsel asked why they were sick and the witness stated that it was because of the medicine that they were forced to drink in Kanilai. Next, the Counsel asked how persons number three to six had died and the witness said that they died as a result of drinking the medicine prepared for and administered by the witch-hunters.

Returning to the witness' mother, the Counsel asked the witness to explain what happened to her mother after she was taken to Kanilai. She explained that her mother was given the medicine at around 5 pm.

When her mother's turn came, she was taken to a room where they made her take off of her clothes and bathed her. Her mother was very unhappy because there were several people watching her who were young enough to be her grandchildren.

Then she was given a cup of medicine to drink and they made her chew the leaves in the bottom of the cup and swallow them. After consuming the medicine, they

filled up a cup with some liquid and splashed it in her face. The witness testified that her mother said that when the medicine was splashed in her eyes, she experienced **indescribable pain**. Her mother also added that the medicine was bitter and smelly. The Counsel asked if the liquid she bathed in was the same concoction as the one she drank and the witness said that they were different, the one she drank was bitter and the one they splashed on her face was smelly and burnt her eyes.

She narrated that after her mother put her clothes on and came out of the toilet, she lost consciousness until the following day. After daybreak, the captives were questioned and accused of being witches or wizards. They were asked how many people they killed. The people who denied having killed anyone were taken back into the compound while those that confessed to killing someone were bathed again and then taken out of the compound. When it was her mother turn to be questioned, she told her captors that she killed two people. After giving the false confession, she was made to bathe in the medicine again and given another cup of medicine to drink. Her mother protested, saying that she had confessed so she did not need to drink the medicine again but they made her drink it a second time anyway. After drinking the second portions, she became **unconscious** until the next day when she returned home.

The Counsel asked the witness who had questioned the captives at Kanilai. She replied that the men dressed in red did the questioning and they were accompanied by paramilitaries who acted as interpreters.

The Counsel asked why her mother told the witch-hunters that she had eaten two people and the witness explained that her mother said that because she thought that if she did not give a false confession her captors might abuse her more.

The Counsel asked if the witness's mother had been **afraid** that there would be repercussions if she denied being a witch. The witness said that was true.

When asked, the witness testified that on the third day her mother was released and taken back to Sintet in the same bus that she was **captured** in. The witness' mother returned with her elder sister. When they reached Sintet, her mother could not walk unassisted and had to be helped by her daughter. The witness testified that when her mother reached the compound, they brought her inside and that when she arrived, she was incoherent and could not talk. She said she let her mother rest until the following day when she asked her mother what happened and learned her story.

Jarrah Colley admitted that it was very hard to hear her parents' stories. She said she felt embarrassed and shocked that her mother had been accused of being a witch and worried about how this might affect her large family. When asked, the witness said that the men in red were given their orders by Yahya Jammeh. She said she came to this conclusion because he was the President at the time of the witch-hunt and his workers would do whatever he asked. The Counsel asked the witness who she held responsible for her parents' health problems. She said that she blamed former President Yahya Jammeh. She also blamed Yahya Jammeh for what happened to the people mentioned on the confidential witness list including their **deaths and disabilities**.

The Counsel asked the witness what happened to her parents after the witch-hunt. The witness narrated that her father was sick and had gone to Kombo and her mother was no longer able to work as a farmer. Ever since she was **captured** and taken to Kanilai, her mother was unable to do anything unassisted and even struggled to walk sometimes. The Counsel asked the witness what was responsible for her father's ill-health since he did not drink the concoction. The witness explained that she could not blame his sickness on what happened in Kanilai because he did not drink the medicine but added that her mother's medical problems affected her father negatively.

The witness testified that because of her mother's ordeal, she was not able to stay in her married home and had to

stay with her mother to take care of her. The Counsel asked the witness if she wanted to add anything to her testimony and she said that when she was getting ready to go to the TRRC, her mother told her to make it categorically clear that she had been sick since the day she left Kanilai and her illness was caused by the medicine she drank. The Counsel pointed out that the witness had had to come to testify at the TRRC because both of her parents were too ill to go themselves.

The Counsel concluded by asking the witness if she had suffered from any **stigma** because of what had happened to her mother. She explained that she was adversely affected by community stigma and that there were still people in her community who thought that her mother might be a witch.

The Counsel handed over the witness to the Chairman and other Commissioners for further questioning. The Chairman thanked the witness for testifying on behalf of her parents and commiserated with her and her family.

The Deputy Chair asked if Sutay Bah, the driver who rescued her father, was still alive. The witness said that he was. The Deputy Chair said that she would love to know how he had the courage to rescue people from Kanilai. The witness said that she did not know how he had that courage.

In giving her closing remarks, the witness prayed for the Chairman and Commissioners. She stated that she used to listen to the TRRC until late into the night and has been supporting the Commission even before they came to Sintet. She said that they were clearing the people who were accused. She added that the witch-hunt had heaped a lot of dirt on those that were accused but that they were now trying to clear themselves. She stated that her mother was taken away in broad daylight and that is why she did not shy away from testifying or hide. She wanted to clear the air about how her mother was alleged to be a witch because her mother was worth everything to her. She added that if she had been there on the day of the witch-hunt, she might have been **captured** because she will not let her mother be taken.

She addressed the students at the hearing, telling them that they came to learn so they should learn how to treat and speak to their elders and how to behave in their country. She said that the children were brought to the TRRC to learn and so they should walk away with knowledge to help them later. The witness said that if you have knowledge, you should have mercy and respect for people but the problem they were in that day was because their leaders did not have mercy or respect for the people. Jarrah Colley said that everyone in The Gambia should pray that no one like Yahya Jammeh would ever lead them again. It was because of the bad rule that brought bad blood between everyone, even family members and we should be mindful of that.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, leading to death

Yahya Jammeh

The witness said that if you have knowledge, you should have mercy and respect for people but **the problem they were in that day was because their leaders did not have mercy or respect for the people.**



Sankung Balajo was abducted and accused of witchcraft during the 2009 witch-hunt campaign ordered by Yahya Jammeh. He testified before the TRRC that he spent five days in detention and each of those days, he was given the hallucinogenic concoction twice.

WITNESS NAME (S): Nyima JARJU and Lamin BADJIE

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 28th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: Two witch-hunts in Sintet, detention of Nyima Jarju, her child and her mother-in-law

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Nyima Jarju was a farmer/ **Lamin Badjie** worked at Kanilai as a tractor driver

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Nyima Jarju was present in Sintet during the second witch-hunt and was arrested and detained for a week/**Lamin Badjie's** father was forced to flee to Casamance

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Nyima Jarju, farmer/**Lamin Badjie**, driver

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONIES:

Lamin Badjie introduced himself by saying he was born in Sintet in 1975. He used to work as a driver and a tractor operator plowing then-President Yahya Jammeh's fields at Kanilai. Nyima Jarju, Lamin Badjie's wife, then told the Commission she was born in Tabokoto, is 36 years old, and is a farmer. Together they had five children.

Lamin Badjie identified his father, Bulli Badjie, as a founder of Sintet. As a result, he explained, his father owned a lot of the land in the village and had the right to allocate land to newcomers for farms, rice fields and compounds.

Lamin Badjie testified that the first **witch-hunting** incident in Sintet⁶² was led by a man named Tambajiro. To his knowledge, Tambajiro was a Jola man from Casamance who was known to hunt witches. That day, he explained, he learned that Tambajiro was in Sintet while he was collecting people to work on the farms at Kanilai. When he got home that evening he found his father at home distressed and disturbed.

He added that his father narrated to him that Major Solo Bojang and Tambajiro had come to Sintet with a list of elders who they gathered and brought to the village hospital. They burned a mysterious powder in a small coal pot and made the witness' father inhale the smoke. He added that Mamandi Sanyang and the former Alkalo Sarsantamaba were also on the list and were subjected



to the same ordeal. Lamin Badjie said he forgot the year it occurred as he never thought he would be testifying about these events.

When the Counsel asked why this happened to his father, Lamin Badjie replied that it was “all because of hatred”.

Initially he disputed that it was connected to **witch-hunting**, but later in his testimony he said that while his father was being forced to inhale the smoke he was accused of witchcraft and of eating his own children. The Counsel asked Nyima Jarju about the initial incident with Tambajiro, but she stated that she was not present in Sintet on that day.

Lamin Badjie continued that it was more than 3 years between Tambajiro's visit to Sintet and the next **witch-hunt**. He explained that one Monday morning when he arrived at the fuel depot in Kanilai behind Yahya Jammeh's residence, he ran into Solo Bojang, the soldiers that usually surrounded him, and men he identified as Fula witch-hunters. While they were filling up their vehicles he heard someone say they would soon be going to Sintet.

The witness explained that he knew immediately his father had been betrayed, likely because of his role in allocating land in the village. He said upon overhearing Solo Bojang and his entourage at the fuel depot, he was very unhappy because he loved his father and his father loved him.

⁶²There was some initial confusion about which witch-hunting incident the witness was describing.

He confirmed that Solo Bojang and his henchmen were working directly for Yahya Jammeh, “everyone in Kanilai, even the ants are working for Yahya Jammeh!”

The Counsel then turned to Nyima Jarju to continue the narration of the couple’s ordeal. She explained that while her husband was at the fuel depot in Kanilai, she was in Sintet helping cook at a naming ceremony of a neighbour. When news that witch-hunters were spotted on the road spread to the naming ceremony, everyone scattered. She quickly slung her baby on her back, and ran to her house. On the way, she was stopped by a man in a black uniform who told her to return to where she came from. She stated that she disobeyed and continued on to her house. The witness testified that many of those who fled the naming ceremony were caught.

She described the men who came to Sintet as dressed in red with cowrie shells and pieces of mirrors sown into their clothes. They were accompanied by paramilitaries who were dressed in black uniforms.

Nyima Jarju testified that she was nursing her baby on their veranda when these men came to her compound. A young man started talking to her, but he was speaking Fula and she could not understand him. Another man came through the compound gate and began translating. After confirming the child she was nursing was hers, he took out a mirror and held it to her face.

She stated that he told her she was not a witch, but that she had a sickness in her body and that they would take her to Kanilai to cure her illness.

He told her they were going to continue moving through the village, but would pick her up on their way back.

The witness stated that as soon as the men left the compound she went inside and locked all the doors and the windows. She assumed the men who had come to

Sintet were bringing trouble and she wanted to avoid them at all costs. Apparently, the men did not return to her house and on this occasion, she was spared.

The Counsel then turned to Nyima Jarju’s husband. Lamin Badjie told the Commission that Solo Bojang, his soldiers, and the witch-hunters departed for Sintet around 8 am while he went to work in Kanilai. When he finished his day’s work, he departed immediately for Sintet. On the trip home he called one of the women who worked in his house and asked what had happened. She replied that “*there is chaos in the village,*” and that she had not seen anyone at his compound. He hurried home and found his compound completely empty.

Nyima Jarju continued the couple’s testimony by explaining to the Commission that by the time her husband returned home she had already left. She revealed that her father-in-law, Bulli Badjie, had traveled to the nearby village of Darsilameh early in the morning before Solo Bojang and the witch-hunters arrived. After locking herself in her house, she decided to take some food to Bulli Badjie in Darsilameh.

In Darsilameh, Nyima Jarju narrated, she found her father-in-law at the house of his younger brother. When she greeted him, he began crying. She asked why, and he responded that he had not known if he would see his family again.

He said that he was afraid if he returned to Sintet he would be killed.

He asked her to bring the children to Darsilameh in two days so he could see them again. She stayed in Darsilameh until dusk prayers then returned home to Sintet.

The Counsel then turned back to Lamin Badjie, who stated that he went to work the day after the witch-hunters came to Sintet. On that Tuesday, while he was on his way home, he passed police who were leaving Darsilameh. In Darsilameh, he found people holding sticks and machetes. They asked if he had

passed the police, and explained that the police, led by the then Officer Commanding, OC of Sibnor Tamsir Bah, had come to **arrest** his father. He was told that the Alkalo of Darsilameh seized the keys from the police when they arrived, and people from surrounding communities converged on Darsilameh ready to fight with the police and burn their cars.

The Counsel asked the witness why his father was targeted and Lamin Badjie responded that he heard his father's name was on a list. He told the Commission that the list contained the names of elderly people in the village, and when the witch-hunters were unable to find them, they became angry and started **capturing** people from all over the village. Regarding his father, “*even if he goes into a hole in the ground, they were ready to dig him out.*”

Later in the testimony Nyima Jarju described how on Tuesday, the day after Solo Bojang and the witch-hunters came to Sintet, the police came to Sintet looking for members of Bulli Badjie's family. She told the Commission they arrived at her mother-in-law Fatou Bojang's house after the 5 pm prayers and told her to board the vehicle. She added that they had allegedly asked about Nyima Jarju's whereabouts, and her mother-in-law led them to the garden.

Nyima Jarju testified that she was in her garden with her three-month-old baby when a car carrying four policemen from Kalaji and her mother-in-law appeared at the gate. The police told her to board the vehicle. She asked where they were going, but they just repeated their order. She eventually boarded the vehicle with her baby. Neither the witness nor her mother-in-law were told where they were being taken.

The witness further narrated that the vehicle took her and her mother-in-law to the Sibnor police station, where they were identified as Nyima Jarju and Fatou Bojang. The police then asked about the whereabouts of Bulli Badjie. When the witness replied that she did not know, one of the policemen told her that she would not leave the station until she gave them the information they were looking for. She was then accused of lying, and then OC Tasmir told them to sit in the parlour room.

She added that after performing their evening prayers, one of the police officers brought a mattress for them to sleep on. Nyima Jarju explained that she used her headtie and wrap as sheets for her three-month-old, who slept between the witness and her mother-in-law on the mattress. She recalled that they were not given any food that evening.

The next morning, they were brought out of the parlour room, and then OC Tasmir **threatened** them again that if they did not reveal Bulli Badjie's whereabouts they would remain at the police station. The witness told the Commission that she responded by saying that “*even if I die, I will not say.*”

The witness continued that they were then brought to an inner cell beyond the parlour room.

They – the witness, her mother-in-law, and her three-month-old – were kept in the cell until the following Tuesday without being charged. She said the cell had just a water bottle to urinate into and lacked ventilation.

At night the room was infested with mosquitos and they had to fan themselves constantly.

On multiple occasions, the police asked her to nurse her child to stop it from crying. They were allowed to leave the cell to eat in the parlour, and for a short while each evening. She also added that when her baby urinated or defecated, they would allow her to go wash him off. This was the only opportunity she had to wash him and his clothes. They continued to threaten that if they did not reveal Bulli Badjie's whereabouts they would not be allowed to leave, “*the anger they had against Bulli, that's what they brought down against us.*”

When asked if they tried to complain about their conditions to the OC of Sibnor, the witness responded that OC Tamsir was well aware of the conditions as he was supervising their **detention**.

While describing the conditions her baby endured, the witness began to cry. She told the Commission that the suffering left a permanent mark on her mother-in-law who never regained her health and passed away.

Nyima Jarju added that one day during their **detention**, OC Tamsir left Sibenor to attend a meeting elsewhere. While he was away, one of the policewomen who worked in the office appealed to someone at the station to allow the witness and her baby to come to her house to take a proper shower and eat some food. The policewoman, who went unnamed, encouraged the witness to eat, telling her that as a nursing mother if she did not eat the baby would suffer. The witness recalled that she said “one day you will leave this place.”

Later in her testimony, Nyima Jarju stated that after the police came for Bulli Badjie in Darsilameh, he went to stay at a relative’s house in the Casamance in a village named Boungari for around four months. During that time there was no communication between Bulli Badjie and either of the witnesses. One night, she told her husband she wanted to go to Boungari and bring her father-in-law home. Initially Lamin Badjie was skeptical, but she convinced him to tell his supervisors that he needed to take time off to take her to the hospital, so he could stay with the children while she travelled to Casamance.

The witness testified that she left Sintet on a Sunday to travel to Casamance. At first people in Boungari said that if he were to return to Sintet, he would die. After dinner, as she was saying goodbye, one of her father-in-law’s hosts voiced that considering she had travelled to Casamance, perhaps Bulli Badjie should return home. After some discussion, they left later that night. According to the witness, Bulli Badjie wanted to pass by Darsilameh to let people know he was back before returning to Sintet. In Darsilameh, they met the Alkalo and his younger brother, who readied a cart for the remainder of their journey.

Continuing on with her testimony, the witness stated that they did not arrive in Sintet until around one in the morning when most people were asleep. As they approached the

town Nyima Jarju narrated, she called her husband to tell him they were near. When they reached the compound, Bulli Badjie began to start “going into shock” and his son told him to calm down. She said that whenever he would leave the compound thereafter “people there were looking at him with the eyes he was a witch.”

Nyima Jarju said that the whole experience had a serious impact on her. The Counsel then asked Lamin Badjie how the witch-hunting incident affected his family.

He replied that it has brought serious hardship and embarrassment, and people now look down on them in their community.

The questioning then passed to the Commissioners. To begin with, Chairman Sise clarified that Nyima Jarju’s baby was with her throughout her **detention**. He then pointed out that her ordeal constituted the state using collective punishment on individuals because they could not reach Bulli Badjie and that the **detention** of a baby was a gross violation of the rights of the family.

Commissioner Bishop Odico then asked Nyima Jarju how the police would have known that her father-in-law was in Darsilameh during the second witch-hunt. She replied that there were people in Sintet who were passing information to the police. She said that she was later made to understand that when the police were going to Darsilameh to **arrest** Bulli Badjie, they were spotted by children on the road who told the Alkalo the police were coming. The advance warning gave the Alkalo of Darsilameh time to call people from surrounding villages to confront the police. She confirmed that the police did not find her father-in-law that day.

In her final remarks, Nyima Jarju told the Commission that the incident brought embarrassment and sadness for the family. She revealed that when she thinks of this incident she sometimes cries to herself. She expressed her thanks to the Commission because

“we never thought a day would come where we would sit and narrate our ordeal.”

Lamin Bajie concluded that after the incident, he quit his job at Kanilai to stay with his father in their compound because he had fallen ill. He explained that his father was operated on by Dr. Ceesay in Kololi after which he regained his health until he passed two years later. He also finished his testimony by expressing his thanks to the Commission.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death

Yahya Jammeh, Solo Bojang, Tambajiro

Arbitrary arrest and detention (of Nyima Jarju, her baby and her mother-in-law Fatou Bojang)

Tamsir Bah



WITNESS NAME: Matty SANYANG (also known as Sami JATTA)

TRRC HEARING Date (S): 28th November 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Sintet, victimisation and subsequent capture and detention, impact on witness and family

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Farmer, gardener

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Farmer, gardener

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Matty Sanyang told the Commission that she is 68 years old and that she was born in Sintet. She confirmed that she did not receive a formal education because “*in those days, our elders used to say that to take women to school is not good*”. The witness explained that she was a farmer and also worked as a gardener. When asked if she had ever worked in a garden or a farm outside of Sintet, she responded that “*they used to take us to go and work*” in Kanilai. She said that when Yahya Jammeh took over the country, they went to work in Kanilai and noted that whether they liked it or not, they had to go. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked for how long she worked there and the witness responded that she had been working in Kanilai for three years when she was made to drink the medicine.

The Deputy Lead Counsel told the witness she had told them that they were **forced** to go and work in Kanilai. When asked on whose farm they were **working**, **Matty Sanyang** responded that they went to work on **Yahya Jammeh’s farm**.

The Deputy Lead Counsel then wanted to know how she felt about being forced to work there. The witness answered because Yahya Jammeh was the ruler of the country “*whatever he says, you had to comply because if you did not, you might find yourself in serious trouble*”. The witness explained that a truck would come and take her and others to Kanilai and that apart from farming they also had to cut down trees for him at a place called Mayok, where the school is now located. She told the Commission that Yahya Jammeh had promised that he would pay them and later added that he had promised to pay four million dalasi, but that he never did. She also added that they sometimes paid their own fares to go and come but he never gave them a penny.

Speaking about the 2009 witch-hunt, Matty Sanyang said that she was told that one morning, a man called Tambajiro came to Sintet. She explained that she was not present when it happened, but others recounted the events to her and told her that when they came, they went to people’s places and also dug holes saying that they were looking for items buried by witches. She noted that she was told that no one saw them recovering anything and that in fact these people just dipped their hands into a bag, pretending to put something in there.

Asked about Tambajiro’s identity, she responded that she had never heard of him before the day he came to Sintet. The Deputy Lead Counsel then asked if apart from the incident concerning Tambajiro, the witness had ever heard of the witch-hunters. She responded saying that she had indeed been told

that witch-hunters had come to the village and “smoked some people”, which happened on another day. That day, the witness said, she had gone to the rice farm. When she came back, she did not find anybody at home and when she asked around, she was told her that people had all gone to the hospital because some person had forced them to inhale smoke. The Deputy Lead Counsel then asked if she heard about the activities of the witch-hunters in any other village or location apart from Sintet, which she did not.

Focusing on the main incident, the witness explained that it took place on a Monday and she remembered that that day the schoolchildren were drumming, dancing, and playing. It was also her younger sister’s baby’s naming ceremony. The witness was told to recount the day step by step but did not fully understand the question.

She repeated that the naming ceremony was happening that day and all of a sudden, they heard the news that “*Yahya Jammeh* had sent people to the village who were coming to capture people go take them away and give them medicine to drink for witches”.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked how she reacted when she heard that. Matty Sanyang explained that she, together with her sister and her baby ran away to Kabong, which is one of the satellite little hamlets located at the border with Casamance (Senegal). The Deputy Lead Counsel asked her if something happened along the way. The witness responded that soldiers, wearing their usual military uniforms with mixed colours, paramilitaries dressed in black and people wearing “red red things” were following and running after them. Asked what happened then, she said that those chasing did not manage to catch her and her group before they reached Kabong but arrested others and **took them away forcefully**. Responding to the question at what time she and her sister ran away, the witness stated that it was at the time that the Mandinkas call “Silinka”, meaning in the hours of the morning, around 1 pm.

The witness then recounted what happened in Kabong. When they reached the village, they went into a house and locked the doors but the “chasers” found them and told them that if they did not open the door, they would break it. The witness described how she went onto a bed and tried to climb up the wall and jump into the other room because she was so shocked. She had never seen anything like that. She had wounds and bruises on both her hands. She did not succeed however and fell down on the bed. She then decided to run to the backyard, where a man wearing “red red”, caught her and told her “aree.” (she later noted that this was a word in Fula and that this was the language he was speaking). Asked to describe the man, Matty Sanyang explained that he was wearing red clothes and some white ones on top with cowry shells on them, as well as a mirror on his chest. His hat was made of red material and decorated with cowry shells. She also remembered that he was holding a horn. She noted that in addition to this man, there was another one who was dressed in a similar way.

The Deputy Lead Counsel then asked if she could tell if these two individuals were Gambian or not. The witness answered that they were foreigners and that the Fula they were speaking was different from the one spoken in The Gambia. Matty Sanyang said that in addition to the two men in “red red”, paramilitaries and soldiers were also present. She continued narrating that they **arrested** everybody in the compound and that in total they caught more than ten people. When asked if her sister and her baby were among that group, the witness explained that the mother of the baby appealed to the man and told him that today was the naming ceremony of her baby and begged to release the two of them, which they eventually did.

Asked why she felt compelled to follow them, the witness explained that she feared to be **beaten** as she had seen how they were treating those who tried to resist. She confirmed that at this stage nothing was done to her. The Deputy Lead Counsel recalled that she had said earlier that she was shocked

because she “had never seen anything like it before” and the witness explained that she was afraid that these people could **kill** her.

The Deputy Lead Counsel then asked where the witness was taken to. Matty Sanyang explained that they took her to Tamba Kunda. On the way, she asked the men if she could pass by her compound to take her head tie but they refused. When they reached Tamba Kunda, they stopped at the Taba tree, close to the house of the former Alkalo. Many vehicles were parked there: a bus, two trucks and a military vehicle as well as some soldiers. She recalled being asked to board the bus, which was already so packed that there were only a few free seats remaining. She noticed that there were only women on this bus. Asked to estimate the number of women, she said many, probably more than forty. In total, with her and her group, they were way more than fifty, noting that some people had no seat and others had to stand.

Asked about the men, the witness said that they had board a “big vehicle” as well as the trucks. Asked about a rough number, she said that it was difficult to estimate, but noted that they were many and that the vehicles were filled up. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if she saw anyone refusing to get on the vehicles, the witness responded no, no one dared to resist, all went into the vehicles. When asked if some of her family members were caught as well, she responded in the affirmative and mentioned that her older brother, who had been ill and had travelled, was among them. She was then asked if she at any point observed any of the soldiers, the paramilitary or the people in “red red” beating any of the individuals in Sintet. She responded that she did not.

Regarding the identity of the soldiers, she said that she did not know any of them before but on that day, she came to know a man called Solo Bojang. She explained that when her older brother was **captured**, he first refused to go and was forced and **beaten** on the way. She added that her brother was not well, “*his mind was not stable*”. He had travelled and came back in that condition. When they brought him to the tree, Solo Bojang was called and when he got up, the witness knew that this was his name. She then decided to get out of the vehicle to tell the men

that her brother was not well, adding “*the whole of Sintet knew that he was not well. Even children knew that he was not well*”. According to the witness, only someone who is well can be a witch, asserting that someone in his condition could not be one.

She then narrated that her brother was beaten all over the place and his forehead was oozing blood. Asked who was beating her brother she responded the paramilitary and the soldiers, using batons.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked how Solo Bojang reacted as her brother was being beaten. The witness said he was standing there. She confirmed that she went to see him to explain that her brother, Malangai Gaye, had a mental illness and that everybody in Sintet knew about it, but Solo Bojang told her that her brother had been rude. More people came to speak to the soldiers and eventually they stopped **beating** him and he was allowed to return home. She confirmed that her brother sustained injuries as a result of the beatings, notably on the shoulders and the forehead. The witness was asked if she knew who was in charge of the soldiers and the paramilitary who were beating her brother. The witness replied that she was sitting inside but that every man that came, went to speak to Solo Bojang.

She was asked if based on that, it would be fair to say that she believed that Solo Bojang was the one leading those men. The witness said yes.

Continuing to speak about her brother, Matty Sanyang said that when he returned home, he was taken to the hospital in Kanifing because he was **vomiting blood**. Not more than six months later, the witness said, her brother **passed away**. The witness was asked how that made her feel as she sat on the bus

and observed what was happening to him at the time. The witness replied that she felt **pain**, it felt as if she was the one being **beaten**. She was unhappy but she could not do anything because she feared that they would do the same to her as they were doing to him.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if the vehicles eventually left Sintet to go elsewhere. The witness responded that they did and that it was after the 2 pm prayers. She recalled that her mother who was also there wanted to pray but they told her not to because she was under the custody of the government. The Deputy Lead Counsel inferred that those on the bus could not pray at that point, which the witness confirmed, noting that they were too afraid to do so. She was asked if she could tell them where they were taken and she responded Kanilai, where they arrived around 5 pm.

In Kanilai, she said, they were taken to a compound, which had two houses and the ground was made of concrete. Asked if she knew to whom the compound belonged, she said that she thinks it was Yahya Jammeh's because when they arrived there, soldiers and paramilitaries were already inside the buildings. Once there, they were told to sit outside. Asked about the demography of the **captured** people, the witness responded that they were elderly men and women from all ethnic groups: Mandinkas, Jolas and Fulas. She explained that when they alighted from the vehicles, they were given food (benachin), but that she could not eat it, noting: "you cannot eat food when your mind is not stable".

Asked if the men in red were also present, Matty Sanyang responded in the affirmative and added that the men who **captured** her were there as well. Regarding Solo Bojang, she highlighted that he was there the entire time during the two nights they had to spend in Kanilai. She remembered that his name was constantly being called. Asked about individuals known as Green Boys, the witness confirmed that they were many.

Matty Sanyang then described what happened next: the men were given something to drink. She narrated that they started with one man, and after he drank, he fell down. She then started to scream because she realised that all of them were going to go through this. She added

that she lost her mind at that time. Asked about the man who drank first, she said that he was lying down in a **coma** and was not aware of anything happening around the world. Responding to the question, whether the medicine was given to them outside, she responded: "*they used to call you inside, inside the toilet. When you get into the house, into the main hall you go through the toilet. That was where you drink the medicine. There was water on the floor*".

She further said that they had to undress and take a bath. Once that was done, they sprinkled some medicine into their eyes, which started burning "as if pepper was thrown inside". Then they gave them the medicine to drink.

The Deputy Lead Counsel inferred that after the men were taken inside to drink, the women were asked to go in. The witness confirmed this, noting that the men were lying on the ground of the big veranda as well as of the building in the middle. When all the men had drunk the medicine, they started giving it to the women. However, that day they could not give it to all the women because it was already late. She recapped what happened when one was asked to go inside: the individual had to undress, take a bath and then a liquid was sprinkled into the eyes. Then, they were told to drink a medicine and this is when "*you would lose consciousness. You would not know what was happening. You would go into a coma. When you lie down, you do not realise anything else until the following day in the morning*".

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked the witness to describe what happened in more details. Matty Sanyang explained that the medicine was extremely bitter, noting that she had never "experienced anything of that nature". Regarding the men in presence, she said that in the room were two men dressed in red, one soldier and two paramilitaries.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if she could give them a step by step account of what happened when she arrived in that room.

The witness said they forcefully undressed her. The paramilitaries stood at her side, held her and forced her to drink the medicine. If you could not swallow it, they would force you to.

Asked if she had been forced to undress fully, the witness confirmed and said that they did not leave anything on her. She was asked how that made her feel since all the persons in the room were men. Matty Sanyang answered that the sadness was so much that it **sickened** her. She added that even her own husband would not undress her in that fashion, let alone other men. She noted that after that incident, having been forced to drink this medicine, she could no longer work as a farmer and gardener, as she had done all her life, because her chest was too **painful**. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked how many children the witness had at the time, to which she responded four.

Going back to what she had experienced inside the room, the witness further explained that it **shamed** her, noting that it surprised her a lot but she was not brave enough to refuse to undress because she feared being **beaten** up. The Deputy Lead Counsel told her they had heard testimonies from other people, that when they were given water to bath, the water was also poured over their heads. The witness confirmed that it also happened to her and that it was after that that she was given some of that concoction to drink. She was then asked if any of the men in that room said anything to her and the witness said no, they did not tell her anything, apart from when they forced her to drink the medicine. Regarding the liquid that was splashed into her eyes, she said that she sustained **injuries** from it.

The Deputy Lead Counsel confirmed with her that after she drank the medicine, she became **unconscious** and then asked at what time she regained consciousness.

The witness answered that it must have been after 1 pm. This is when she started to “begin to feel herself again” and could crawl a little bit. Around 2 pm, her body felt a little bit better.

The witness was asked if on that second day, she interacted with any of the witch doctors or any of the security men there. She responded that they did and that the Fulas who were dressed in red called them **witches**. She explained that she did not speak Fula, but that some people were interpreting what they said and that they were asked to confess that they were witches. The witness was asked how she reacted when she was told to say that she was a witch. Matty Sanyang responded that she was **saddened** because she thought that there was no use to say that she was not and that she might even get **beaten** if she denied it. So, she said that she was a witch. Another reason why she did so was because those who refuse to say it were taken to drink the concoction for a second time, and she could not possibly drink it another time fearing that it would **kill** her. So, she told them: “yes, I am a witch.”

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked what happened to the people who admitted to being witches on that day. The witness responded that she thought about it deeply. It even **sickened** her because when she returned home, the people had heard that she had confessed being a witch. She added that she was not endowed spiritually, adding that only those who had spiritual endowment could become a witch.

She noted that if she had been spiritually endowed, she would have done terrible things to Yahya Jammeh himself because of the suffering he inflicted on them.

She added that she could not even stand people “liking or loving” Yahya Jammeh, because of what he did. She noted that her general health condition was not good, but the worse were her eyes.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked if on that day, there were other people who admitted to being witches in order to avoid the consequences. The witness responded that many did so, fearing to be **beaten** if they denied it. Responding to the question, if they were released once they **forcefully confessed**, she confirmed that they were and that it was at around 1 am, meaning that they spent two nights in Kanilai and were let go during the third one.

Matty Sanyang was asked if her family knew where she was, to which she responded that her children were aware of her whereabouts and that in fact, her son called and said he was coming. But she told him not to, because she feared that he might be beaten. Asked if she had a reason to tell him this, she explained that she witnessed it personally and recounted how a boy had been **beaten** by the paramilitaries until he was wounded on the leg.

Describing her journey back to Sintet, the witness said that they were driven back in the same bus.

After three of four days of being unable to eat anything, her children took her to Ahmadiyya because they said that Yahya Jammeh had forbidden anyone to take them to any hospital. Even if they went, they were not to be given any medicine.

The witness was asked if she recalled where she heard that information from. She replied that her aunt, Sansang Camara, was taken to Bwiam one day after having been released. She spent three nights in Bwiam but she was not given any tablets and was eventually sent home. The next day, she **passed away**. The Deputy Lead Counsel asked her if it was during that incident that she heard that Yahya Jammeh did not want people to be given medication, which was why she avoided going to a public hospital and the witness confirmed this was what she meant.

The Deputy Lead Counsel asked Matty Sanyang to describe the health problems she encountered as a result of drinking the concoction. The witness mentioned her

impaired vision and noted that her chest pained her, adding "it never heals". Regarding the **stigmatisation** she had alluded to earlier in her testimony, she said "*you know witchcraft is something that is very dirty. (...). Now to be accused of being a witch, everybody runs away from you. People would be scared of you and people would also run away from you*". She further said that it used to disturb her, wondering why she had been taken and others not. She was asked what impact the situation had on her children, to which she answered that it saddened them a lot because, noting that in fact, one of her sons cried because some people told him that his mother was a witch.

The Deputy Lead Counsel then mentioned that the witness had provided the Commission with a list of names of individuals who had been abducted with her and some of the impact they suffered as a result. The Deputy Lead Counsel recalled that she also provided the names of two individuals who passed away as a result of drinking the concoction. She was asked if she could confirm that and she said yes. The Deputy Lead Counsel then asked her to say how many more people from Sintet died as a result of drinking the concoction, advising her not to state their names. The witness recalled Sansang Camara and Malangai Gaye, who she had already spoken about and in addition to them there were more than ten other individuals, but as they did not want to be exposed, she would not name them. She added Mba Dajang, and Ma Ceesay. The Deputy Lead Counsel interrupted her, saying that it would be better not to give names.

The Deputy Lead Counsel said she had concluded her questions and thanked the witness for answering all of them. She told the witness she was very sorry that she had to go through such a difficult experience. She added that she would now hand over to the Commissioners.

The Chairman thanked the witness for her testimony and told her that he was sorry that she had to endure so much suffering. Commissioner Bishop Odico asked about the part of her testimony, when she went across the border to Casamance to seek refuge

but was nonetheless captured. He enquired if the border had been open at that time. Matty Sanyang responded that they were no border guards there. The Deputy Lead Counsel then explained to Commissioner Odico that the place she went to was still in Sintet, and therefore Gambia, but on the border with Casamance.

There were no further questions and the witness was invited to make her final remarks. Matty Sanyang started by thanking the Commission and greeted all Gambians. She said that these events have been inside her and that she did not know how to get it out. They had come so that they could narrate it to them. She added that while it was still inside her, it had diminished. She prayed that this would never happen again in The Gambia or anywhere else in the world. She further said that because God is the one who makes witches and that these people did not even know who the witches were, because they just arrested everyone they saw.

She praised the TRRC for conducting investigations into this. She referred to the fact that people are saying that some individuals are making (false) allegations against Yahya Jammeh, but that in fact: "*this is the way that Yahya Jammeh is*". She prayed to God that they all have long life and good health and thanked them again.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Forced labour

Yahya Jammeh

Torture causing death (of the victim's brother, Malangai Gaye)

Solo Bojang

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, leading to death

Yahya Jammeh, Solo Bojang, Tambajiro

WITNESS NAME: Amie NJIE

TRRC HEARING Date (S): 2nd December 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The abduction of the witness' husband during the 2009 witch-hunting exercise, the impact on the witness and her family

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Businesswoman, gardener

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Wife of the deceased who was abducted during the witch-hunting exercise

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Businesswoman, gardener

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Amie Njie told the Commission that her late husband, Lamin Sonko, had passed away in 2013. They had been married for 20 years and had five children. The witness added that Lamin Sonko was a watchman at a nursery school. She also described him as an easy person who was reserved, adding that his eyes were not good, a condition he had since birth.

Counsel Singhateh asked if she could recall what happened to her late husband and the witness explained that he got sick as a result of being **captured** "by some people". The witness was then asked if she could recall when these people she was referring to caught him, but she responded that she could not say which year it was.

When the witness was asked which people she was referring to came for her husband, she explained that her husband had returned home from work and after lunch, people dressed in red accompanied by soldiers and paramilitary officers in uniform came into their house.

She highlighted that some of the soldiers and paramilitary officers had pickaxes and others had spades, shovels and guns.

She added that the Green Boys were also present and estimated that there were over ten men present.



Continuing on with her testimony, Amie Njie told the Commission that when the group arrived, they asked for the head of the compound. When her husband came out and said "*here I am*," they responded "*yes, it is you that we want*". They then asked her husband to go to the bantaba. The witness remarked she was terrified as her husband was trembling. She also recalled that the men dressed in red went behind the compound with a mirror and they were inspecting the entire place.

The witness recounted that at that time, her eldest son and his younger brother were at school but the little ones were in the house. When asked if she knew the mission of these men, she responded in the negative. However, she recalled that after lunch, she had heard drumming from the bantaba and that witch-hunters were in town.

Further testifying, the witness stated that she was surprised when they came and picked her husband. She added that she went to the bantaba and saw that people (including her husband) had been made to board a long wide bus. When she enquired about her husband, the men in charge told her he would not disembark as they were being taken away to Barra.

The Counsel asked if she could recall other people that were taken with her husband and the witness stated that one of her late husband's relatives called Biji Sonko was also taken away. She added that the bus was not full as the group of men was still in the village hunting for other people. Describing the scene at the bantaba, the witness explained that many people were there and these included people

who had been **captured** and relatives of those individuals who had followed them. She stated that she also saw drumming at the bantaba.

Amie Njie testified that after her husband was taken away, she came to hear that he was taken to Fort Bullen. She therefore decided to go there but later on she heard that at around 6 pm, those **captured** were put in a bus and were taken to Banjul. She stated that after their departure to Banjul, she did not receive any information about him until the following morning. The Counsel asked who told her where they were taking him and the witness responded that it was those who had followed them to Barra.

The witness told the Commission that when her husband was taken away, he had his mobile phone with him and also some money. The mobile was returned to her through a boy who was also the one who informed her that they had been taken away. The money, she said was not returned to her.

The witness was asked if the boy told her anything about her husband's condition and she replied that all he said was that her husband gave him the mobile phone and told him to take it to her. The Counsel asked when this was and the witness confirmed it was in the evening before they left for Banjul.

Continuing on with her testimony, the witness stated that after they left for Banjul, she was informed that her husband was taken to Baba Jobe's compound. She did not know who Baba Jobe was at that time, neither did she know where his compound was. Nevertheless, after three days without news from her husband, she decided to go to Baba Jobe's compound with the help of Biji Sonko's wife who appeared to know where the compound was located.

At the time of her testimony, the witness could not recall where exactly the compound was located but stated that when they arrived, they made enquiries and the soldier posted at the door said that they could not see the people inside.

He added that the people who were inside could not be seen by anyone.

Amie Njie explained that it saddened her that she could not see her husband after traveling all the way there to check on him. Her husband, she testified, eventually returned home after spending five days in **captivity**.

Discussing his return, the witness told the Commission that he arrived home on the sixth day, after the last prayer in the evening. She recalled that he came back with injuries on his knees and told her that he had been injected on his waist. The injuries he suffered on the knees started giving him problems so they took him to the hospital and he was given some medication.

On his physical appearance, the witness commented that her late husband came back looking weak. The Counsel asked if she could tell them if he told her about how he sustained the injuries on his body and the witness explained that her husband said that when he was made to drink the "medicine", he fell on the tiles injuring his knees.

He further told her that he was shouting so they injected him on the waist, which swelled as a result.

When asked if he had told her how he was made to drink this medicine, Amie Njie responded in the negative. She repeated that he only told her that he was given medicine to drink but did not explain the manner in which he was made to ingurgitate it. Going back to the swelling on his waist, she further explained that after taking his bath, she would heat some sand, put it inside a rag and then she would use it to massage the swelling. She specified that when he eventually got ill, it "came through that wound". The witness was asked if she could tell them if apart from the swelling she saw anything unusual around that area and she stated that there were swellings on his hand and his arm, which also turned black. Then they had to take him to the clinic for that, the nurses asked him if he had been **beaten** on his arms, but he responded that he was not aware.

Upon further probing, the witness explained that her husband's swelling started from his breast going downwards. She recalled that they noticed the swelling around 2 pm and at around 5 pm they took him to the hospital. Prior to being **captured**, she remarked, her late husband was healthy except for his eye condition, which was congenital and he never missed his work.

When the Counsel asked if she could tell them how long her husband was sick for after his release, the witness did not give a clear answer. She instead responded that when he returned, he complained about the pain where the injection had been given and on his body. She added that it was only when the sickness became serious that he disclosed that he was suffering and gave details about his condition. Later, the Counsel asked again how long her husband was ill for and the witness responded that "his sickness took two weeks", adding that he passed away the month before Tobaski (Eid). The Counsel further probed again and the witness stated that he passed away less than a year after he was released.

Amie Njie told the Commission that it saddened her that her husband was ill. She added that at the time, she was doing gardening work and her husband's illness affected the business.

She would work for two days and stop work for some time to take care of him.

When asked who she thought was responsible for his death, she blamed those who had **captured** him. Upon further probing by the Counsel, the witness reiterated that apart from God, it was those who had **captured** him who were responsible for his death. She explained that she knows death is inevitable but "these people", referring to the witch-hunters, were responsible. Asked if she knew who had sent the witch-hunters to **abduct** her husband, the witness responded in the negative. The Counsel further probed and the witness stated that she knew that the soldiers, the paramilitary officers and the Green Boys who accompanied the witch-hunters were working for Yahya Jammeh.

The Counsel further asked who the witness thought sent those people to **abduct** her husband and the witness said it could be Yahya Jammeh because they came on his orders.

On the impact of her husband's death, the witness told the Commission it was huge because after he **died**, the responsibility for the family and their sustenance was all on her. It also affected her children's education. She stated that the eldest wants to further his education but is unable to and the younger one who is at Grade 8 has had to abandon school.

Amie Njie added that since her husband's passing, she was the sole breadwinner of the family and confirmed that her family had suffered stigma as a result of her husband's death. She explained that when her eldest son would go to school, his schoolmates would say to him, "*behold we heard that the witch-hunters had also taken your father*", which saddened her son.

The floor was then given to the Commissioners who did not have any questions.

Chairman Sise told the witness he was sorry for the loss of her husband, the suffering that he endured in the hands of the witch-hunters and the impact this had on her family.

**In her very short closing remarks,
Amie Njie highlighted that the
impact it had on her was huge
because she was alone, with no
help and everything had fallen on
her shoulders.**

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

**Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture,
inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death**

Yahya Jammeh



WITNESS NAME: Tabara JOBE JAWO

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 2nd December 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Barra

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Teacher

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft and detained

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Teacher at the Essau Lower Basic School

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Tabara Jobe Jawo began her testimony by speaking about her background and her extensive experience in the field of education. She said she had a long career as a teacher working in the classroom and as a highly experienced administrator that has opened several schools throughout her career. Although the Counsel asked her why she was currently working in a lower position than before, the witness asserted that, as a Stream Head at her school, the position is the same as ones she has held before and she does not see it as a demotion. She explained that she changed positions because she was not feeling well and so she requested a transfer. When asked, the witness explained that she has experienced poor health due to the events that took place on 8th February 2009.

Explaining the day of the event, the witness narrated she left her home to go to her family compound to greet her mother. As she was about to return home, her younger brother told her that there were witch-hunters around who

were sent by Yahya Jammeh. The witness decided to hurry back home so that she could cook. She instructed her younger brother to let her know if they came back. After she had lunch, her younger brother called her and told her that the witch-hunters had arrived. She said she met with him to the bantaba to see who the witch-hunters were. When they arrived at the bantaba around 1 or 2 pm, they saw people drumming, dancing, and singing but all of them were strangers to the village. She added that she also saw the Green Boys as well as paramilitaries.

The Green Boys were singing, dancing, and clapping with a man dressed in red with mirrors on his clothes. When the witness was asked, she said she did not know any of the Green Boys but recognised them because of their green clothes. The paramilitaries were wearing blue. Aside from the Green Boys and the paramilitaries, she said she also saw some military officers. The Green Boys and Girls were more than thirty in numbers and there were two paramilitaries. There was only one man that she saw dressed in red. She said she could not identify the witch-hunter in red but he spoke in Fula and he was dancing and had a mirror in his hand. He was using the mirror to point at people and accuse them as witches or wizards. According to the witness, the military people were there to guard people who were being **captured** and accused of witchcraft.

The witness said she saw people being taken from their houses by the Fula man dressed in red and the Green Boys and also heard them **threatening** to **beat** people if they refused to go. She went on to explain that while she was standing with her younger brother at the bantaba observing the scene, she saw the Fula man dressed in red blowing his whistle and approaching her. This is how he picked her out and told her to go stand at the bantaba. Her younger brother tried to prevent her from going but she did not want her brother to be hurt so she went with the witch-hunter. She said she was taken because she was suspected of being a witch. When asked, the witness said that the men in red did not speak to her directly and they were speaking in Fula and that she

does not believe that they were from The Gambia. After standing at the bantaba for some time, the Green Boys brought a bus and loaded people on to it. The witness said she was not able to count the people on the bus but it was filled to capacity. Shortly after she boarded the bus, it started moving. When they arrived at Fort Bullen, she saw Lamin Ceesay, Alhajie Tabora Manneh, Mary Taal, Alhajie Faye, and some other people on the bus. She said they spent nearly five hours in Essau as the witch-hunters and the Green Boys continued to **capture** people and put them on the bus.

The Counsel asked for more details about the condition of the people she saw on the bus and she narrated that when she met Lamin Ceesay she saw that he was very tired, his hands were in handcuffs and he looked like he had been severely **beaten**. She had heard on the bus that he had been beaten because he did not want his parents to be taken. She observed that his eyes were very red. When asked, the witness said that they knew each other from childhood and that he worked as a head teacher.

When asked about Mary Taal, the witness told the Counsel that she had worked with the APRC but she did not know what position she held. The witness stated that Alhajie Faye was an alkalo at the time of this testimony but during the incident he was not. She said she also saw the chief of Lower Niumi, Alhajie Tabora Manneh. As far as she could tell, they were under **detention** because everyone who was taken to Fort Bullen was a **captive**. When asked, the witness acknowledged that the people that she met at Fort Bullen were from Barra. The group consisted of detainees from Barra and Essau. She said they also met an unidentified police officer there wearing a white shirt and she could tell that he was a senior police officer.

She continued to narrate that after stopping at Fort Bullen, they went to the ferry terminal and continued on to Banjul. Although she knew she was in Banjul, she could not tell exactly where they were because they did not arrive until 8 or 9 pm. However, she eventually heard that she was at the compound of Baba Jobe in Kololi. In the day time, she was able to see that the house had a large hall and a swimming pool.

When they arrived, there were armed guards at the house who were charged with making sure that no one was able to escape.

She stated that the Green Boys were part of the guards. They were taken inside, into a tiled room and told to sit down by one of the Green Boys. The witness said she refused to sit on the tiles and one of the guards went and brought a mat for her to sit on.

They brought her rice to eat and she told him that she did not take rice for her dinner, but that she usually has tea and bread. The man brought her tea and bread and the witness shared her food with the people around her. After they took their dinner, they were told that, it was time for the "witches" and "wizards" to take their medication. They were made to line up in front of a container full of the medicine. She said that when it was her turn, she was given a teacup full of the liquid by one of the Green Boys. The liquid was very bitter with leaves in it. She did not see the man dressed in red until after they drank the medicine and people had become intoxicated. When asked, the witness testified that this was the only medicine that she saw people drinking and the people who gave them the medication were speaking Wolof and Mandinka.

After drinking the medicine, they were instructed to return to the hall and go back to their previous seats. As people returned to the hall, guards went around to check to see how people were behaving. The witness testified that anytime anyone started speaking the guards would come by and listen to what they were saying. The accused were asked questions about what they were feeling and thinking while they were affected by the medicine. The witness stated that people were very intoxicated. Aside from being **forced** to drink the medicine that made the people intoxicated, the guards would push people over who looked like they were about to fall. The witness said she blamed the liquid that they drank for causing the

intoxication, adding that she was very fortunate that the medicine did not affect her and she could not say why she was unaffected even though she drank the medicine as well.

She further said that the people who were **captured** were mostly elderly men and women and that no young people were **detained** in their group. The men and women were kept in the same hall. Further explaining, she said that after she drank the medicine, a guard approached her and asked her what she was seeing. She told him that nothing was happening to her. The guard then asked her what the other people were seeing and she responded to him that she could not know the answer to that question because it was the guards who gave them the medicine that was making them intoxicated. The guard looked into her eyes several times to see if the medicine had taken effect. Tabara Jobe Jawo told the Commission that **accusations** of witchcraft were leveled against her and the others throughout the ordeal. The guards were told to watch them so the witches and wizards could not escape and the detainees were accused of having eaten human flesh.

The witness said she demanded a sponge to sleep on and the guards brought her one which she shared with others. When asked why she was given special treatment by the guards, the witness asserted that it was because, as a teacher, she is paid to talk and used her voice to demand what she needed. Despite some special treatment, the witness and the others were not given access to toilet facilities and many people slept on the floor. She said she was fortunate she did not have to use the toilet until the morning.

When asked, she said that she did not observe if other people lost control of their bodily functions or not and continued to explain that she was not given any more food or water until the next morning when she was released with a few other people. She stated that she believes she and the others who were let go early were released because the medicine did not affect them. When asked, the witness testified that she did not see or hear anyone being killed in the compound while she was **detained**. When they left, there were many people still **detained** in the compound and she did not know how long those

other people were there for but she heard that some people were held for an entire week. She said she did not know what happened to those people during that time. When they left Kololi, they were put in a vehicle, taken to the ferry terminal in Banjul, and given three hundred dalasi to pay for the ferry and taxi home.

Speaking to the effect that this event has had on her life, the witness stated that at the time she was captured, she was a deputy at her school and before the witch-hunt, she used to go to the school with breakfast each day to help the teachers who could not afford to eat. After she was **captured** and accused, many of her colleagues refused her food because they believed that she was a witch.

The stigma of the accusation damaged her relationships with many of her co-workers and fellow teachers. Even at the time of the hearing, she had **problems** with other teachers.

She said that on 26th April 2018, she was accused of having taking too many absences from working with the TRRC and going to the hospital. As a result, she got into an argument with one of the head teachers. The next day one of the deputies at the school tried to greet her and she did not respond. They got into an argument and the witness told him that she would not let herself be killed by him, to which he responded that she is the one who can **kill**, not him because the former school that she worked at had accused her of witchcraft and that is why she had to go to a new school. The deputy accused the witness of **eating human flesh**. She said she spoke about it with her superior and threatened to go to the police but was advised not to. She stated that in addition to being afflicted by the stigma of being accused of witchcraft, she has also been diagnosed with high blood pressure, diabetes, and gastric problems and she believes that her health problems could be due to the medicine that she was forced to drink. The

witness stated that the other people who were **captured** with her during the witch-hunt have experienced health problems and many of them died.

The Counsel asked the witness who she held responsible for the witch-hunt and the subsequent problems she has experienced. The witness stated that former President Yahya Jammeh was responsible because he was the one who sent the Green Boys and ordered the witch-hunt. She said she blames the former President Yahya Jammeh for the health problems and **deaths** of the other people who were accused of witchcraft and forced to drink the medicine.

The Counsel handed the witness over to the Chairman who expressed his condolences to the witness and to the other victims of the witch-hunt.

Chairman Sise stated this should **never have happened to anyone in their country or any human being** anywhere and that it was a **great human rights violation.**

The Deputy Chair asked the witness if the incident at the school was recorded in the school records. The witness replied that she did not know if it was recorded or reported to a higher authority. Commissioner Kinteh asked her if she was forced to bathe in the medicine as some other witnesses testified that they had and she told him that she was not.

The witness concluded her testimony by thanking the TRRC for crossing the river to allow people to testify. She thanked her family because she cannot repay them for being there for her whenever she is suffering, wherever her sickness befell her, when she needed money and medication. She thanked her directors at the school for understanding that she is sick and letting her care for herself. She said she was grateful to her head teacher that she works with. She informed the Commission that she is not well, and that up until now she could not recover her full health. She could not even work a full

week without lying down. She spoke to the damage done to others by drinking the medicine and reminded the audience that whatever happened to them was the will of God. She wished everyone good health.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death

Yahya Jammeh

WITNESS NAME: Lamin CEESAY

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 2nd December 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Essau, torture at Fort Bullen in Barra

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Teacher in Gambian school system

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Saved his parents from being detained, survivor of torture

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Retired Headmaster

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Lamin Ceesay began his testimony by narrating his rise through the ranks of the Gambian educational system until his retirement in 2014 after achieving the level of Headmaster Class A in Bakinding in Lower Niumi.

The witness testified that on Sunday 8th February 2009, he was in his compound in Essau when he received a call from his elderly father, Lalo Ceesay, around 3 or 4 pm. His father told him that while he and his wife, Binta Drammeh, also in her 80s, were sleeping the then Officer Commanding, OC of Barra Police Station, Omar Jawo, accompanied by a military officer named Saikou Jallow, Green Boys, and a “magician” entered their compound. They group woke up the witness’ parents and forced them out of their compound to the bantaba. The witness told the Commission, “when I received the call from my father, there was no other option then to go there and rescue them.”

After a technical problem was fixed, Lamin Ceesay continued that while on his way to the bantaba, he was met by more than 50 people - youths, the elderly, and children - who were running in the opposite direction.

When he asked what they were running from, they told him that there were witch hunters, soldiers, and Green Boys at the bantaba arresting people.



He added that when he arrived at the bantaba, he saw that those who had been **arrested** – around 50 people almost all of whom were around 50 years old – were sitting on the ground. The then District Chief Sekou Fabakary Sonko was sitting on a chair near by. The Green Boys and Girls were drumming and dancing while armed soldiers patrolled the area. According to the witness, one of the “witch doctors”, dressed in red with cowrie shells attached to his attire, carried a plate in front of him with mirrors mounted on it, and whoever’s image appeared from the back and the middle, he would run after that individual and bring them to sit among those **arrested**.

Upon arriving at the bantaba, the witness approached Seyfo (District Chief) Fabakary Nana Sonko and asked how he could allow these people to come to their community and arrest elderly people. The District Chief implied he was not involved, and that even his sister, Jainaba Sonko, was among those who were **arrested**.

Lamin Ceesay told the Commission that as far as he knew, Saikou Jallow was either a Lieutenant or a Captain who was posted to Barra but spent time in Fort Bullen. Later in his testimony, he added that Saikou Jallow was manager of Yahya Jammeh’s properties on the North Bank, and was rumoured to be among the Junglers.

Continuing on with his testimony, the witness related that Saikou Jallow approached him and asked why he

had come to the bantaba. The witness responded that he had received a phone call from his father and had come to save his parents.

Saikou Jallow then responded that he had received an order from Yahya Jammeh to come and arrest their parents and take them for medical treatment.

The witness countered that they could take care of their own parents, after which Saikou Jallow told the witness he was insulting the President and struck him.

According to the witness, between 10 and 15 soldiers and Green Boys began **beating** him and **striking** him with the gun butts. Saikou Jallow then handcuffed him and pushed him into a nearby bus. The witness described how his nose, his mouth, and his head were all bleeding as a result of the **beating**. He later added that OC Omar Jawo also participated in his **beating**.

However, Lamin Ceesay continued, while he was being **beaten**, his parents, and a number of the other elderly people who had been **arrested**, used the confusion to escape the bantaba. The Lead Counsel then interrupted the witness' testimony and asked him to identify Saikou Jallow from a lineup of photos. Afterwards, he began asking the witness about the witch-hunters.

Initially Lamin Ceesay denied any connection between the witch-hunters and the arrests. However, after further questioning from the Lead Counsel, he told the Commission that he heard that when Yahya Jammeh's aunt died, the ex-President believed it was caused by witches, "*which is why he engaged them in that exercise.*" When asked to describe the "exercise," he told them that it was to **arrest** people in their houses and take them to Baba Jobe's compound. When asked what alleged wrong they had committed that caused them to be **arrested**, the witness at first said they did nothing wrong, but later acknowledged that they had been **arrested** because they were believed to be witches and wizards.

Lamin Ceesay then continued his narration, telling the Commission that the bus departed Essau around 5.00

pm and took him, and between 30 and 50 other detainees, to Fort Bullen on the ocean side of Barra. When they arrived at the fort, he descended from the vehicle and met the current Alkalo of Barra Alhagie Babucarr Faye, the previous Alkalo Alhagie Tabora Manneh, Adja Mary Taal, Rohey Faye, and many other detainees.

A few minutes after arriving at the fort, the witness testified, the detainees were marched back on the bus, leaving him alone with around 20 to 30 soldiers. Saikou Jallow then took him to a small room, removed his handcuffs, and called for other soldiers to come.

Lamin Ceesay told the Commission that Saikou Jallow pulled out a pistol, pointed it at his neck, and asked if he wanted to say his last prayers.

The witness said that he replied in the negative. Meanwhile, OC Omar Jawo was insulting him and telling him that he was rude and was disobeying the President's order.

The witness further explained that when the soldiers arrived in the room, Saikou Jallow ordered them to hold the witness' hands and legs so he was suspended. They then began beating him with chains, 8 mm rods, pipes and sticks. He recalled that the beating continued for about 15 to 20 minutes. Upon further questioning from the Lead Counsel, he added that OC Omar Jawo also participated in the beating. When the **beating** stopped around 5.30 pm, the witness said, his mouth was **bloody**, his face swollen, and his whole body was in **pain**. He was released from Fort Bullen around 8 pm.

Outside the Fort, Lamin Ceesay continued, he met three of his children who were waiting for him. Seeing his state, covered in blood, they began to **cry**. After calming them down, they snuck around the seashore until they reached the river where the witness bathed to remove the **blood** from his body and clothes. He then walked home, arriving at around 8.45 pm.

The witness recalled that soon after he arrived home, Captain Jatta, who was in charge of Essau Barracks, came to his house accompanied by his orderly. Lamin Ceesay explained that he knew Captain Jatta because his wife used to work near the barracks and had a cordial relationship with the Captain. Apparently, Captain Jatta had come to apologise to the witness for the treatment he had endured that day.

The Captain explained that earlier the men who were overseeing the witch-hunting had come to his barracks and asked for his men to support them. He allegedly told the witness that if he had refused, he would be in trouble, so he released his men to join. Captain Jatta then apologised again for the part he played. The witness explained that he forgave the Captain because he had come to apologise and what had already happened could not be revised. The witness then told Captain Jatta that he had been told by OC Omar Jawo to report to the Barra Police Station the next morning at 8 am. The Captain assured the witness that he would meet him at the police station the next morning.

Lamin Ceesay stated that when he arrived at the police station the next day, he went to OC Omar Jawo's office where he also found Alhagie Tabora Manneh. Omar Jawo picked up his landline and told the witness he was calling the then State Guard Commander Lamin Sanneh. The witness added that Omar Jawo told him that Lamin Sanneh had told him to take the witness to the State House. However, before Omar Jawo finished his conversation with Lamin Sanneh, Captain Jatta entered the room and told Omar Jawo that he had already spoken to the State Guard Commander about releasing the witness.

The witness remembered that this turn of events upset Omar Jawo, who continued to chastise the witness for not letting his parents go with the witch-hunters. At this point, Alhagie Tabora Manneh intervened and said that the witness was not rude, but instead was a good son who did not want his parents embarrassed or **humiliated**. Afterwards, the witness was released to go home.

Lamin Ceesay then told the Commission that he later heard that the people who left Fort Bullen on the bus were taken to Baba Jobe's residence in Kololi where they were given a poisonous drug called "kubejaro" in

Mandinka. Those forced to drink the concoction would instantly vomit and have diarrhea, become dizzy, and behave like a "**mad person**". The witness wrote down the person who told him this and gave it to the Commission. He added that many of those who were taken to Baba Jobe's compound developed lasting illnesses that continue to plague some and have claimed the lives of others. The witness then presented a list of names of those effects, which he read to the Commission.

The names were as follows: MaLamin Ceesay, MaLamin Kaddy Sonko, Binta Ceesay, and Nata Camara died within a year of drinking the concoction, soon followed by Ansu Sarr, Alhagie Bigi Sonko, and Alhagie Kenbugoul Faye. Meanwhile Sankun Balla John, Tabara Jobe, Abbisa Jaw, Mama Bass, Badj Janneh, Foday Jallow, Mam Gaye Bahoum, Alhagie Babucarr Faye, and Fatou Keita still suffer serious **pain** and illness as a result of their ordeal and require continuous medical support.

In addition Sankung Balajo, Saliu Sonko, Jainaba Sonko, Bachi Jammeh, Mbai Cham, Masane Ceesay, Rohey Faye, Mba Musa Trawally, Kenbugoul Njie, Pa Aliue Joof, Ali Marr, Saikou Jawara, Adama Kassama, Jarjue Sonko, Alhagie Tabora Manneh, Mary Taal, and someone identified as Jamanka were also on the witness' list of those who were taken to Baba Jobe's compound.

Those who are still alive, Lamin Ceesay continued, face stigmatisation in the community.

He asserted that he does not believe the allegations against those that were taken, but that some people in Essau do and have branded the people detained on the 8th of February 2009 as witches and wizards.

The Lead Counsel ended his questions and Chairman Sise took the floor. He pointed out that thus far, between the testimonies of Jambur, Sintet

and Essau, the Commission had heard of 39 people who died as a result of drinking the concoction. This figure, he pointed out, does not include those who have been made permanently ill and those who still suffer **stigmatisation**. He described the situation as “totally unfathomable.”

After making his short statement, Chairman Sise then asked the witness what the purpose of the mirrors the witch-hunters carried was, but the witness said beyond speculating it was some kind of magic trick, he did not truly know. Chairman Sise later also asked if anyone had pointed one of the horns adorned with cowrie shells at the witness, to which Lamin Ceesay replied in the negative. Deputy Chair Sosseh Gaye then clarified that the witness’ parents were not among those taken to Baba Jobe’s compound.

Lamin Ceesay told the Commission he wanted to give his closing remarks in Mandinka so the audience could fully understand. He told the audience that he was very happy because finally the day he had been waiting for had arrived.

For 22 years, he said, they had no voice. He called on the new government to make sure that the offenders under Yahya Jammeh's rule be taken to court and face the law, and those who were victimised get the compensation they deserve.

He asked the government not to take the TRRC as lightly as it took the Janneh commission. “*This one is a commission about those who beat other people's father's, and if you beat someone's father, he never forgets. If the truth is not established, we will continue beating each others father's until the end of The Gambia.*”

The witness then addressed his comments to the students in the audience, appealing to them to take their education seriously. He argued that the perpetrators under the previous regime were people who had refused education. He also vehemently discouraged the government from forming youth movements, pointing out that these youth movements can become implicated in abuses. He concluded by thanking the Commission.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death

Yahya Jammeh, Omar Jawo, Saikou Jallow

Torture (of Lamin Ceesay)

Omar Jawo, Saikou Jallow



WITNESS NAME: Alhagie Babucarr FAYE

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 3rd December 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The witch-hunt in Barra

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Businessman from Barra

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft and abducted

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Alkalo of Barra and Businessman

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

The Lead Counsel drew the witness' attention to the events that took place on his birthday, 8th February, 2009, and asked him to recount what happened that day. The witness testified that he had crossed the river in the morning to go to work in Banjul and look after his businesses and while there, he got a call from his elder brother, Gibou that marabouts were in Barra and that they had come to pick up his father from the compound. Based on the information the witness received at the time, the marabouts were accompanied by some other people including Salifou Corr, Saikou Jallow and Solo Bojang. The witness believed they were soldiers because he had seen them wearing uniforms before but was unsure of their ranks.

The Lead Counsel asked the witness if he was familiar with the face of Saikou Jallow. The witness responded positively explaining that they used to be neighbours and saying that Saikou Jallow has a child with his niece and

that he lives in England. The witness was asked to identify Saikou Jallow from a series of pictures, which he did and identified person number 1 as Saikou Jallow.

Recapping, the witness said that on 8th February, 2009, he heard that some men had come to Barra with marabouts, or, witch-hunters, to capture witches. He said he was told by his elder brother told that the marabouts had taken his father to a meeting place in Banjul where the witch-hunters had gathered people who they had alleged to be witches to make them drink a medicine. He explained his brother had said that their father was taken to witness the event as he had no reason to suspect that he was being taken for any reason other than to witness the alleged witches drinking the medicine as he was the Alkalo of the village, and nothing could be done there without speaking to the Alkalo first. Even the government would approach the Alkalo before doing anything in the village.

He said when he called later to follow up, he heard his elder sister, Amie Faye shouting and screaming.

He also heard the voice of and his elder brother, Biram Faye, talking with his sister who was yelling, “you are killing my father” and Biram Faye was telling her, “No, no, just leave things as they are”.

He testified that Amie Faye and Biram Faye were at Baba Jobe's compound in Kololi when he spoke to them on the phone. When asked, the witness explained that Amie Faye and Biram Faye went to Baba Jobe's compound because they had heard that their father had been taken there and wanted to see how they could get him out of there. During that phone call, the witness said he also heard that his father had been given a medicine to drink and that medicine made people get drunk. The witness added for a man in his eighties to be given such medicine would be an attempt to kill him.

His continued to explain that his father was made to spend the night and to drink the concoction a second time and put a nylon bag over his head, asking him if he wanted to keep his alkaloship or give it over to someone else. He stated that he learned these things from his elder brother Gibou who also heard about it from their other siblings, Amie and Biram Faye who were at Baba Jobe's compound and witnessed what was being done to their father. When asked, the witness affirmed that he did not confirm this information with his siblings, Amie and Biram Faye.

He said he was told that after his father was given the medicine, he fell and they thought he had died. His father was later released and Amie Faye took him to her nearby compound in Kotu to give him medical assistance for the severe side effects of the medicine.

The concoction that the witness' father drank caused lasting damage and he was never able to do anything for himself again.

They took him to the hospital for treatment and later agreed to bring his second wife (the witness' mother) to Kotu to take care of him.

On their way to the ferry terminal the next morning to pick up his mother to take her to Kotu, the witness said he received a call from one Jawo, the officer in charge, OC of Barra Police Station (the witness did not mention the officer's first name)⁶³. Jawo told the witness that he wanted to see him and when the witness asked what for, the officer told him that he would speak with him at the police station. To this, the witness replied that he was checking on the status of the ferry because he needed to send his mother to Kotu. However, the witness ultimately decided to go and speak with Jawo, hoping it would not be a long conversation. When he arrived at the station, he found that a lot of soldiers there and he wondered what was going on in Barra.

When he went in to Jawo's office, he told him to sit down and when he asked him what had happened, the OC told him that he had been instructed to keep him (the witness) at the police station. He added that OC Jawo told him

he did not know what he had done but that he was instructed to keep him there. He said he told the OC that as the head of the law in Barra, he should know why he was being summoned and **detained** without explanation. He further said to Jawo "*your life and my life will be terminated in this office*" and at that time, he realised the military were there for him because when he told him that their lives would end in that office, Jawo called them. The head of the military, and three soldiers came into Jawo's office with someone called Pa Wally Njie, who was a sergeant at the Barra Police Station.

In that moment, the witness said he believed those men were willing to do anything to him and that they would use force on him if he resisted.

The witness said he told them that he would do what they wanted.

They put him in a pick-up truck and he sat in the middle of a group of soldiers. Salifou Corr drove the vehicle and Pa Wally rode in the passenger seat. They were followed by a pick-up truck with four armed soldiers, unknown to him. When asked where he was taken, the witness became visibly re-traumatised and started crying. It took him a moment to answer that he was taken to Fort Bullen and locked in the room where they kept sheep and given only a mat. It was the cold season in Gambia at the time and when he felt cold, he asked the **armed** guard to open the door for him and to allow him to sit outside in the sun to warm up. After that, he was locked inside again.

He added that when needed to relieve himself, he was escorted at gunpoint to the bathroom and back.

When asked why the soldiers were stationed at Fort Bullen, the witness explained that the soldiers were not initially at Fort Bullen as the fort did not have living quarters. They were stationed near his compound for

⁶³Based on previous testimonies, we believe this to be Omar Jawo.

a while. Amongst them were men like Salifou Corr, Solo Bojang and Saikou Jallow, and this is how he came to know Solo Bojang and Saikou Jallow. He further explained that people used to go to the fort often, but eventually they were prohibited from visiting Fort Bullen and Saikou Jallow, Solo Bojang, and Salifou Corr closed Fort Bullen to the public. The witness was asked why they had closed the fort to which he testified that to his knowledge, a marabout had told Yahya Jammeh that there was a house inside of Fort Bullen, which contained diamonds, so the President sent the marabout to work with Saikou Jallow, Solo Bojang, and Salifou Corr to close Fort Bullen and find the diamonds. They dug and threw dirt over the fence behind the fort and into the sea, looking for diamonds. The witness said he believed the marabout was fooling Yahya Jammeh.

When asked how the marabout was fooling the President, he told the Lead Counsel he had heard that the marabout was breaking up bottles and putting them in a case. The lead Counsel asked the witness if the marabout and the soldiers found diamonds in Fort Bullen. The witness replied that the project got to the point where an expert was brought in to test the diamonds they claimed to have found.

The witness recalled that he did not sleep that night because his window was facing their compound on the night the expert came to check the diamonds. He said he heard a lot of noise coming from their house but he was not curious enough to go outside to see what was happening. When asked what happened after the expert came to check the diamonds, he said that one day he woke up and heard that the man had run away. The soldiers pursued him but by the time they reached Karang (in Senegal) he was already in Senegal.

The witness also testified that the marabout purchased eleven compounds after connecting with the President and took vehicles and several bags of things given to him by Yahya Jammeh. The witness stated that the marabout scammed the President and ran away.

Clarifying, the Lead Counsel asked the witness if his testimony was as follows: President Yahya Jammeh was prospecting for diamonds in Fort Bullen and the mining operation destroyed the entire environment there.

The witness agreed and stated that when he (the witness) tried to go to Fort Bullen after the diamond excavation began, he was turned away.

The Lead counsel returned to the witness's **captivity** at Fort Bullen and asked him to continue his story. Continuing on with his testimony, the witness explained that he was alone there for a while but eventually he heard other people arrive and when someone opened the door to the room he was in, he saw Pa Alhagie Tabora, his aunt Mary Taal, and another aunt, Rohey Faye. He said he asked the soldier to allow him to join the group of captives and when he got to them, he asked what was wrong. They responded that they also did not know why they were there, they said they were just brought in. As they continued chatting, they heard a bus arrive at the fort between 5 and 6 pm and learned that the people who got off the bus were from Essau. He said that later, between 6 and 7 pm, a second set of buses arrived and they were made to line up and board them.

The Lead Counsel interrupted to ask the witness if he saw any teachers he recognised from the area. The witness testified that he saw Lamin Cessay who was **handcuffed**. The witness said he asked what happened to him and Lamin Ceesay told him they wanted to take his father and he refused to let them so they handcuffed and **abducted** him. When asked if Lamin Ceesay had any marks that might indicate if he was beaten, the witness testified that he did not know because he was preoccupied with his own situation and did not pay much attention to him.

The witness explained that they (their captors) said Pa Alhagie Tabora was an elderly man and a leader so he should not go. The witness explained that at that time, Solo Bojang was standing at the gate and he asked him what he had done wrong but Solo Bojang just told him to board the bus. When asked, the witness stated that after they lined up, he did not see Pa Alhagie Tabora or his aunts again until they had reached Baba Jobe's compound. On that particular day, the witness only saw one bus going from Barra to Baba Jobe's compound and explained that the reason was because after he sat down, he lowered his head so that no one would see him.

The Lead Counsel asked the witness why he did not want to be seen, he replied that he was embarrassed, he did not know what he had done to be abducted.

The witness testified that he also learned at Fort Bullen that he and the other **captives** had been accused of being witches or wizards and that was why they were **detained**.

The Lead Counsel asked if he was on the same bus as Lamin Cessay but the witness replied he did not see him on the bus or at Baba Jobe's compound either. At this point in the testimony the Lead Counsel pointed out that according to other testimonies, Lamin Ceesay, had been at Baba Jobe's compound on the same day and that must indicate that Lamin Ceesay was taken to the compound at a different time than the witness. The witness said that he did not see him, and it was possible he was at a different place. The Lead Counsel made a correction and said that in fact Lamin Ceesay did not go to Baba Jobe's compound and so the witness was correct when he said that he saw only one bus going there.

When asked, the witness estimated that the bus was at maximum capacity with more than sixty people and he believed he was the youngest person on the bus at forty to forty-five years old. He agreed that most of the people on the bus were either very elderly or in late middle-age.

The witness stated that he never learned of the exact location of Baba Jobe's compound because they arrived at night. When they got to the compound, they lined everyone up and took their names. He added that he had a large sum of money on him at the time and he asked if he could call his nephew to take it. He was not permitted to call anyone, because sometimes, after drinking the medicine, people would forget who they gave their money to and as a result, people had accused the guards of stealing before. They counted the witness' money, which totaled 1,200,000 CFA francs plus 12,000 dalasi. He explained that he was carrying such a large sum of cash because he had been planning on going to take care of his businesses and did not expect to be **imprisoned** that day. His captors counted the money and took it away.

Continuing on, the witness explained that before they drank the medicine, they had to eat. The green girls were doing the cooking and told people that they needed to eat before taking the medicine.

Alhagie Babucarr Faye further explained that he was the last person to drink the medicine so he was able to see what happened to many people.

He described the events as follows: they made people line up and some of those who had drunk the medicine acted as if their tongues were heavy.

He saw one Green Boy forcing elderly men, who were already intoxicated, to walk on one leg. The witness testified that if they made you stand on one leg and you showed signs of intoxication, they would put you to one side.

The witness explained that after giving people a concoction, which made them drunk, they would watch you and if you fell down, they would take it as evidence that you were a wizard or a witch. After daybreak, a marabout came to the compound and the witch-hunters told them who had "displayed signs" (of being a witch or wizard). These people were then forced to take a second dose. The Lead Counsel asked the witness what other symptoms were displayed by people who consumed the medicine and he responded that people could not control themselves when they were walking or talking and that sometimes you were not even aware of what you were saying.

The witness further stated that when it was his turn to drink the medicine, he was led into a small room in a house inside of the compound where he met a marabout. The marabout asked him what he was wearing and the witness disclosed that he had some jujus tied around his waist. He told the witness to remove them and hand them over to him, which he did. Then, he was **forced** to bathe in another room in the house.

When he returned, the marabout filled one cup full of medicine and gave it to him and within five minutes, his heart started beating hard and he felt nauseous.

After that, he did not sit down nor lie down, he spent his time trying to guide his elders and family members, talking to them, helping them to stay calm. He advised the elders to sit down and stay where they were so they did not get hurt but the witness himself stayed up and awake until daybreak.

The morning after they drank the medicine the marabout first looked at the people who had not displayed signs of intoxication. They were standing aside and a marabout dressed in red outfit with cowry shells asked them what they were doing there. At the request of the Lead Counsel, the witness clarified that the people had been separated into two groups the night before, one for people who displayed signs of intoxication and another for those who did not. The witness testified that he had been placed in the group of people who were unaffected by the medicine.

The people in the group that displayed signs of intoxication were forced to drink a second dose of the concoction. The witness was not able to estimate how many of them drank two doses. He said the marabout turned around and asked what his group (the people that did not display signs of intoxication after taking the concoction) was doing and that was when he realised that those who did not show signs of intoxication were not made to drink a second round. That was when a man approached the witness and asked him to change money to CFA francs for the marabout, which he did. The Lead Counsel asked what happened to the money he gave the soldiers the night before. He responded that they gave it all back to him.

After changing the money, the witness left the upstairs quarters. On his way out of the premises he realised that those who were forced to drink the medicine a second time would not be able to explain what had happened to them.

As he came downstairs, he saw people that looked dead.

He was **shocked** by what he saw. The witness was initially hesitant to share his experience because he worried it was too gruesome. The Lead Counsel encouraged him to continue with his testimony as the essence of the Commission was to expose the truth in order to prevent this from happening again. He said he saw people urinate on themselves and some vomiting. The Lead Counsel asked him what led the witness to believe that some people were basically dead to which he explained that everyone who drank the concoction was lying down like that like they were in a drunken state. When probed further, the witness stated that he did not see anyone who had defecated on themselves.

Alhagie Babucarr Faye continued on, explaining that when he came downstairs and saw people in that state, he checked for his aunties to see if they were in Baba Jobe's sitting room. He was told that they had been released and were outside and when he left the house, he found that they had already been given their transportation fare. Saikou Jallow was handing out money for transportation. When he was offered money, he said he turned it down because he had vehicles waiting for him and he took his aunties with him to the ferry. When they boarded the boat, he threw the bottles of spiritual water into the river when they were halfway across.

The Lead Counsel asked the witness to describe the heart pain he felt after drinking the medicine. The witness explained that he had pain and palpitations after drinking the medicine and for one month afterwards he experienced **severe chest pain**. He said that the heart problems did not change but they got better over time. He recounted that one morning, he had to sit down and rest every five minutes to reach the seashore, and after six stops he bought some food to try to feel better but when he drank coffee it made him vomit and he was taken to the hospital. There, he did not know where he was and could not see or speak to anyone. He could only hear

voices. He heard that he had been given injections to help him sleep but they did not help. He spent one night in the hospital and after he regained his consciousness, his older brother took him to Afri-Med⁶⁴ but he was not aware of how he got there or where he was until two days later. On the third day he was discharged but his condition was unimproved and undiagnosed. Eventually he was taken to the Medical Research Council, MRC where he was given an exam and the doctor and told to seek treatment in Senegal or Morocco, eventually going to Dakar.

At the hospital in Dakar, he paid 40,000 CFA for the consultation, 20,000 CFA for a check-up and 300,000 CFA on medication. The doctors in Dakar told him that he had a problem with his heart.

Alhagie Babucarr Faye told the Commission that he could not say it was the **concoction** he drank that made him sick because he believes that sickness comes from the hand of God, but **he knows he was healthy before he drank the concoction and became sick afterwards.**

The witness continued his testimony, explaining how his brother, who lived in the United States, suggested he secure a visa to the US for further treatment. He said that though he was initially rejected for the visa, he eventually secured one and went to the United States where he was able to get treatment. He said he initially thought the treatment would be free but was shocked to receive medical bills when he returned to The Gambia and ultimately paid 14,000 US dollars for all the treatment. In the United States, he was given an additional medication and after the treatment in the United States, he continued his treatment in Dakar and his condition has improved significantly now.

The Lead Counsel asked him what happened to his father who also had to drink the concoction. The witness said that after the witch-hunt, he had had to take his

father to the hospital in Banjul more than ten times before they got him a visa to go to the United States to treat the heart problems he developed after drinking the medicine. He said that expect for being diagnosed with diabetes, his father was very healthy before the witch-hunt. He had been a contractor and a hard worker who walked everywhere but after he was forced to drink the marabout's concoction, he developed serious heart problems.

His father went to the United States for treatment two years after drinking the medicine and was given a pacemaker after which he lived for less than a year before passing away.

When asked if he knew of anyone else who **died** from drinking the concoction, the witness responded that he heard one of his brothers, Pa Ndure, was taken by witch-hunters and after he returned, he never got well again. Also, a man named Jahateh passed away shortly after being **abducted**.

The Lead Counsel then passed the witness to the Commissioners to ask follow up questions. Commissioner Samba asked him how many days he spent in Fort Bullen. The witness explained that he was taken there around 8 am and they all left Fort Bullen in the evening around 7 pm to go to Baba Jobe's compound. He noted that once you were locked in Fort Bullen there was no way to get out.

Commissioner Jallow asked the witness what advice he had for the elderly people of Gambia. The witness said that if you are an elder in a village, it is your responsibility to do good and not be destructive.

Gambia is so small that whatever you do, good or bad, you do to yourself.

⁶⁴A private clinic in the Gambia.

Commissioner Jallow also asked him what advice he had for the young people of Gambia after the Green Boys youth group had been misused by the government to do a lot of terrible things in the country. The witness replied that adults must talk with them and help them to do the right thing because kids need guidance. He advised children to listen to their elders and their advice. When asked, the witness advised members of the armed forces not to treat the law like it is their own personal possession.

The Deputy Chair empathized with the witness for what he went through, adding that he was among the fortunate few to have the means to seek medical treatment in The Gambia and abroad. She noted that unfortunately, there were many that went through same experiences who are poor without support for treatment – some have passed away, others are old now and some are still **suffering**. She added that she wanted to draw people's attention to these issues and hope they will reflect on the fact that one thoughtless act has led to people suffering financially, physically and socially as a result of the stigmatisation.

The Deputy Chair went to ask the witness about how his mother, who was waiting for him to take her to the ferry, felt with a sick husband and a son who was **arrested**. The witness explained that he was more worried for himself than for his mother who was at home with his younger and older siblings. He said he heard later that his mother was taken to Kotu to his father but he did not know how she was taken there.

Commissioner Kah asked how he thought the witch-hunting incident affected the families of the victims. Alhagie Babucarr Faye explained that aside from the physical problems that the victims experienced and that their families had to provide support for, his family also worried that he would experience **discrimination** because of the stigma associated with the accusations. The witness stated that he was not bothered and he knew that anyone who knows him, knows that he is a worker and that he works for himself. He said he encouraged his family to believe in God and go on with their lives and not take the events to heart, because he had not.

Commissioner Bishop Odico asked the witness how the marabout who organised the diamond hunting activities

escaped from Gambia without getting in trouble. The witness explained that he escaped because the police were afraid of the soldiers and some of the soldiers were in part of it. He added that everyone was afraid to challenge a soldier that was close to Yahya Jammeh. He added that the soldiers could have stopped the marabout when he was staying in the compound but he believed that they chose not to. When asked, the witness acknowledged that the marabout bought many properties in Barra and Essau area but he was a fraudster, buying homes so people would believe he was there to stay when he was not. The Chairman asked him if his business were affected by the stigma associated with the witch-hunt. The witness replied that God was good to him and it did not affect his work or income.

Alhagie Babucarr Faye closed his testimony by thanking the Commission for the opportunity to share his story. He explained that he never thought he would be able to testify in front of the whole world because he was in pain but the reason why he came to TRRC was because of the Commissioners and their work.

He added that he had had a lot of pain but that he felt healed that day. He thanked God for his family because they were never discouraged and they came to witness his testimony when they could have stayed away in hiding. He also said that his children know that he believes in God and that his experience has not shaken his faith. He advised Gambians to believe in God, stating that the evil that affected them has come and gone.

He stated that he is only angry with Jawo, and no one else. The Lead Counsel asked the witness if he would reconcile with Jawo if he came to him asking for forgiveness. The witness stated that he was not ruined even though he tried to ruin his family. If Jallow asked him for forgiveness, he would call his whole family and tell them to forgive him because they are young and would care if someone hurt him.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

**Persecution, torture, inhumane and degrading treatment
leading to death**

Salifou Corr, Saikou Jallow, Solo Bojang

Unlawful detention

Jawo (first name not stated)

She added that she wanted to draw people's attention to these issues and hope they will reflect on the fact that **one thoughtless act has led to people suffering financially, physically and socially as a result of the stigmatisation.**



WITNESS NAME: Jainaba SONKO

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 3rd December 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Barra

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Farmer and
Groundnut picker

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Retired Farmer

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Jainaba Sonko began by telling the Commission that she lives in Essau and picks ground nuts at Barra. She was previously a farmer but her children have asked her to stop farming because of her age.

Moving on to her experience during the witch-hunt, the Counsel asked the witness if she remembered the day that she was captured and taken away to Kombo. She replied that she remembered the day but did not remember the date. The Counsel stated that according to their information, the event happened on a Sunday and asked Jainaba Sonko if this was the case. She acknowledged that this was possible but that she could not recall exactly what day it took place on.

The Counsel asked Jainaba Sonko to describe what happened on the morning that she was **captured**. She replied that she had been gathering ground nuts in the morning with a friend, Joni Sonko and on their way home, they encountered a group of people having some kind of a meeting. They told her and her friend that they had some medicine for arthritis. She said both her and her

friend suffered from arthritis so they approached the group. When they met them on the road leading to the Barra Police Station, a man grabbed her hand and smelled it and then did the same thing to her friend. He then told them to go to the vehicle to wait for them and they would bring them medicine shortly.

Probing further about the men who captured her, the Counsel asked the witness how the man that smelled her hand was dressed. She replied that he was sitting in front of the vehicle and she did not check what he was wearing. Continuing, the Counsel prompted her that previously, she had told the Counsel that the man was dressed in red. Jainaba Sonko agreed that this was true. The Counsel then asked her if the man was holding anything in his hand or carrying anything with him and she responded that he was not carrying anything. Clarifying, the Counsel told her that previously she had informed the Counsel that the man was holding a horn and a mirror and the witness clarified that there was another man there who carried these objects but that he was a different person from the one seated in the vehicle. The Counsel asked what those men were doing and the witness replied that they would look at you and tell you if they thought you were a wizard or a witch and that they would point their mirrors at you. The man who pointed his mirror at them was also wearing red and they were accompanied by people who were wearing green-green.

The Counsel asked the witness why the man in red sitting in the vehicle had smelled her hand. She replied that she did not know exactly why he had smelled her but that it had something to do with the witch-hunting. She was then asked what happened to her friend and she told them that the same things happened to her friend and that she had since passed away.

The witness then narrated to what happened next. She told the Counsel that she and her friend were then taken away and when they arrived at their destination, they were brought food and they had lunch. She said she was captured at 2 pm at and that they left by 6 pm. She was asked her if she saw

any military officials accompanying the men in red and the men in green. The witness said that this was possible but that she did not see them. The Counsel reminded the witness that previously, she had said that there were men dressed in black that day. The witness agreed that she had seen men in black and the Counsel asked her if she thought those men could have been paramilitary soldiers. The witness agreed that this was also possible and that those men had been beating drums, clapping, and dancing during that time.

The Counsel asked if anyone else was being captured by the men dressed in red that morning. The witness initially responded that she did not know anything about that but after more, similar questions, the witness said that she did see men in red capturing people and taking them away.

Jainaba Sonko explained that she went with the men because she had been promised arthritis medication but that they were never given the medication. Instead, the man who offered it to her told her that he would only give it to her if she got on a bus and went to Kombo. The Counsel asked her if she agreed to go on the bus to Kombo and if she ever changed her mind about going. The witness said that she did agree to go but she also changed her mind at one point.

The witness described to the Counsel how she was taken to a small house with three people inside. Two the people caught her hands and another one put a bag over her head.

She told said she them she did not know anything about witchcraft. She also told them that she had lived in her villager for a long time and no one there thought she was a witch and she did have any witches in the family either but the men did not listen to her.

Clarifying, the Counsel asked her if this took place in Kololi and the witness told them that it had taken place there and she never would have gone with them if she had

known they were not going to be given any medicine. The Counsel asked if she was **forcibly taken** and the witness agreed that she was.

Continuing on, the Counsel asked if she was taken to another room in Kololi. The witness said she was and clarified that it was a different room from the one where a bag was put over her head. The room was completely bare and had a tile floor. The witness said the compound belonged to Baba Jobe and that both men and women were **forced** to lie down on the tile floor. The people were given a liquid to drink. She was given two cups of the liquid. When she was asked how big the cup, was she said that it was just a regular cup that people drink out of and that it was a big, white cup. She did not know what kind of plant matter was in the liquid but she heard others say that it was kubejara. The Counsel asked if she was forced to eat the leaves in the cup and she said that she was not. She had removed the pieces of leaves and threw them away.

After drinking the liquid, she was taken to another room by three men and two of them took her hands and held her while a third one put a plastic bag over her head. The witness said that she felt dizzy and started trembling all over but that she did not fall down.

The Counsel asked the witness how it made her feel when they put the bag over her head and she said it made her suffer. When she finally got out of that place in Kololi, her family had to take her to the hospital.

Jainaba Sonko explained that she was held at the compound for three nights and that on the fourth day they released her just before evening prayers. The conditions at the compound were very rough and she told the Counsel that they were only fed after they arrived on the first day. They were made to sleep inside

a bare room in Baba Jobe's compound without blankets or anything else to make them comfortable. They were **forced** to sleep on the tile floor, not given access to a bathroom, and they were not allowed to shower. Jainaba Sonko testified that everyone who was taken to Kololi was forced to drink the "medicine."

The witness stated that her friend Joni Sonko, who was also **captured** and made to drink the medicine later **died**. When asked who she thought was responsible for the death of her friend, Joni Sonko, the witness told them that it was former President Yahya Jammeh who was responsible for what happened there because he was the one who had mixed the country up and caused these problems.

Returning to the effects of the medicine they were forced to drink, the witness testified that after she drank the medicine, she had trouble walking, was trembling, and had severe **pain** in her waist so that she had to hold her stomach to help with the pain. When asked, the witness testified that the medicine that they drank made it so that some people were not able to go to the restroom because they could not walk and so they soiled themselves.

She said that her friend, Joni Sonko, also suffered from similar side-affects and that from that day, her friend never had a day of peace and eventually she died.

The witness said that she believes that the medicine was the cause of her friend's death.

She also told the Counsel that because of the accusations of witchcraft, some people in her village really thought she might be a witch and afterwards, she sometimes would catch people whispering about her or refusing food that she offered them. The **stigma** from the accusations of witchcraft was bad enough that followed her even to her home compound.

After the witness concluded her testimony, Chairman Lamin Sise thanked the witness for her testimony. There were no questions from the Commissioners. For her final remarks, the witness extended her sincerest gratitude to her family. She said, "*Let's be united because that is going to benefit us. But you say something here, another one is saying something else somewhere, it looks like there is separation and you are hitting two heads together*". She said that the people of Gambia should stop this because they are all one people and that they should be united because that's what's best for everyone. She greeted each of the members of the Counsel and said thanked them for their work. Jainaba Sonko prayed for Allah to guide everyone and protect them from evil and asked that they all be blessed in the name of Islam.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, leading to death

Yahya Jammeh

WITNESS NAME: Adama GASSAMA

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 4th December 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The witch-hunt in Essau; the witness and her husband's abduction, the impact on the witness and her family

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Not mentioned

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft and abducted; Wife of the deceased who was abducted during the witch-hunting exercise

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Gardener

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Adama Gassama told the Commission that she was the first wife to her late husband Nata Camara, with whom she had four children but stated that one had passed away. She added that she had a co-wife called Ceesayba Jadama who had six children with Nata Camara.

Discussing the witch-hunt, the witness explained that though she could not remember the year, she recalled that it took place on a Sunday. Asked where she was that particular Sunday, the witness stated that she was in her compound in Camara Kunda. At this point, Counsel Singhateh asked if this was in Bakau and the witness clarified that it was in Essau. The Counsel asked the witness if she had a compound in Bakau and in Essau and the witness confirmed she did.

Adama Gassama further explained that they had just moved to Essau, adding that at the time of the witch-hunt incident, she was in her compound in Camara Kunda, which is located in Essau. Then going back to what happened on that day, the witness told the Commission that it "was very bad".

The witness narrated that men came with a bus, alighted at the bantaba, brought a black goat out of the bus, dug a hole and did not slaughter it but buried it alive.



She described those she was referring to as wearing red shirts adorned with mirrors. She further explained that the witch-hunters were running until they entered her compound where they found her husband sitting down. They told him they were there to pick him up. When he asked what the problem was, they responded that they were going to cure him to which he replied that he was not ill.

Further testifying, the witness told the Commission that they threatened to call soldiers on him if he did not come but her husband still resisted. The witch-hunters therefore went ahead and called the soldiers. At this point, the Counsel interrupted and asked some clarifying questions to the witness. The witness explained that she was in her compound when the witch-hunters arrived and buried the goat alive. Asked how she knew what had happened at the bantaba, she explained that she heard people narrating the incident.

Adama Gassama said that the men wearing red were accompanied by armed policemen, whom she was able to identify because of their uniform. At this point, the Counsel stated to the witness that she had told them that the first time the men in red came, they told her husband to go with them and when he refused they told him that they were going to bring soldiers. The witness agreed. The Counsel then asked if she was correct to say that the first time the witch-hunters came, they did not come with soldiers. The witness responded that the first time, they did not come with soldiers but when her husband refused to go with them, they called in the soldiers. The Counsel

further asked whether it was only the “people in red” the first time and the witness responded that there were two of them.

After some follow-up questions, the Counsel put it to the witness that two men in red came the first time and her husband refused to go with them. She then asked what happened the second time and the witness testified that the second time, they were accompanied by two soldiers.

She added that the soldiers threatened to kill her husband if he did not go with them, specifying that they got hold of him and forcefully pulled him up.

The witness narrated that she was also forced to go with them.

Adama Gassama stated that as far as she could recall, her husband was quite healthy at the time. The Counsel then asked what the reason was that they had also asked her to follow them and she simply responded that they just said “let’s go”. She added that they took them to the bantaba and when they arrived, they were made to board a bus filled to capacity and taken to Fort Bullen.

The Counsel asked whether there was anything unusual going around the bantaba and the witness responded that she did not notice anything. The Counsel informed the witness that she was reading from her statement, which said that she (the witness) saw people beating drums at the bantaba. When the Counsel asked the witness to confirm that information for them, the witness stated that there was drumming and dancing because they were hunting for witches.

When the Counsel asked if that was the reason why she was taken and placed in the bus, the witness responded in the affirmative. Continuing on with her testimony, the witness recalled that the bus contained elderly and middle-aged persons as well as married women. Adama Gassama stated that they stayed at Fort Bullen for a little time before they departed. Going back to the men in red, she recalled that they either spoke the “Tilibongka”⁶⁵ or “Sarahule”⁶⁶ language.

The witness disclosed that they were not told where they were being taken and at that point, she was wondering whether she was going to live or die.

From Fort Bullen, they went to Baba Jobe’s compound, which she said she knew because she was born in Bakau. When asked who Baba Jobe was at that time, the witness testified that she never saw him but she had heard about him and that he was “one of the followers of Yahya Jammeh”.

Continuing on with her testimony, Adama Gassama testified that when they arrived at Baba Jobe’s compound around dusk prayers, they were taken inside, made to sit down and given food, which they refused to eat. She recalled that after a while, they were taken to the back of the compound and made to drink medicine from a cup. When they drank the medicine, they came and lied down until around 2 am. They then took her husband behind and beat him. She stated that she could hear his screams. After he was brought back and made to lie down, she asked him “Nata, what has happened?”

He told her that those “people have killed me”, adding “Adama, I will not survive”.

The Counsel asked the witness if she met anyone at Baba Jobe’s compound when they arrived and the witness stated that the compound was packed with Green Boys and soldiers. When the Counsel asked who the Green Boys were, the witness responded that they were “followers of Yahya Jammeh”. The Counsel asked whether the Green boys also came to Essau by the time she was being abducted and the witness said yes.

Going back to the medicine she was made to drink, the witness explained that it was the old man, which she described as short and as the leader of the group,

⁶⁵People from Mali are commonly referred to as Tilibongka.

⁶⁶Mande language spoken by the Soninke people of Africa. The language has an estimated 2,100,000 speakers, primarily located in Mali, and also in Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea and Ghana.

who **forced her** to drink the medicine, adding that it was greenish, bitter and sour. The witness was not among the first people to drink the medicine and described what happened to the first group when they drank the medicine. She stated that they found them lying down, limp with some even vomiting because of the medicine they drank. Some were also growling and rolling around.

Adama Gassama said she was scared when she was asked to drink the medicine because she thought she would **die** because she was a woman. When asked, the witness described the place she went in to drink the medicine as a small house within Baba Jobe's compound. They put the medicine in big pans inside the room and the witness was given a big drinking cup that they filled to the brim.

Initially, she said she was not going to drink it but they told her that if she did not drink the medicine, they would kill her there. So she had no choice but to drink it.

At this point, the witness specified that inside the room, there were three men wearing red with horns in their hands in addition to the old man. She added that after looking at them, she thought that they were Tilibongkas and they were speaking in Sarahule. The Counsel informed the witness that they heard testimonies that those men were peaking in Fula. The witness disputed that and asserted that they were not Fulas as they were speaking Sarahule.

After taking the medicine, the witness narrated that she was not even aware of herself, the whole world went black and she remained in that condition until daybreak. They then took them inside and made them drink again after which they went and lied down under the mango tree. In response to some follow-up questions, the witness explained that after she was made to drink the medicine for the first time, her husband was **dragged** away and **beaten** by the men in red. She added that the first time she drank the medicine, it did not affect her much.

Going back to her husband, the witness recalled that the areas were he had been **beaten** were all swollen and he had told her that he had been beaten with black truncheons. When the Counsel asked whether her husband had told her the reason for the **beatings**, the witness responded she did not ask because she was afraid and her husband also did not tell her anything. Adama Gassama testified that her husband was made to drink the same medicine that she drank. She added that though she could not estimate his age at the time, her husband was an "old man" but "not to the point that he was that elderly" and he **died** less than a year after drinking the medicine.⁶⁷

The witness stated that they told them that the reason for them drinking that medicine was that they were hunting for witches. The witness and her husband were each made to drink the medicine twice. She stated that after drinking the medicine for the second time, her body became heavy and she was not aware of what was happening.

The Counsel informed the witness that they had received evidence that after drinking the medicine, most of the people were made to bathe with the medicine as well, and asked whether that happened to her as well. The witness said no. Further testifying, she told the Commission that she was made to stay at Baba Jobe's compound for two days.

Moving on to her husband, Adama Gassama explained that the second day that he was made to drink the medicine, her husband was lying down after drinking the medicine, unaware of his surroundings. The witness recalled that all those **captured** in Essau were negatively affected by the medicine.

Continuing on with her testimony, Adama Gassama testified that eventually, her daughter Fatou Sonko made a call to a friend named Binta (she did not know her last name) who was working at Baba Jobe's compound and was also a Green Girl. She asked her to intervene so her mother (the witness) could be released. The witness did not know Binta well prior to

⁶⁷The witness contradicted herself later in the testimony on the timeframe of her husband's death.

being taken to Baba Jobe's compound but she also lived in Essau and she used to meet up with her daughter so she clearly recognised her.

After Binta's intervention, Adama Gassama and her husband were released on that day. Their son came to Baba Jobe's compound and because the witness and her husband were very weak, he hired a taxi and brought them all the way to the terminal.

Adama Gassama disclosed that once they got home, her husband got really sick, adding that he was suffering from his waist and stomach, which the witness believed was as a result of the beatings meted onto him.

The witness told the Commission that her husband was taken to the hospital close to the Sandika⁶⁸ in Serrekunda about a month after they were released. They gave him medication and injected him on his back but he was still sick when they returned home. They took her husband to the hospital again where he stayed for about 10 days before being discharged. About four days later, he was ill again so they went back to the hospital and he was admitted for 10 days again. After he was discharged, the illness returned again so they went back to Essau Hospital. The witness recalled that this was during the start of Ramadan. They were there until the day before the Eid prayers then her husband died.

The Counsel asked the witness whether her husband's condition was diagnosed and the witness stated whenever he went to the toilet, whatever he passed was green. The Counsel asked for how long her husband was in that condition and the witness responded that he remained like that until he died, which she estimated to be a month after his release from Baba Jobe's compound. At this point, the Counsel informed the witness that she was looking at her statement and she had mentioned there that her husband was in and out of the hospital for two years before he died. The Counsel asked if that was correct and the witness confirmed.

Regarding the witness' condition, she recalled that she was given some medication when she told the hospital that she had drunk a strange substance. Her condition has slightly improved since she started taking the medication and whenever she is unwell, she goes back to the hospital. When asked what she would say was the cause of her sickness and her husband's death, the witness categorically attributed it to the medicine they drank because before that, she remarked, they were all healthy.

She further added that she held Yahya Jammeh responsible for her condition and the death of her husband as it was him who sent those people to come after them.

On the impact of her husband's death on her family, the witness stated they were faced with hardship as he was the breadwinner. He was the one paying for the children's school fees but now the children can no longer go to school because they could not afford it anymore. She added that she has faced the stigma of being considered a witch in their community ever since her return from Baba Jobe's compound. Sometimes, if she stands near someone, they just run away from her, which was unpleasant because she is not a witch.

Asked if the stigma affected her children, their siblings and her co-wife and the witness confirmed it did. She stated that it affected them seriously because they keep on crying, with one losing her husband and the children losing their father. They also faced the stigma as being referred to as children of a witch.

The Counsel thanked the witness for answering all of her questions and the floor was given to the Commissioners.

Chairman Sise told the witness that he was truly sorry that she had both her rights and husband's rights violated, which led to his death.

⁶⁸A market near Serrekunda.

Commissioner Kinteh asked the witness if her daughter Fatou Sonko completed school and the witness responded that she did not and as a matter of fact, none of her three children or her co-wife's six children completed their education.

In her closing remarks, Adama Gassama declared that she would like Gambian to be mindful about things that are happening in the country because if things like these continue, they will lead to many deaths. She deplored falsely accusing people of being witches or wizards and urged that everyone pray that such atrocities never happens in The Gambia again.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death

Yahya Jammeh

Chairman Sise told the witness that he was truly sorry that she had both her rights and husband's rights violated, which led to his death.



WITNESS NAME: Ali MARR

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 4th December 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: Abduction of the witness from Barra; the witness being accused of being a witch, his victimisation and the impact it had on him and his family

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Cart-driver

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Farmer

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Ali Marr testified that in the month of February 2009, two Fulas dressed in red clothes and accompanied by several soldiers came to his compound while he was eating lunch with his two sisters, Awa and Isatou Marr, and his elder brother Kolly Marr from the same mother and father.

When the Fulas and the soldiers arrived, they told them that something had been placed in the compound and that it was not good.

They added that they had been sent by Yahya Jammeh to capture alleged witches and wizards inside the village.

Asked why they specifically went to his house, the witness responded that they did not know anything about him, they just came to his house and alleged that he

was "one of them", a wizard. He further recalled that when they arrived, he went to get up to greet them but they told him to stay seated and eat his lunch.

The witness testified that, after he ate, he put away his basin of food and the men in red forced him to hold an object, noting that he believed that it was a **human skull** because of how it looked, having eye sockets, a hole where the nose would be, and jaws with no teeth.

He further added that the Fulas dug a hole in his compound from which they claimed to have removed the skull. While they were digging the hole, the soldiers were standing on the right and the Fulas on the left. When the hole was dug it was just the two Fulas standing by where they were digging and during this time the witness was standing at his door and they called him to come to them and then forced him to hold the skull. The witness specified that when they were digging, he did not know what they were looking for or what they were doing.

When asked, the witness testified that he could not tell if the object had been removed from the hole or if it had been brought with the Fulas who dug a hole in his compound to make it appear like there was a human skull buried in his house. After they gave him the skull to carry, he initially refused, but they told him, "*It is a force and we are going to get hold of it*", and they made him carry it. When the witness took the skull in his hands, he said that he felt a great heaviness and a great force come over him so that he felt dazed.

Ali Marr told the Commission that the Fulas and the soldiers took him, his elder brother Kolly Marr and his two sisters Awa and Isatou Marr to the vehicle. At the time, his older brother was very sick and could not get out of bed so he was helped by the soldiers to board the bus. The witness highlighted that when they were **forced to board the bus**, he had to **leave behind the donkey that he used to support his family** as well as **his only son** who was still alive at the time but **very sick**. When he was taken away he was not able to leave anyone with his sick child to

take care of him. When asked, the witness said that he initially said that he was **captured** on Sunday but that it may actually have occurred on Monday. He also specified that there were about 60 people on the bus.

When asked, the witness testified that the bus was more than half a kilometer away from his compound and when he walked to the bus, he was forced to carry the skull in his hands and walk in front of the **armed** soldiers and Fulas dressed in red. The Lead Counsel asked the witness if it seemed like he had been forced to walk with the skull in order to create the appearance that he was a wizard who had been caught with the remnants of his kill, like a criminal being dragged away to jail and the witness responded that it was exactly like this. As he walked through the streets, he encountered people from his village and started to feel like something was in his body. He started feeling dizzy, his body felt heavy, and he had **pain** throughout his body.

When asked, the witness agreed that he had been **captured** around mid-day and was traveling on the bus and ferry until after evening prayers, spending about 4 to 6 hours in the bus waiting before they crossed to go to Banjul and then the Kombos. When they arrived at Baba Jobe's compound, they were put into a tiled room and made to sleep on the tiles. He recalled that they stayed there for two days like that without water or food. In that time, the witness and his siblings were all given medicine to drink and then they were left there alone in the tiled room.

Ali Marr testified that after he was forced to drink the **medicine**, he became very **dizzy, nauseous, and had difficulty breathing.**

He added that the Fulas and the soldiers made a man who was there fill the cups to make the accused people drink. After he drank the medicine, he became very confused and did not remember what happened for some time afterward. He was the fifth person in line to drink the medicine. The witness testified that he did not see what happened to the people who drank the medicine before

him because he was just focused on himself. He did not regain consciousness until the following day at breakfast when he was able to start recognising people including Alhagie Kenbugoul and Mam Banyi Senghore.

The Lead Counsel asked what he noticed about his elder brother that morning. The witness said that he was very sick and could only lie down after drinking the medicine. His sisters were also sick and lying down and told him that they should put their faith in Allah to take the effects of the medicine from them. The Lead Counsel asked if they were given the concoction to drink a second time on the second night and the witness clarified that on the first night that he was at Baba Jobe's compound he did not have to drink the concoction but was forced to drink it the next morning. He did not know why he was not made to drink the concoction the night before but one of the Fula men put him aside that night and told him not to drink while others were taken to consume the medicine.

When asked to elaborate on how he was affected by the medicine, the witness testified that he developed a painful boil over his heart that was so bad that people who saw it would cry and thought that he would certainly die.

When the boil eventually popped, it was full of blood and pus. The witness described it as being like an empty tomato tin.

Continuing on with his testimony, the witness stated that the following day, they offered him a cup of tea and a slice of bread but he refused them. The soldiers that took him away brought him back to Barra, dropping him off near the police station in the same place where they originally disembarked. He was dropped off with his siblings and his elder brother had to be carried home in a wheelbarrow.

After three days his brother **passed away**. The witness testified that his son, Ebrima also passed away while he was **detained** at Baba Jobe's compound. Finally, in addition to his brother and his son, his donkey that he used to earn a living had also died.

When asked what side-affects the witness continued to experience after drinking the concoction, he explained that initially his chest still hurt but now he gets bad dizzy spells from time to time. As for his sisters, one of them was taken away by her son for treatment and his other sister developed problems with her eyes.

The witness testified that prior to the incident, he and his siblings did not have any of these health problems and their problems developed after they drank the medicine.

In addition to his health problems, the witness is not able to support his family or fulfill his responsibilities.

The witness expressed that because he was accused of being a wizard, he is followed by the **stigma** of that accusation and some people still believe that he is a wizard. He explained that when he went out in public afterwards, people would move away from him because they believed he was a wizard. The witness has realised that all the problems that he has had after being detained by the witch-hunters came from the medicine he was forced to drink. The witness testified that if you are accused of being a witch or wizard, people from other clans will run away from you.

Ali Marr declared that he held Yahya Jammeh responsible for sending the soldiers and the Fulas to take them away.

The Lead Counsel handed the witness over to the Commission. After the Chairman expressed his condolences, Commissioner Bishop Odico asked how

the witness managed to make a living after his donkey died while he was **detained** at Baba Jobe's compound. The witness explained after the donkey died all that he could do was to put his faith in Allah.

Commissioner Kah asked the witness whether he ever went for treatment for his sicknesses. The witness said no he has never looked for treatment, he just suffered from dizziness and whenever it attacked him he just tried and catch on to things to be able to steady himself.

Imam Jallow told the witness that this did not happened to him alone, it happened to other Gambians and asked the witness how could the TRRC or the government help them for them to return to normality. The witness said that it was left to them to help them and advise them to forge ahead.

The Deputy Chairperson asked the witness whether his elder brother left children before he died and the witness stated that his brother had three children who were in Senegal.

To conclude his testimony, the witness closed by thanking the elders present at the Commission, he prayed to Allah to grant long life and good health to the people who are doing the job of the commission. He said that he believes that these events were destined by Allah long ago to happen and wished, again, for long life and good health to the members of the TRRC.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death

Yahya Jammeh

The witness highlighted that when they were **forced to board the bus**, he had to **leave behind the donkey that he used to support his family** as well as **his only son** who was still alive at the time but **very sick**.



Madi Sonko holds a photograph of his father Bigi Sonko, who was accused of witchcraft, abducted and forced to drink a hallucinogenic concoction made of kubejaro. He died after drinking the concoction.

WITNESS NAME (S): Aja Mba Jai DRAMMEH and Sankung BALAO

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 4th December 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: **Aja Mba Jai Drammeh**-The 2009 witch-hunt in Barra, the witness' daughter's death, impact on family/ **Sankung Balajo**- The witness' capture and detention during the 2009 witch-hunt in Essau, impact on witness and family



POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Aja Mba Jai Drammeh-Not mentioned/**Sankung Balajo**-Farmer

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Aja Mba Jai Drammeh-

The witch-hunters were looking for her specifically but in her absence, her daughter Binta Ceesay was taken in her place/**Sankung Balajo**- Accused of witchcraft

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Aja Mba Jai Drammeh- Not working/ **Sankung Balajo**-Goldsmith, silversmith and farmer

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONIES:

There were two witnesses for this sitting, Aja Mba Jai Drammeh and Sankung Balajo. After giving their personal details and occupation, Aja Mba Jai Drammeh told the Commission she had two children and she also raised for Binta Ceesay, now deceased, her elder siblings and her own grandchildren.

Aja Mba Jai Drammeh explained that her testimony was on behalf of her adopted daughter, Binta Ceesay, who passed away after she became a victim of the Essau witch-hunt. She said that she had travelled to Casamance at the time but Binta Ceesay had narrated to her what happened.

Sankung Balajo also told the Commission that he had children and also took care of his wife and some her relatives. He said he was also a victim of the Essau witch-hunt, which he recalled happened on a Sunday though he could not remember the date or year. When the Counsel put it to him that they had information that the event in question happened some time in February 2009, Sankung Balajo said if that is what is written,

then that is the truth. He was asked if he had any information about the witch-hunt on that day or any day previous to that. He replied that there was a day when he came from Banjul and found people at Barra whom he heard were marabouts witch-hunters. He added that he did not go there or enquired further because it did not concern him.

When asked if, following that he had any encounters with the witch-hunters, the witness narrated that he was resting in his bedroom one day after the midday prayers when suddenly he saw a man standing over him. He said the man did not knock before entering nor greet him. He spoke to him in a language he did not understand and beckoned for him to follow him. When he followed him outside, he found his compound completely filled with people. There were other people like him (the man who came to his bedroom) who were wearing red with white patches, mirrors and horns. They also had drums. He added that the Green Boys⁶⁹ were also present and there was a soldier with a gun along with Officer Commanding, OC Omar Jawo, as well as Solo Bojang, Salifou Corr and another soldier whose surname was Jallow⁷⁰ but he could not recall his first name.

When probed further, he explained that OC Omar Jawo was a police man and the man in-charge at the Barra Police Station and Solo Bojang whom he recognised as a soldier working for Yahya Jammeh. He had him met at a political rally by the Alliance for Patriotic

⁶⁹The Green Boys was the name given to the young men.

⁷⁰The witness was probably referring to Saikou Jallow.

⁷¹Fort Bullen.

Reorientation and Construction, APRC and heard people call him Lieutenant Bojang. Witness Balajo said Salifou Corr was also a soldier based at Barra and at the fort⁷¹, put there by Yahya Jammeh. When Counsel asked if the person with the surname Jallow would be Saikou Jallow, the witness said he thinks that would be him but it was a long time but he was a soldier with Salifou Corr at Barra. Sankung Balajo further said that there was a cameraman present who told him he was called Sankung Fatty.

The Counsel asked Sankung Balajo if he could he tell them how the **guns** he mentioned earlier were being used. Sankung Balajo responded that all the atrocities committed in this country were because people were afraid of guns. He was asked if the guns were directed at him and if that instilled fear in him or other members of his family to which he replied they were not directed at him but his household was not used to people with guns or guns itself. The Counsel asked Sankung Balajo why he went with them to the bantaba and he replied "**well you know a powerless man is not at his choice**".

Returning to Aja Mba Jai Drammeh, the Counsel asked her to tell the Commission where she was when the witch-hunt happened in Essau and she explained she had travelled to Casamance and left the family behind including Binta Ceesay. She said when she came, she called home and told them that she was back but would be spending the night at her elder sister's place in Brufut and that was when Binta Ceesay narrated to her that some people from the village had come to hide at their compound from the witch-hunters. She said Binta told her they had closed the doors and gate and the people who came to hide went to the backyard.

Continuing on, Aja Mba Jai Drammeh said Binta explained that some of the witch-hunters decided to scale their fence. They were wearing red shirts with horns, some had shovels for digging and there were soldiers among them plus the Green Boys and paramilitary. When they jumped into the compound, everyone ran helter-skelter, going into the different rooms in the compound and locking the doors and in the commotion, they broke the sticks holding the fence and the gate and everyone came in.

They went into the room where Binta Ceesay and the others were hiding, brought them out and told them they were to go to the bantaba. Binta Ceesay told them if she could stay as she had twins and that was when they asked for the witness, Aja Mba Jai Drammeh. She told them Aja Mba Jai Drammeh was her mother but she had travelled and they responded "*then you are the one who is going. You are going to the bantaba.*" She appealed to them telling them that she was still breastfeeding her twins but they nonetheless took her away, leaving her twins and other children behind.

Aja Mba Jai Drammeh highlighted that everyone was afraid because they had not done anything wrong and all of a sudden, a team of witch-hunters appeared with the military, paramilitary and the Green Boys. She said she presumed they were sent by the ruler of the country, Yahya Jammeh because of the powerful force with which they came.

The witness was asked to name the others who had come to hide in her house and were **captured** and she listed Kebba Njie and his wife, Sally Sonko who is her aunty, Kenbugul Njie, Mba Sireh Jammeh, Jomma Dibba and Fatou Keita. The Counsel asked if she was related to any one of these people and she responded yes because her mother's younger sister was among them.

The Counsel then turned to Sankung Balajo and asked him to tell the Commission what happened after he was taken to the bantaba. He explained that when he arrived there, he found the place completely full with the Green Boys, other captives, the witch-hunters, soldiers, some policemen and spectators but he was there for less than 10 minutes before he was told to go back to his home, followed by the Green Boys, soldiers, paramilitary and the witch hunters. When they got to his house, the Green Boys drummed and danced in his compound and the people wearing red went inside one of his tenant's room and came out with a small anthill before heading back to the bantaba. When asked if he knew the significance of this anthill, the witness responded that all he knew

about anthills was that if you came across any, you just kick and destroy it. When probed further, the witness confirmed it was a termite hill and maintained that there was no spiritual significance to the termite hill where he came from.

The Counsel asked the witness if he could remember the names of any of the other captives he met and he replied he could recall an uncle (cultural relative, not blood) called Bigi Sonko and another called Malamin Sonko. When asked if he recalled seeing Mba Jai Drammeh's daughter, Binta Ceesay, the witness stated that though he knew her, he could not remember seeing her that day, but he had heard people saying Binta Ceesay was **captured**. He was then asked if he had an opportunity to speak to any of the others that were **captured** to which the witness responded in the affirmative and added that he forgot to mention Lamin Ceesay who said he defied them (the captors) and they **handcuffed** him.

The witness further added that Salifou Corr had announced, after a discussion with Solo Bojang that their instruction came from the head of state (Yahya Jammeh), that it was an executive order and anyone who refused to go would be in trouble. Sankung Balajo said that that made them calm because **“a powerless person could not stand somebody with powers, an unarmed person cannot stand somebody with arms”**.

The Counsel went back to probe further on the issue of Lamin Ceesay, asking the witness to tell them what the captors did to Lamin Ceesay. The witness responded that what he witnessed was that Lamin Ceesay was **handcuffed** and he (the witness) heard it was because they wanted to take his father away. He added that the witch-hunters could not handle Lamin Ceesay on their own, so they were supported by Solo Bojang, Salifou Corr

and the other soldiers who were there plus Officer in Charge, OC Omar Jawo and Saikou Jallow.

The Counsel then asked the witness what happened after his second trip to the bantaba. He explained when he returned back to the bantaba, he tried to get supporters to challenge their captors but when Salifou Corr stated that this was an order from the top, they also calmed down because *“an empty-handed person cannot stand people with arms”*. From there, he never talked to them until they arrived at their destination. When asked what happened after that, the witness responded that they boarded the bus around 5 pm and went to Fort Bullen in Barra to wait for the ferry. He stayed in the vehicle from where he saw Solo Bojang and Salifou Corr standing with Alhagie Tabora but he did not hear what they were saying.

The Counsel then asked the witness how many of them were on board the bus to which he responded that he could not estimate the number but explained that it was a big bus and all the seats were full and the rest had to stand, including himself. He added that there were soldiers and some Green Boys on board of the bus and the ones he called bandits, that is the people wearing red were in their own. The witness was asked if he saw any other people who were **captured** in Barra and he replied that he could only recall Alhagie Faye⁷² and Mary Taal.

He was asked when he eventually left Fort Bullen and he responded that their bus boarded the ferry around the dusk prayer time.⁷³ The witness was also asked if they were given any food or water to drink and he replied in the negative. The Counsel thanked him and moved on to Aja Mba Jai Drammeh.

After recapping what she had last said, the Counsel asked Aja Mba Jai Drammeh if she could tell them where Binta Ceesay went to which she responded that they all went to Fort Bullen and later on they heard that they had crossed with them to Banjul and then taken to Baba Jobe's compound where they were given the medicine to drink. When the Counsel

⁷² We presume the witness was referring to Alhagie Babucarr Faye, the Alkalo of Barra who also testified during the same session.

⁷³This is usually between 8 and 8.30 pm.

interrupted to ask if Binta Ceesay had told her what kind of medicine they were given to drink, Aja Mba Jai Drammeh replied that Binta did not know. When asked if Binta had told her how much of the medicine she was given, the witness replied she had said she drank it once, felt dizzy and vomited. The witness said that Binta had told her that all those who went with her were made to drink this medicine.

Aja Mba Jai Drammeh told the Commission that Binta Ceesay spent two nights away from her babies. The Counsel asked how the babies who were suckling managed during this time and the witness replied that **they just suffered.**

They were given light milk or light porridge. The witness testified that her daughter did not tell her about anything else that was done to her apart from being made to drink the medicine. She was asked what happened to Binta after she came back home and the witness said she came home looking like somebody who was drunk but she was able to breastfeed her babies. The Counsel asked if she was there when Binta Ceesay came home and she replied in the negative.

Going back to witness Sankung Balajo, he was asked if he could explain what his experience was like when he got to Kololi and what he observed about other people as well. The witness said his experience was serious hardship. Explaining further, he said the moment they arrived, around the last evening prayer, they were told to go inside the compound and made to sit in the living room of a house. They came to him and told him to hand over his mobile and all his other belongings. He said luckily when he was going there, he had no money in his pocket. He handed his mobile over to them but refused to give them his watch.

Around 30 minutes later they came back to him and brought him rice to eat but he told them that he does not eat rice at night. They said they would bring another type of food but they did not. Later (he could not estimate how

long), they called him into the back of another room where they filled a cup with liquid from a container and told him to drink it. He drank half and returned the cup to them but it was given back to him and asked to drink the rest.

He added that at that time, Solo Bojang and the interpreter whose name he did not know, were standing there. He drank all of it because he had no choice.

He was told to chew the leaves, which he had left in the cup and they took him back. He said that truly, that day he **suffered** because he was hungry when he drank the liquid.

From the time he drank the medicine, he did not know what was in his stomach, he did not know the condition of his body. What he could say was Allah helped him to be able to become aware when it was time to pray Fajr in the early morning. Around 9 to 10 am, they brought him half a loaf of bread and a cup of tea.

He said they were there until the sun became hot and he was given the medicine again and around 5 pm they gave him the medicine again. That was his second day and they still did not tell him anything. On his third day, the same thing happened again. They gave him this medicine twice and when he drank medicine around 2 pm, they called him into a room. Their cameraman was standing in front of the witness, the man with the **gun** was standing behind him, Solo Bojang was standing on his right and the interpreter for the witch-hunters was standing on his left-hand side.

They asked him how many people he ate. He asked them what kind of people and the question was repeated to him three times. The witness said he responded that he did not believe in what they were saying and that was where hardship started for him. They then filled the cup with half liquid and the other half was all leaves and told him he was going to drink

it whether he liked it or not. He decided to drink all of it but with the help of Allah, they came to realise that the medicine did not have the effect on him they wanted and when he told them he did not believe in what they were doing, that always brings problems. After he drank the liquid, they took him and made him sit under the sun.

The man with the **gun** came and sat in front of him. He was guarding him because he thinks they thought he might move and sit under the shade. He was there until 5 pm before he was moved to the shade. He said the medicine caused him some problems but it did not have the effect they were expecting it to have on him because he was still aware of himself however **painful** it was.

He recalled he was not given the medicine that evening until at night. On his fourth day, he drank the medicine on two occasions again but they did not ask him anything on that day. On his fifth day, he drank it in the morning and around 2 pm, they called him again. The man with the gun was there, the cameraman in front of him, Solo Bojang on the other side and the “bandits” were on the other side. They asked him the same thing. He said he told Solo Bojang “*you people if you want, you can kill me here but since I came here, you have been asking me about the same thing and what I said, that is where I stand and that is what I stand by. I do not believe in what they are saying and I don't believe in what they are doing. That is all what I can tell you.*”

They argued for some time before Solo Bojang told his people to release him. Solo Bojang said they can take the records they have to Leader's place. The witness said he took this to mean “Leave this man to go. What we have recorded, we can take that to the President,” and confirmed he was referring to Yahya Jammeh.

The Counsel asked the witness if he could tell them how he was forced to drink the concoction to which he responded with a gunman standing behind him and told to drink it whether he liked it or not.

He was then asked how he was able to drink a liquid which had all sorts of particles in it. The witness reminded the Commission that some people **captured** by Yahya Jammeh's people were made to drink their own urine and drinking urine is harder than eating leaves. He further said death comes to a person but nobody invites death.

When asked if he knew what was in the concoction, Sankung Balajo said that according to his own observation, it was red and looked like sawdust, neither bitter nor sour. When also asked to expand on how the medicine affected him when he drank it on an empty stomach, the witness explained he did not feel pain in any particular part of his body but rather all over his body; he did not understand his body, he did not understand his system.

When the Counsel probed further about the role of the cameraman he mentioned from his **capture** all the way to his **detention** in Kololi, the witness replied that that was his work just like the cameramen standing there (at the TRRC). He said he used to chat with the cameraman and he had told him that he did not really like what he was doing but he could not help it and had asked for his forgiveness. He added that he said his name is Sankung Fatty and at that time he was based in Brikama. The witness was asked if the cameraman happened to tell him who the video recording was for and the witness responded Yahya Jammeh.

When asked if he could tell them what happened to the others who were with him, the witness replied no. He recalled that he saw people lying down and they said they were **intoxicated** but he did not talk to them. They were in very bad shape but he did not see anybody who urinated or defecated on him or herself; but he saw people walking and all of a sudden they would fall down. The Counsel thanked him and move back to Aja Mba Jai Drammeh.

The Counsel asked Mba Jai Drammeh to tell them what the impact of her daughter's passing away was on her family after she was **victimised**. She was asked to tell them what happened after she

was released. Aja Mba Jai Drammeh explained that they **suffered**, especially her babies who she was breastfeeding explaining that when you separate babies – and in this case they were two – from their mother, they would cry and even more so when they get hungry. She noted that this was painful and “another form of unhappiness” because no one could do anything about it.

She further stated that when Binta Ceesay returned home, she was not feeling well. She was still drunk from the effects of the concoction and she was also tired and before the tiredness and the drunkenness could leave her system, she suffered for some time. They could not help her in any way and that also made the family **suffer**. When asked to tell them what kind of ill health she suffered when she came back, the witness explained that there was a boil on her knee; between the kneecap and the thigh. She went to the hospital a couple of times and was later referred to the hospital in Banjul where she was admitted for almost a week and the boil was operated on.

She came home but the pain did not subside, it got worse. They took her back to the hospital and she was admitted again for one month and she (Aja Mba Jai Drammeh) was with her at the hospital. She further explained that one day, Binta told her that she could not leave the bed because her leg was hurting her a lot. She said the pain never subsided, it went on aggravating at a very bad scale. One day, Binta called her crying, and told her that she was leaving her babies with them, and asked her to please take care of her them for her and to make sure they teach them Islam, not leave them alone, make sure they brought them up in a good way. The witness cried while recounting what Binta Ceesay had told her. The witness said she tried to reassure her that nothing would happen to her.

Aja Mba Jai Drammeh said that she would stand over her from time to time, fanning her and reciting all the verses that she knew in the Quran. When Ya Jai came to visit, she said she told her what Binta Cessay said and said that she gave her the fear of her life. Ya Jai told her that she was the first person Binta had made this appeal to but she was afraid to tell because she would be shocked and heartbroken.

Aja Mbai Jai told Ya Jai that Binta Ceesay would get up in the middle of the night, crying and would tell her “mother, my children.” She added that when Binta would say this, she would feel lost. Aja Mba Jai cried bitterly while recounting the story. Her story got everyone emotional in the public and there was some silence in the room. The Counsel told the witness she knew this was very difficult for her and they were very sorry about what happened to her daughter. After a while, the Counsel asked the witness if she could still continue and when she did not respond, the Counsel suggested moving on to Sankung Balajo while they gave Mba Jai Drammeh a chance to recover.

The Counsel told Sankung Balajo that they would like to know the impact this whole experience has had on him, his health, his life and perhaps any **stigma** that he had suffered as a result of his victimisation. The witness responded that health is a gift from Allah but from that day up to date, he was not healthy. He added whether it is about a witch or witchcraft, if something bad is said about somebody, your enemies rejoice at that but your loved ones would be unhappy.

The witness was then asked if he has been diagnosed with any particular illness. He responded that no one has told him about what was troubling him but whenever his body does not feel right, he would go to the hospital and they would give him medication. He said that he had an operation about one month ago. Sankung Balajo was asked who he held responsible for everything that he had gone through. He answered that they all knew it was Yahya Jammeh.

The Counsel then went back to Aja Mba Jai Drammeh and asked her what happened to Binta Ceesay's leg eventually. The witness who was still crying, said that towards the end, they were going to amputate Binta Ceesay's leg when the pain was unbearable but she (Aja Mba Jai) did not agree, however after she disagreed for the third time, they told her if she still refused for them to amputate Binta's leg, then they would release them. That was when she said okay.

When they release them from the hospital, they took her to her grandfather at Toubakolong where she was treated by their local treatment.

They found out at that time Binta Ceesay was pregnant. Before the pain overcame her, she delivered the child but it was a premature birth and the child died.

Binta was in that treatment until the day that she passed away. When asked how long after Binta Ceesay left the hospital she died, the witness replied it was three months. She told the Commission she held Yahya Jammeh responsible for Binta Ceesay's death.

She was then asked what happened to Binta's children after she died and where they were now. Aja Mba Jai told the Commission her children (Binta had four children) were at home. When they came from the funeral, she told Ya Jai she was going to adopt Binta Ceesay's daughter however, Ya Jai said they could not leave the children with her, they had already shared the responsibility of the children amongst the relatives. Binta Ceesay's sister-in-law, Ida Drammeh adopted one, Ya Jai and Binta Kinteh each adopted one child but Ba Seedy (Binta Ceesay's only son) became mentally imbalanced the time his mother took the concoction and his affairs made her very sad. He is still learning the Quran but his schoolmates were now going to high school in Banjul. She added that he was very serious about the religion. Crying again, Aja Mba Jai explained that he never misses prayer time and whenever he hears the call to prayer, he would leave and go to prayers, which was his mother's wish. She appealed to the TRRC to support him, adding that she would leave his affairs with Allah and them (TRRC). The Counsel thanked her very much. She also thanked Sankung Balajo and handed the witnesses over to the Chairman.

Chairman Sise stated that he was not sure what questions one can ask the witnesses with the suffering that they had gone through, suffering brought about by the State through its sponsorship of a **brutal system**

that does not belong to their country, that does not belong to their world and certainly does not belong to their generation. These crazy 13th century practice of witchcraft and witch-hunting, that should not resurface in their area. They as a people at some point would have to address that issue. The Chairman added that for four weeks they have heard story after story from victim after victim with 39 already **dead** from taking concoctions and hundreds and hundreds of **sick** people and **traumatised** families. They could only share their pain and their loss. The brutality involved in separating mother from suckling twins, is unforgivable.

So, he was truly sorry for what both of them and their family members had endured but at the end of the day, what the country itself endured. The Commissioners were then invited to ask questions.

Commissioner Bishop Odico asked Sankung Balajo to clarify that he spent five days at the place of detention and each of those days, he was given the concoction three times a day. Sankung Balajo affirmed that he was there for the time and they gave him the medication twice a day. He further added the problem he had there was telling them he did not believe in what they were doing and this is why they made him drink this concoction twice every day. The Commissioner thanked him and said he was surprised because this means that the witness drank more than all those who had testified. The witness said that he did not know about the others but that was what happened to him.

Commissioner Kinteh told Sankung Balajo that maybe the colour and taste of the leaves in the concoction later looked and tasted different to him after some time to which the witness responded that the entire time he was there, the medicine looked like sawdust to him.

Commissioner Imam Sey liked Sankung Balajo's ordeal to the victory of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) got over his people, adding that Allah knows they were offended and has cleaned all of them in the front of the whole world. He said that no one was spared

whether APRC or UDP elders, marabouts, women, not even the relatives or strangers. Even if a stranger is found in a village or town, they would take you away. He further said the security people, soldiers and others who accompanied these people are the worst of them. And somebody who did not give a chance to his own relatives, his siblings, that person will not give a chance to anybody. He told him they had nothing to be embarrassed about, no shame was on them and that they were the victorious.

Commissioner Samba told Mba Jai Drammeh she was appealing to her to forgive for all the suffering she encountered and she was also praying for her and what Binta Ceesay entrusted to her. She then asked the age of the twins when her mother was taken away, to which the witness answered that they were not more than a year old. The Commissioner thanked her and prayed that Allah helps her to give them sustenance.

Commissioner Imam Jallow told Mba Jai Drammeh he had heard her story and that in this world, they should help one another. He said people helped him until he was able to take care of himself; Allah helped him so he could save some money and he helped teach other peoples' children. He told her he was going to add Binta's children (the twins) to his family starting from today. Both the Commissioner and the witness were in tears at this point and he further said he would give her money that day and his telephone number and would send her money every month going forward.

The Chairman invited Mba Jai Drammeh and Sankung Balajo to make their closing remarks.

Sankung Balajo who went first thanked the Almighty Allah and his creator. He extended his greetings to the entire Gambia, his in-laws at Bunyadou and in Niani Kayai who, after he came out of this problem really stood by him. He further extended his greetings and thanks to his brothers in Baddibu and Kombo, the children of Mamanding Tida Kabba who also helped him.

He also named, Binta Touray and Jarra Balajo and his younger brothers and sisters as well as his own children who all stood by him. He added that his adopted daughter called Hawa Ceesay Sonko collapsed when he called to tell her he was **captured** and to this day she was not

normal. He went on to thank many others, adding that when you go into hardship this is the time you know who your friends are and who your enemies are.

He told the Commission that people behind (the followers) cannot destroy a country. The people who are leading are the destructors of a nation.

He said that in our African society, the politicians are the poison. He suggested that in their recommendations, let them talk to the politicians and talk to them very seriously.

He said that from the current ruler to all those looking for leadership, no one is fighting for the country or any other citizen. They are fighting for themselves. Those who are sitting right now want to remain in their cool offices and those who are looking for it (leadership) want these others to go so that they can replace them. He advised whenever they are coming to the conclusion of what they are doing, poor and peasants cannot do anything in the country.

He further buttressed that when Yahya Jammeh was coming into this country, he found sound laws in this country. It was because of Sir Dawda Jawara when those sound laws were established in the country but when Yahya Jammeh came, he made laws that would favour him so they have to talk to those who are sitting and those who are now seeking leadership not to destroy their country. He asked what a poor person could do if a leader becomes a lawless man. He again stressed the politicians be talked to properly to do what is good for the country.

He then said that revenge is not wrong, but to be patient and have fate are also good. He further said that what people are talking about in the streets is if something does not happen, nothing is done about these things, they would see civil war in this country.
“People will revenge on each other if the government

does not do anything about it". Those who caused atrocities should be made to stand and face justice. To say just "I forgive," that will not end trouble if nothing is done about it.

Those who offended other people and they were still here and they did not apologise, well still there is a problem.

Truth has to be established, then reconciliation follows. Well he was just appealing to them sitting over the table. Let them try to establish the truth. Those who were offended, let them be given the truth, let justice be done. Those writing, let them make sure that they disseminate this information. People who committed wrongs should be made to stand and face justice. Or else, they are brewing war in this country.

Concluding, he called out to the Chairman and the Commissioners telling them that the country has fate and hope in them.

Mba Jai Drammeh thanked Allah in the name of the holy prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and everyone. She further said that the good work the TRRC is doing is helping them wipe their tears and come out of bondage.

The Chairman thanked Aja Mba Jai Drammeh and Sankung Balajo for their closing remarks. He said their thanks also goes to their own colleague, Commissioner Imam Jallow for the generosity he manifested in the offering to help the twins who must be 10 to 11 years old now.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, leading to death (of Binta Ceesay)

Yahya Jammeh

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony (Sankung Balajo):

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Yahya Jammeh, Solo Bojang, Salifou Corr, Saikou Jallow, Omar Jawo

Those who caused atrocities should be made to stand and face justice. To say just "I forgive," that will not end trouble if nothing is done about it.



WITNESS NAME: Neneh BABOU

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 5th December 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Barra

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Mother, Petty Trader

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft and abducted

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Mother, Petty Trader

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Neneh Babou told the Commission that she was 36-year-old, a mother of three and earned her living through petty trading.

The witness testified that the incident began after lunch while she was sitting with her husband and her co-wife in the compound. At this time, a marabout had arrived accompanied by two soldiers.

She highlighted that she was eight months pregnant and after the men searched her compound they came to the witness and told her that they were going to take her away because she had a sickness in her stomach.

She explained that she told them that she was pregnant but was quite healthy and that her baby was fine but they retorted that she had no choice, that she must go **by force** to the vehicle to take some medicine that they had for her to drink. The witness stated that she insisted she was not going because she could not leave her family behind. She added that at this point her husband intervened and told her not to argue, that it was because of the government that was in place, and that she had to go with them. After her husband told her to go, she went with her in-law to the vehicle.

When asked, she testified that her in-law was also told that she had a sickness or a disease and that she had to go with the men to drink some medicine. She however remarked that her in-law was also perfectly healthy to her knowledge. The Counsel asked the witness how she knew that he was a marabout and she responded that she knew because the man was wearing red clothes with cowry shells sown onto them. He also carried a mirror that he used to point at people. She recalled that when he came, he pointed the mirror at her stomach. This is the moment when he told her that she had a sickness. When asked, the witness reiterated that the marabout was accompanied by two soldiers.

Neneh Babou further testified that when she got to the vehicle, she found other men wearing green as well as other soldiers. She did not recognise any of the men in green and did not know what their work was but she did know that they followed Yahya Jammeh. She stated that she was put into a white vehicle, which was very crowded adding that she did not notice exactly who was there because she felt **humiliated** by the experience of being accused of witchcraft.

She said the people standing around the vehicle were accusing her and the others inside of being wizards or witches. She was so unhappy and embarrassed that she mostly looked at the ground although, eventually, she recognised a few people including Ya Matou

Faye, Alhagie Kenbugoul Faye, Pa Ali Marr, Pa Jahateh, and her in-law Rohey Faye, all of them residents of Barra.

Continuing on with her testimony, the witness stated that the marabout and the soldiers told her that they were sent by Yahya Jammeh. They told her to sit in the vehicle until the marabout came to give her some medicine and they told her that if she drank it that they would let her go home. Neneh Babou told the Commission that she waited for them for around 2 hours, from 3 to 5 pm and when they finally arrived, they told her that they would have to take her somewhere else. She highlighted that she did not want to comply but she was forced to go.

The witness recalled that at the time, she was not properly dressed so that her husband had to bring her a shirt to wear. When asked, the witness testified that she saw two marabouts in her compound and there were others at the vehicle. She was not sure about the exact numbers of marabouts or soldiers there but she said that there were about seven people dressed in green. One of them was a woman but the rest were men. She stated that she was not sure what the Green Boys were doing there but the soldiers had **guns** to force you to get into the vehicle. She remarked that there were not any police present at that time, nor did she see any paramilitary soldiers either.

She continued to recount that she and the other accused were put into a white pick-up truck that was parked outside of the Quranic school. They rode in the same vehicle all the way there. She remembers that they used a ferry that stopped in Banjul and then the vehicles took them from the ferry to the compound where they were held. They arrived after dusk prayers and she did not know where exactly they went although she remembered that it was in the Kombo district. The witness did not know whose residence she was taken to. At their destination, they did not ask her name or take any of her belongings. Inside the house, there was another group of soldiers all around the compound. The witness testified that she was unable to count the number of soldiers but that the Green Boys and the marabouts were present at the house as well.

Neneh Babou recalled that when they were taken inside, they were put into a bare room with tiles on the floor.

She added that because she was pregnant at the time, she was not able to sit or lie down and she was so exhausted that she actually felt like she wanted to die. After they were put into the room, they were taken one by one to drink the medicine.

Neneh Babou testified that as people came back to the tiled room where she was held, they looked like they were drunk, some of them were vomiting and some of them urinated on themselves. Some people were talking to themselves like they were mad.

When asked, she said that she drank the medicine before her in-law did. When it was her turn, she was taken into a room that was like a bathroom and given a cup of the medicine to drink. The liquid was powdery and had a yellowish colour. She heard that it had kubejaro in it and recalled that it tasted very bitter, adding that it was given to her by one of the Green Boys who was accompanied by an **armed** soldier. The witness testified that she was made to drink the medicine by force but she refused to drink all of it because, as she told them, she was eight months pregnant. When she refused to drink, she got into an argument with them that was so bad that her in-law came into the room and argued with them to leave her alone. Her in-law told the soldier that he was a wicked man, to which he retorted that it was none of her business. Her in-law did not back away and said that it was their business because the witness was her relative and she was pregnant with her grandchild.

After the argument between the soldier and her in-law, the witness stated that she still refused to drink anymore of the medicine, telling the soldier that she did not even care if she died and that no matter what she would not drink any more. She put down the cup and she left.

The medicine made her vomit three times. The medicine also made her in-law vomit.

When asked, the witness testified that her in-law felt very bad and was acting the same as the other people, even after the incident her in-law had to go to the hospital many times and eventually, she went mad. The witness also testified that the medicine gave her a continuous headache and that she was forced to sit for a long time so that her waist hurt badly as well as her navel. She testified that she spent one full day at Kololi.

Continuing on with her testimony, the witness told the Commission that the next day, after they woke up, the soldiers told them that they would leave that morning. At that point, the witness had not had anything to eat since the previous day and her stomach hurt very badly. Additionally, all she had been given to drink was the poisonous medicine. After they told them to go, the soldiers took them to the ferry, bought them tickets and told them to go home.

She recalled that in Barra, she rushed home, **embarrassed** to be seen because of what had happened to her. She highlighted that physically, her head hurt terribly and she still had pain in her waist and navel. Her in-law was quite sick when they returned home and never recovered, reiterating that she went mad. When they arrived home, they were very worried that they would be seen by people who thought they were witches

When asked how old most of the people who were **captured** were, the witness said that she could not say their exact ages but that they were all elderly except for her. After the incident, she continued to experience dizziness and pain in her stomach and needed to go to the hospital frequently until she gave birth. The witness testified that after she gave birth, her baby took a long time to start suckling, so she went to doctors in Essau and Banjul to see what the problem was. The doctors could not figure out what was the matter so they told her to go home to wait and see what would happen. They had to purchase milk to feed the baby but this milk gave the baby problems.

The witness stated that she had to return to Essau and was referred to Banjul again to the clinic near the morgue, where she was admitted with her child. After the baby was three months old, the baby started having seizures. When asked how she felt watching her child suffer, the witness testified that one night she woke and saw that the baby was having a seizure, so she woke the baby up, and in that moment decided that this was not a sickness that could be cured at the hospital but that she should go to see the marabouts. So, she started taking her child to see any marabout she could. The witness testified that the baby's arms and legs looked like they had leprosy and when she would put the baby down it would not move. She told the Commission that her baby girl died at eight months of age.

Neneh Babou testified that she believes that the medicine that she was forced to drink is what caused the baby's illness and death.

She stated that she holds Yahya Jammeh responsible for the death of her child because it was him that sent the witch-hunters. She further told the Commission that she has continued to experience headaches and pain in her waist and navel since the witch-hunt, adding that after the death of her child, she had three children and they all died. She has also had two miscarriages.

The witness testified that she had now found some peace, but immediately after she was **captured**, she had to hide because the accusation of witchcraft damaged her relationships with the people around her. When asked, the witness said that her in-law is still at her home and sick. She further testified that half of the people **captured** passed away. She did know about the health of the others who survived except that they are sometimes sick. On how the others passed away, she did not know but stated that they had drunk the same medicine as her and believed that the medicine likely led to their subsequent health problems and their deaths.

In her concluding statement, the witness extended prayers to the Commissioners and the audience. She stated that she would never forgive Yahya Jammeh and that she asked Allah to grant the same pain to Yahya Jammeh that Jammeh had given to her. The witness said that she had done nothing to Yahya Jammeh, she was just at home taking care of her marriage when she was **captured**. She ended by saying that she took those things and “gave them to Allah”.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment leading to death

Yahya Jammeh

On how the others **passed away**, she did not know but stated that they had drank the same **medicine** as her and believed that the **medicine** likely led to their **subsequent health problems and their deaths**.

WITNESS NAME: Lamin JOBARTEH

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 5th December 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Barra

POSITION DURING THE EVENT (S): Student at Essau Secondary School

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Accused of witchcraft and abducted by witch-hunters

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Driver

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

The witness stated that he was born in 1993 in Aljamdu, Upper Niumi and that in 2009, he was attending secondary school in Essau where he lived with his mother. Explaining what his secondary school years were like, the witness stated that he had a normal life and he did quite well in school.

He said the witch-hunters arrived in Essau on a Sunday 9th February, 2009. At the time, he was home washing his school uniforms with a group of friends when they heard drums at the bantaba. They came out to the compound gate and looked out at the bantaba where they saw the drummers and some people dressed in red accompanied by soldiers and the Green Youths, or, Green Boys. The witness said he saw them entering peoples' compounds. After watching them for a moment they went back inside to finish washing their clothes.

Soon after they had finished their chore, the people dressed in red arrived at their compound accompanied by soldiers and the Green Boys. Two of them entered and one approached him and asked him to give him his hand. The man talked to him in Fula and the other translated to him in Mandinka. The man was holding a big mirror and he made the witness place his hand on the mirror. After touching the mirror, the man told the witness to stand aside. Each of his friends were made to do the same thing and they were all told to sit down and the man told the witness to follow him. As he was following the man out, one of the Green Boys noticed that he was only wearing shorts and a tank top and he stopped him



to tell him that he was going someplace very cold and he should put on long pants and a jacket. The witness therefore changed his clothes and followed them out.

When asked, the witness testified that the soldiers were **armed** and the Green Boys had batons and sticks in their hands. When probed further, the witness explained that although there were other people who lived in the compound, him and his friends were the only people there at the time the witch-hunters arrived. He also said that when he was asked to place his hand on the mirror, he felt confused and **afraid** and when he was asked to put on warm clothes, he was afraid because he did not know where they were going and he did not see any reason why they would want to take him somewhere else. He added that he was afraid he might not return from where they were taking him. When asked, the witness explained that at the time that he was **abducted**, his mother was spending the rainy season in their home village. He also responded when asked that when the witch-hunters were inspecting him, they did not explain what they were doing and he had not heard anything about the witch-hunts prior to their arrival.

Lamin Jobarteh continued to explain that he attempted to refuse to leave the compound but one of the Green Boys slapped him and told him that he was being taken by force.

He added that in that moment, he was gripped with fear and worried that he would be killed on the spot if he did not go with them. He further explained that he was then taken to the bantaba as was his family's yard owner, Alhagie Bigi Sonko. At the bantaba, one of the Green Boys told him to sit among the **captured** people, one of whom was a man with the surname, Silva who said to the witch-hunters that the witness was a small boy and asked them how they could make a small boy sit with them. As a result, the witch-hunters allowed the witness to sit on the bus but told Silva that if the witness escaped, Silva would be held responsible. Lamin Jobarteh said he sat in the bus while the rest of the captured people were made to sit under the tree at the bantaba. Aside from Green Boys playing the drums and armed soldiers standing guard, the bantaba was also surrounded by spectators. The witness said he felt a combination of fear and embarrassment because of the presence of the **armed** soldiers, it would appear as if he had been captured for doing something terrible, like killing someone.

He further explained that he felt embarrassed because he learned at the bantaba that they were captured because they had been alleged to be witches or wizards and he worried that people would start believing that lie and think that he ate human flesh.

He said he began to cry as he was overwhelmed by feelings of shame and anxiety about how the stigma of witchcraft would follow him and change the way he was seen in his community.

Among the people who were **captured** that day, he was the youngest person there. The others were old enough to be his parents or grandparents.

The witness testified that, initially, he was alone when he boarded the bus, but that eventually, the bus was filled with other **captured** people. He said he did not speak to anyone on the bus and while he was there, the soldiers, and the people in red were either inside the village or

standing guard over the captured people. When the bus was loaded, they were taken to Fort Bullen, where he saw a man called Lamin Ceesay who was **handcuffed** and had **blood** all over his face. When he saw him like that, he thought they would all be handcuffed and beaten, adding, he felt very afraid and that if he could have escaped, he would have.

While the witness was detained at Fort Bullen, he said he observed that there were many Green Boys, soldiers, and people dressed in red standing around the **captured** people. When asked, the witness said he recognised two people, "*a fair-coloured man and tough guy*". These people went ahead of the captured people as they were taken to a place he later was told was Baba Jobe's compound. The Counsel asked if the witness knew the name of the person he described as a "tall, tough guy". The witness said he did not know the man's name but he would recognise him if he saw him again. The Counsel showed several pictures to the witness and asked him to pick out the man of which he spoke and the witness picked the person in picture number one. The Counsel made a note to the Commission that the man in picture number one had also been identified by two prior witnesses and that his name was Saikou Jallow. The Counsel asked the witness to describe what Saikou Jallow's role was in the witch-hunt. He explained that he believed he was leading the other witch-hunters because he saw him giving orders to people. The Counsel asked what he would say if she said that he was a bystander. The witness stated that he would not believe it because he saw him giving orders and telling people what to do and based on his appearance, he believed the man was a soldier. Apart from him, the witness did not recognise anyone else amongst the people who brought them to Fort Bullen.

At the fort, they were all guarded in the same place, sitting there with one old woman called Naa Sally, the grandmother of one of his friends. When asked what her full name was, the witness said that he was not sure. He thought her surname was Sonko but that he had always called her Naa Sally. The witness said that around 7 or 8 pm, they were put on board a bus

and crossed the river on the ferry. When they boarded the bus there were also people from other places who had been **captured** and forced to join them. The bus was extremely large and could contain up to fifty people sitting and standing. They were joined by the Green Boys, soldiers, and people in red, riding ahead of and behind them in other vehicles. When they finally arrived at their destination, he was told that they were at Baba Jobe's compound.

At Baba Jobe's compound, which was full of soldiers and Green Boys, they were made to sit on the tiled floor of a large hall in the compound where their captors brought them dinner. Some people ate and some people refused the food. He said initially, he refused to eat, but soldiers told them that they were going to drink some medicine that was "very bitter," so they should have some dinner. When asked, the witness described the compound as having a large fence and a building in the center. After they ate, they were made to line up and the people in red who captured them came and spoke to them in Fula. One of the Green Boys told him that he had been asked to leave the line and they took him upstairs and made him sit down in a room.

He continued to explain that Saikou Jallow then came and told him that the Fula man had said that he had eye pain. He said he told him that that was not true, he did not have any pain in his eyes. The Fula man told him, with Saikou Jallow translating into Mandinka, that the redness of the witness' eyes indicated that he had a problem and he should pay him 500 dalasi to fix his eyes but he told the Fula man that he had no money. Lamin Jobarteh said he told the men that they had seen the place he came from when he was captured and that if you want to treat someone you have to ask them and their family first, but they had not. He told them that they had forced him to leave and brought him to the compound where he was **detained** and never even told him why. Saikou Jallow later told him that the Fula man told him he should go back downstairs and drink some of the medicine.

When he went downstairs, he saw the last person in line drinking the medicine. He said he did not see anyone who had consumed the medicine because he was led to the room through a back way. When he entered the

room with the medicine, a man told him to take out his possessions and take off his shirt and trousers. He said the man spoke in Fula while another man translated for him into Mandinka. He took off his shirt and trousers and was made to bathe himself with a cup of water in another room, wearing only his boxers. The water he bathed with was slimy and smelly. He said he was then given a cup of liquid from a large pan and told to drink it. The man who gave it to him told him to drink one cup because he was child and that would be enough for him. The witness said that the liquid was very bitter and contained small pieces of a substance that he could not identify.

Lamin Jobarteh continued to narrate that within five minutes of drinking the medicine, he wanted to vomit but could not. He also developed a bad headache and started feeling dizzy but. He had to sit down to steady himself against the wall. Before the medicine took effect however, he saw some people who had already taken the medicine and they were behaving strangely; some people were trying to dig up the tiles from the floor, some were pushing on the wall, others had gone outside and were digging in the dirt with their bare hands or trying to pick flowers. A mixed group of soldiers and Green boys **beat** the people who had gone outside with their batons and told them to go sit down. The witness testified that their behaviour was very out of character for adults and that it was easy to see that something was wrong with them. While he watched them, he felt very angry and sad. He kept thinking that if he could have taken all the beatings instead of the elderly captives, he would have done it. He also remembered thinking that the soldiers and the Green boys were young enough to be the children of the people they were **beating**.

The witness said he remained in this condition for two hours before he fell asleep. He was woken by a soldier **beating** him with a baton. The soldier told him to stand up, walk a distance away and then come back. When he tried to walk, he almost fell and had to force himself to walk back. He said he believed the soldier was trying to see if the medicine had had an effect on him.

The elders were also made to do the same. When the soldiers asked the old man, **Alhagie Bigi Sonko**, to stand up and walk, he could not do it so **they beat him with their batons**. The witness thought that they must have injured **Alhagie Bigi Sonko** because **their batons were very heavy**.

The second day, immediately after breakfast, he was told he should not drink the medicine. He was the only exception. Everyone else was made to drink another round of the medicine and they started behaving strangely just like the day before. Some of them tried to touch the flowers or dig in the soil but they were **beaten** again. He was taken to the Fula man who asked him (in Fula) if he had talked to his people. Another man translated in Mandinka. When he replied that he had not, the man offered him a phone to call his people but he said he had no one to call at home. He was told that if he called home and asked for five hundred dalasi for medicine, they would let him go, but if he did not, they would keep him captive. At the time he was having this conversation with the Fula man, another captured man was being given the same offer.

The witness said he kept telling them that he had no money and he was born with red eyes. Eventually he was able to ask Saikou Jallow to release him so he could go and make up the exam he had missed while he was captured. Saikou Jallow spoke to the Fula man before telling him he could go home but when he asked them for money for transportation, they told him it was his problem to take care of and gave him nothing to help him find his way home. He said he was lucky to find a taxi driver to take him to Barra where he walked back to his home in Essau on foot.

Lamin Jobarteh narrated that on the way home, he felt extremely dizzy, had an excruciating headache, and a stomach ache. He had to stop many times on the walk home to rest until the pain subsided. When he arrived at

his home in Essau, he found his mother there crying. At this point, the witness was visibly emotional and crying. He paused a bit before continuing his testimony and said he asked her why she was crying and she asked if the rumours she heard were true, that witch-hunters came to Essau and said he was a wizard and took him away. He said he told her that they did call him a wizard and that when they took him away, they had told him that he was not well. However, his mother told him that people would not see it that way, because people only heard that witch-hunters had been in Essau capturing witches and wizards. His mother told him that people will look at him as if he was a wizard and that they will think that he, “suckled it from the breast”. The witness said he told his mother that they should have faith in Allah. He added that after their conversation, he went off by himself and cried.

The witness expressed that he was deeply saddened, he wondered why he, a small child, would want to eat human beings. It worried him how the Mandinka community would look at him later on. He stayed at his mother's home until the following day.

He had a terrible headache that night and would wake up shouting, a problem that persisted over time.

He said he testified that he used to have terrible nightmares and dreams after the witch-hunt and would shout in his sleep. The nightmares were about being chased by “things” that wanted to attack him. The witness testified that he believes that the nightmares are related to his ordeal during the witch-hunt because the things that appear to him in his dreams are always red.

Lamin explained that he was unable to resume school for a week. On his first day back at school, he had to go to an assembly where he was stared at which made him deeply uncomfortable. He assumed that they were looking at him because of what happened. During the break, he went outside and students were pointing at him and saying that

he was a wizard and that he had been taken away. The witness became very emotional again while narrating the story. He said he experienced bullying and harassment because of the stigma from being accused of being a wizard. Fortunately, his friends stayed by his side. They encouraged the witness by telling him “*this is life. Keep it up. Whatever you see in this world, it will one day come to an end*”. They also told him “whatever happens, we will not abandon you because they know its false”. However, other people who did not know the truth continued to call him names and harass him.

He said that eventually, the experience became so unbearable that he asked his mother if he could drop out of school because everywhere he went at school people would point at him and say he was a wizard. After three weeks he did not go to school, but one of his friends came and told him he should come back, that his friends had not abandoned him and even his own father (the friend’s) was accused of witchcraft but that they knew that the witch-hunt was a lie. His friend advised him to go to school and ignore what people were saying. Lamin Jobarteh stated that the rumours and gossip that surrounded him at school made it impossible for him to concentrate and he worried that the situation might escalate into something much worse. He told his friend that he would stay away from school until it was time for their exams and then he would return but even at the exams, he was teased during the breaks, so that he could not concentrate during the exam and he did not pass. He said he transferred to Berending and finished his studies there.

When the Counsel asked the witness if the school authority was aware of what had happened and what was going on, he explained that they were not aware and he never told them about it. No adults at the school talked to him about it or consoled him. He said that his friend who had been supporting him after he returned from the witch-hunt spoke to a teacher about the situation at one point but the teacher never spoke to him about it. Counsel then asked the witness his friend’s name and replied his name was Ismaila Sonko. The Counsel further asked if it was the **stigma** from the witch-hunt that prevented him from completing his exams and the witness explained that he was frequently attacked by

headaches and dizziness in class that were so bad that he would have to go home for the rest of the day. He said he would tell other people he was sick and ask them to tell the teacher.

The Counsel returned to the events of the witch-hunt to ask clarifying questions and asked if anyone else was released on the day he was let go from Baba Jobe’s compound aside from the one man he mentioned. The witness replied that they were not released on that day. The Counsel then asked if Alhagie Bigi Sonko was subsequently released and if he knew what his mental and physical health was like upon his return. The witness explained that before his capture, Alhagie Bigi Sonko was in good health but after he was forced to drink the medicine he experienced frequent bouts of sickness. Bigi Sonko developed high blood pressure as well. The Counsel asked if the friend of the witness, Ismaila Sonko, had any relation to Alhagie Bigi Sonko. The witness testified that Alhagie Bigi Sonko was Ismaila Sonko’s father. When asked, the witness stated that his friend had confided in him that he **suffered** from the stigma of witchcraft from time to time because his father had been abducted during the witch-hunt.

Lamin Jobarteh went on to explain that when he transferred to his new school in Berending, he had hoped that if he went somewhere far away that he could escape the stigma of the witch-hunt. Sadly, after a while, the students at the new school found out that he had been accused of witchcraft. The other students talked about it and confronted him about it frequently. As a result, he said he asked his mother’s permission to drop out of school because he could not bear the experience of constantly being confronted by the stigma of witchcraft and did not go back to school.

The witness testified that up until the time of the hearing, he continued to experience physical problems such as chest pain, dizziness, and headaches. He also explained that when he encounters successful former classmates, he experiences troubling feelings. He thinks that he was in the same school as some of the people that are living better off than him.

He stated that nothing stopped or spoiled his education but the harassment he experienced as a result of the stigma of witchcraft. The witness testified that when he thinks about how his ability to succeed in life was affected by the witch-hunt, he often cries.

He often time thinks that if he had completed his education that he would be doing something better with his life. When asked, the witness stated that he feels stressed in crowds and that he belittles himself around other people because he feels like people may be thinking that he is a wizard.

The witness explained that his mother eventually sent him to live in Brikama with his step-mother because she did not like the way he was living in Essau. In Brikama, the witness continued to struggle with the trauma from his experiences. He further explained that, even there, his step-mother's husband would sometimes ask him why he looked so sad and lonely sometimes and ask him what was the problem. He said he eventually everything to him. After talking to him, his step-mother's husband went to Casamance and brought him back some spiritual waters for him to drink and wash himself with, which he added helped him with his healing process.

The witness stated that though things have somewhat improved, when he thinks about what happened, he becomes so stressed that he has to stop the vehicle so that he can calm down. He said it is hard for him to drive long distances and when he sees his classmates on his way somewhere it makes him feel very sad. When asked, the witness testified that he was still having nightmares from time to time up to the time of the hearing.

The Counsel thanked the witness for sharing his story even though it was painful for him and apologised for making him relieve his traumatic experiences. The Counsel handed the witness over to the Chairman and

the Commission for further questions. The Chairman advised the witness to remember how his friends had supported him and to draw on their support for strength. He advised him to go on with his life, to never give up, and that he is not a wizard. The Chairman told him that he is still young and has a whole world ahead of him. Commissioner Kah spoke about the importance of the youth, educational initiatives provided by the TRRC and the importance of the witness' testimony.

Lamin Jobarteh closed his testimony by thanking the Commissioners and thanking them for doing the work that they do and helping to reveal the truth. He stated that he almost refused to testify at the hearing because he was worried that more people would learn of the accusations of witchcraft that had been leveled against him. He worried that he would be met with the more of the stigma that has plagued him since the witch-hunt, but he was told that if he came to share his story it would help him feel better, so he went.

The witness gave thanks to Allah for the opportunity to testify and tell his story. He stated that although he is still in pain, sharing his story with the TRRC was very helpful for him. He said that if you look at the history of The Gambia over the last twenty-two years, many of the terrible things that happened to young people because young people were leading the country. The witness stated that he (ex-President Yahya Jammeh) had surrounded himself with young people who had lost their respect for their elders and their country. He added that although he heard young people saying that they should be the backbone of their country, they were in fact the ones who destroyed it. The witness spoke to the ongoing damage caused by the witch-hunts. He stated that he still experiences pain because of the incident and that his mother died because of it.

Lamin Jobarter told the Commission he blamed Yahya Jammeh and the young people he had been using for his terrible experience and subsequent problems. He appealed to young people to invest

themselves in The Gambia and make it a better country. For twenty-two years, peoples' elders and parents were being beaten and disappeared. For twenty-two years Gambians had to look behind them before they could say anything for fear that the wrong person might hear them. He further asserted that the bad feeling he has from the witch-hunt will follow him to the day he dies and if he were to say he had forgiven the person who wronged him, he would be lying. He ended by suggesting that youth movements be discouraged because it was the Green Boys who were the cause of so much trouble.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Saikou Jallow, Yahya Jammeh

He further asserted that the **bad feeling he has from the witch-hunt will follow him to the day he dies** and if he were to say he had forgiven **the person who wronged him**, he would be lying.

WITNESS NAME: Omar Jawo

TRRC HEARING DATE (S): 5th December 2019

EVENT (S) DISCUSSED: The 2009 witch-hunt in Barra and Essau

POSITION BEFORE THE EVENT (S): Officer Commanding of Barra Police Station

ROLE DURING THE EVENT (S): Participating in arrest of citizens of Barra and Essau during the witch-hunt in 2009, the alleged insulting and torture of Lamin Ceesay and Alhajie Faye

POSITION AT THE TIME OF TESTIMONY: Retired, senior citizen

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

Omar Jawo began his testimony by acknowledging that he was aware his name had already been adversely mentioned in a number of previous testimonies. He told the Commission how he rose up the ranks of the Gambian police force up until 2009. Upon questioning from the Lead Counsel, he acknowledged that he had not been promoted between 1995 and 2008, when he was promoted to the rank of superintendent and made Commissioner of Operations Gambia Police Force Starting Command. When the Lead Counsel confirmed that the promotion was given after the witch-hunting occurred in Barra and Essau, the witness instead emphasized his completion of a training course in Botswana in 2009, which the Lead Counsel again noted happened after the witch-hunt.

The Lead Counsel pointed out that by 2009, the witness had acquired 27 years of experience in the police. Upon rigorous questioning, Omar Jawo agreed that after 27 years of experience he knew his duties as a police officer, the difference between lawful and unlawful orders, and that it was wrong to implement unlawful orders. However, the witness added the caveat that “at that time it was very hard to say no.”

The Lead Counsel asked the witness if he remembered receiving a group of people from Banjul around the 8th or 9th of March, to which the witness responded affirmatively. The Lead Counsel then asked if the witness knew it was unlawful to corral people and accuse them of witchcraft. Again, the witness said he did.

Omar Jawo testified that it was early morning in Barra when the ferry from Banjul arrived and a group of double-



cabin vehicles pulled up to the entrance of the police station. He told the Commission that Solo Bojang from the State Guard, Salifou Corr and Saikou Jallow, both soldiers, were in the convoy. He also saw four to five witch-doctors dressed in red with mirrors. The leader of their group was taller than the rest and carried a large horn. The witness also told the Commission that the Green Boys and Green Girls were present.

He stated that he was approached by Solo Bojang, who said he had been sent by “the big man,” then-President Yahya Jammeh. The witness allegedly asked, “what for,” to which Solo Bojang replied to “come to the north bank to Barra and Essau to catch the witches and wizards.”

The witness told the Commission that Solo Bojang's response surprised him and when asked why, he responded that he was unaware of any laws about witches and wizards. He said he then called then Police Commissioner Kebba Jammeh and told him about the group that had arrived in Barra and their reported mission to catch witches and wizards. Kebba Jammeh allegedly responded that the same group had come to Police Headquarters the previous week and that the Inspector General of Police, their superior, had complied with their orders. According to the witness, Kebba Jammeh told him to comply with the witch-hunters.

Omar Jawo stressed that he told his superior this was an unlawful order. The Lead Counsel pointed out this could neither be confirmed nor denied as Kebba Jammeh has since passed. The witness protested this characterisation, claiming “*whatever I did, I did on orders*”. However, under further questioning, he agreed that carrying out unlawful orders was unlawful in and of itself.

The Lead Counsel then asked the witness about the three men he had previously mentioned: Solo Bojang, Saikou Jallow, and Salifou Corr. Omar Jawo told the Commission they were close to then-President Yahya Jammeh and led the team in Barra and Essau. According to the witness, the soldiers’ role was to **arrest** people with the witch-hunters. The Lead Counsel then asked the witness to identify Saikou Jallow from a series of photos.

Omar Jawo told the Commission that the operation, which he did not deny participating in, began in Barra and ended in Essau. In response to the questioning from the Lead Counsel, the witness stated that Saikou Jallow participated in the operation and was not helping people who were being **arrested**.

The witness told the Commission he was given an indirect order from Solo Bojang to participate in the operation, adding that “*in those years when someone said Yahya Jammeh said this’ you are not even to question*”. At this point, Omar Jawo mentioned that he was remanded for 14 days without trial, an experience in which he said his rights were violated and he was mistreated by his country. He did not state the reason for his detention.

Continuing on with his testimony, he gave an example of when he was the police commissioner in Central River Region and a man named Tamba Fofana was reported to him as a supporter of the United Democratic Party, UDP. The witness allegedly responded that the police had no role in political issues, a comment which led to him being moved from his post. The Lead Counsel clarified that on this occasion the witness disobeyed an order, but was not killed. The witness retorted that he was punished by being transferred by executive directive, but under further questioning he admitted that on this occasion he did not suffer greatly. Omar Jawo revealed that while he did not **arrest** Tamba Fofana, the UDP supporter was **arrested** a few days later by the National Intelligence Agency, NIA and the witness has not seen nor heard from him since.

Omar Jawo argued that the incident with Tamba Fofana was different than the witch-hunt because in Barra and

Essau, he was given no prior warning, otherwise, he told the Commission, he would have run. The Lead Counsel then asked if a gun was held to him, to which he responded that he was afraid of being taken to Mile 2 Prison. The Lead Counsel stated that the witness wanted to show his loyalty to avoid jeopardizing his new promotion, and the witness responded that under the previous regime officers had to be loyal regardless of being promoted to avoid suffering. “*They can tell you to do something you don’t want to do, but you must do it*”, he stated.

Omar Jawo then told the Commission that Solo Bojang ordered him that day and that he complied with his orders claiming it was because of his previous 14-day imprisonment without trial. The Lead Counsel then asked why the witness participated in the witch-hunt considering his previous experience with injustice. The witness responded that he could not deny that he went to the homes of respected people in the community and branded them as witches – but again repeated that the operation was led by the witch doctors and that they decided who to catch and who to release.

However, after significant probing by the Lead Counsel, the witness eventually admitted that his presence as the senior most police officer in the region gave the whole witch-hunting process an official stamp of approval.

According to Omar Jawo, the group that went to the house of then Alkalo Kenbugul was led by the witch-doctors and Salifou Corr. The Lead Counsel countered that the Commission had received testimony from current Alkalo Alhaji Babucarr Faye the son of the late Alkalo, that on that date in 2009, he was called and told his father had been apprehended by the OC of Barra acting with soldiers and marabouts. Another man named Lamin Ceesay also testified that he got a call from his father accusing the witness, along with soldiers and marabouts, of arresting him.

Omar Jawo responded to these allegations by saying that he had to comply, and was thus an unwilling

participant. The Lead Counsel replied that the evidence portrayed the witness as a willing and happy accomplice, a characterization the witness disputed.

The Lead Counsel then asked Omar Jawo if he participated in the arrest of elderly men, pregnant women, nursing women, a 16-year-old boy, to which he either replied in the affirmative, or that he did not know.

He said he was powerless to stop the witch-hunt.

The Lead Counsel again declared that the witness was not forced to participate. The witness retorted that he had been advised to do so by his commissioner. The Lead Counsel maintained that testimony from multiple people suggested he was more than a bystander. The witness responded that he had served in Barra for a long time so most of the people there knew him.

Omar Jawo neither explicitly confirmed nor denied the extent of the role he played in the **arrest** of Alhajie Faye and Lamin Ceesay's wife. He did acknowledge that he was in Sankung Balajo's compound with the witch-hunters when he was **arrested** and that he was present for the **arrest** of others. However, he always portrayed himself as part of a group, which he said included Salifou Corr, Saikou Jallow, and the witch-hunters. Under questioning the witness accepted that he was the only person in the group with the statutory power to **arrest**, and that he participated in illegal activity. He again pushed back, saying that "conditions forced me".

The Lead Counsel then asked Omar Jawo if Lamin Ceesay challenged the lawfulness of his parents' **arrest**. Omar Jawo responded that he was in his vehicle by the bantaba in Essau when he heard some noise and "some push and pull". He told the Commission that he descended from his vehicle and saw Lamin Ceesay, who he said was already in handcuffs, and Saikou Jallow, who was said to have put the handcuffs on him. The witness claimed that he did not observe the origin of the situation, he did not want to be a part of it, and he felt Lamin Ceesay should not have been handcuffed.

The Lead Counsel asserted that Lamin Ceesay told the Commission that Omar Jawo was at the center of the bantaba when he had his altercation with Saikou Jallow.

According to Lamin Ceesay, the witness was standing by Saikou Jallow and insulting Lamin Ceesay for having the audacity to challenge Yahya Jammeh's orders.

Omar Jawo denied this characterization, and repeated his claim that when he saw Lamin Ceesay he was already in handcuffs, and added that he witnessed no beating. He depicted the "push and pull" as quarrelling, and said he did not see any blood on Lamin Ceesay's face, or a broken nose or mouth. The Lead Counsel reminded the witness, and the Commission, that merely hours ago they had heard another witness describe Lamin Ceesay as having blood on his face. He also pointed out that the witness' responses had moved from denial to memory loss, and accused the witness of trying to avoid being seen as the senior officer during the operation.

The Lead Counsel then began asking about events at Fort Bullen, a small military base on the point outside Barra. The witness said he remembered Lamin Ceesay being taken to Fort Bullen, but denied that he participated in beating him with Saikou Jallow at the Fort. The Lead Counsel asked the witness if he was changing his previous testimony acknowledging that he participated in the witch-hunt. The witness clarified that he joined in the **arresting**, but not in the torture or beating. The Lead Counsel then read the testimony of Tabara Jobe Jawo, who described a police officer in a white uniform present at Fort Bullen, which the witness agreed was him. He then read testimony from Lamin Ceesay, who accused the witness, Saikou Jallow, and a number of soldiers, of beating him at Fort Bullen. The witness again denied that he participated in the beating of Lamin Ceesay, and suggested that Lamin Ceesay was implicating the witness because of a personal grudge.

In response to questioning Omar Jawo denied that he insulted Lamin Ceesay or told him not to disobey orders from Yahya Jammeh. The Lead Counsel then asked the witness if he remembered having Alhaji Tabora Manneh and Lamin Ceesay in his office, to which the witness responded that he could not deny it, but he also could not remember it. The Lead Counsel pointed out that Lamin Ceesay told the Commission

that the witness had made him return to his office later in the day. Omar Jawo denied this was true, and then called into question another aspect of Lamin Ceesay's testimony in which he said he saw the witness on the phone with then State Guard Commander Mr. Sanneh. The witness declared he did not even know a Mr. Sanneh in the State Guard.

When the Lead Counsel asked why Lamin Ceesay, an educated man and one of the headmasters of the schools in the region, would single out the witness as one of the people who beat him, the witness again claimed ignorance.

Omar Jawo then told the Commission that he did not even enter into Fort Bullen on that occasion. He said that Fort Bullen is an area of town as well as the actual fort, so if people placed him there they were referring to the area of town as he claimed he did not enter the actual Fort. When the Lead Counsel pointed out that Tabara Jobe testified that she saw him at the Fort itself, he said that was her version of events. The witness added that he could not have entered the building because a ferry was waiting for them at Barra to take them to Banjul. The Lead Counsel asked the witness a final time to confirm that he denies participating in the beating of Lamin Ceesay.

The Lead Counsel then asked if he lured Alhaji Faye into his office to be **arrested**. Omar Jawo hesitated, then responded, "yes, no," after which the audience let out a burst of energy with some laughing and others angry. The witness then acknowledged that he called Alhaji Faye to his office, but did not tell him what he was wanted for. The witness hinted that he was actually trying to save Alhaji Faye from a worse fate. He asked to be given the opportunity to tell his side of the story. After repeated requests, the Lead Counsel relented.

Omar Jawo told the Commission that Salifou Corr and Saikou Jallow had come into his office and told him they wanted to **arrest** Alhaji Faye in his compound. He claimed that he told the soldiers that as the son of the Alkalo and a well-known member of the community, they should not disgrace him in front of his family. The witness said that he called Alhaji Faye to his office to discuss. He said that while he was in conversation with Alhaji Faye either

Saikou Jallow or Salifou Corr called 3 or 4 soldiers who came into the office and began to "mishandle" Alhaji Faye. The witness said that he ordered Pa Wally Njie, a sergeant working under him at the time, to accompany Alhaji Faye to Fort Bullen to make sure he was not harassed.

The Lead Counsel disputed the witness' version of the events, pointing out that he had already acknowledged participating in the **arrest** of the Alkalo at the time, Alhaji Faye's father, in his own compound in front of his family. He added that once Alhaji Faye was in his office the witness could have told him the soldiers wanted to **arrest** him, that he knew it was illegal, and that he did not want to take part in the operation. Omar Jawo responded that he could not speak with Alhaji Faye in his office because Alhaji Faye was so irritated at the time he was shouting at the witness and not allowing him to speak at all.

At this point Chairman Sise interrupted the testimony to plead with the witness and the Lead Counsel to allow for sequencing and order. The translator added that they were having a hard time translating with all the interruptions and back and forth between the Lead Counsel and the witness.

The Lead Counsel then accused Omar Jawo again of tracking Alhaji Faye and luring him to his office to be **arrested**. He asked the witness if Alhaji Faye was at his house at the time, to which the witness responded that he did not know. The Lead Counsel then asked, three times, if Alhaji Faye lived closer to Saikou Jallow and Salifou Corr than to the witness's office. At first the witness deflected answering before finally affirming this point, after which the Lead Counsel asked why Saikou Jallow and Salifou Corr would have come to his office if they wanted to **arrest** Alhaji. The witness again deflected and tried to ask the Lead Counsel questions, to which the Lead Counsel said that he was not the one testifying or answering questions.

The Lead Counsel then led Omar Jawo to agree that he participated in the arrest of innocent Gambian civilians and in branding them as witches and wizards.

However, Omar Jawo maintained that he was under duress, and that if he had not participated in the operation, he would have been “in hot soup”.

Omar Jawo continued that he escorted those who had been **arrested** to Baba Jobe’s house in the Kombos⁷⁴, where he testified that he found people in very bad conditions.

He said he saw people crying, urinating on themselves, and being bathed by the witch-hunters.

He told the Commission he instantly regretted why he was there. He declared that he saw two liquids that were being given to people. One was referred to as Kubejara, and which according to the witness causes the drinker to go instantly insane. The other un-named liquid was less potent and was being used to bathe people.

The witness testified that people were called into a room one by one and given a cup of one of the two liquids to drink. He claimed that he too was forced to drink by Solo Bojang, apparently on orders from then-President Yahya Jammeh. However, he stated that he was given the innocuous liquid, on account of being a police officer at the time. He told the Commission that he sat for 30 minutes after drinking and nothing happened to him and he was told to return to Barra.

The Lead Counsel then pointed out that over one hundred people from Omar Jawo’s jurisdiction were forced to drink the concoction, and that he had played a role in the process. He asked the witness if he had anything to say to the victims and their families who were watching his testimony.

The witness replied that he had to apologise to Alhaji Faye and Pa Sankung⁷⁵. The Lead Counsel asked if it was only these two to whom he owed an apology. The witness responded by acknowledging that he participated in **arresting** people, but stating it was not his wish to do so and that he was under duress. He apologised to all people affected, but also described himself as a victim considering he said he was forced to drink the concoction and was eventually being dismissed. He repeated the “Never Again” motto of the TRRC and asked Alhaji Faye specifically to forgive him.

Looking out at the audience, he said he did not consider anyone there his enemy. The Lead Counsel gave him

another opportunity to speak to the audience, which the witness took and apologised again to the rest of the victims and say it would never happen again. The Lead Counsel thusly concluded his questioning.

Commissioner Jallow then asked Omar Jawo what he would tell Yahya Jammeh today about how he feels about how the victims have suffered. The witness answered that Yahya Jammeh and all Gambians know what the former President has done. He said that what Yahya Jammeh did was wrong, and that the truth was necessary to build a country with the rule of law and democracy.

Deputy Chairperson Sosseh Gaye then asked when in the operation it changed from the witch-hunters identifying victims, to the soldiers Salifou Corr and Saikou Jallow selecting those who would be **arrested**. The witness responded that it never changed and that they were all working together. The Deputy Chair then asked why he was involved in escorting the people to Kololi considering that his jurisdiction was the north bank, to which the witness responded that he was called by Solo Bojang and told to take part in the escort. She followed up by questioning if he was answerable to Solo Bojang, considering they were in different branches of the security services. The witness replied that anyone who was close to Yahya Jammeh could give orders without question, and disobeying those orders would lead to penalties. He added that the security services were divided and there was significant mistrust between the different branches.

Commissioner Kinteh took the floor and queried the witness if he could remember any of the names of the witch-hunters. The Lead Counsel interjected that there is a reason their names had been left out of the testimony. Commissioner Kinteh then asked if he could give any names of the Green Boys or Green Girls, to which the witness responded that they came from Banjul and he did not know them. The Lead Counsel again interjected asking that their names be kept private, so the witness wrote one name he remembered hearing on a piece of paper and passed it to the Commission.

Commissioner Kah asked the witness if Solo Bojang ever told him the rationale behind the witch-hunt, to which the witness responded that he did not. When asked if he had any words for people serving in the

⁷⁴Usually refers to the outskirts of Banjul or Greater Banjul area.

⁷⁵We assume the witness was referring to Sankung Balajo who testified on 4th December 2019 before the TRRC.

security services right now, the witness said he would address that in his concluding statement.

Commissioner Bishop Odico then asked if there was cooperation between the witch-hunters and the police. Omar Jawo responded that the incident was not a regular operation.

When asked how the witch-hunters were able to lead the team and identify witches, the witness responded that he does not believe in witches, and that the witch-hunters were picking people at random with the backing of then-President Yahya Jammeh.

In his concluding remarks, Omar Jawo thanked God, his parents, and the Commissioners. He pleaded with the audience to love each other as Gambians. He pointed out that he and his two wives all supported different political parties, but this did not affect their relationships. Omar Jawo stated that while the country's current leadership is better than Yahya Jammeh, they are still shambolic.

He implored the security heads to stop the country being spoiled by people who are not living within its borders. He said the ECOWAS troops in Gambia were doing their job, and asked their sister services to double their efforts. He pleaded for discipline and respect among Gambians, and deplored the tenor of the conversation on social media. He apologised again to the victims, and thanked the audience for their attention.

Persons Mentioned By Witness During Testimony:

Arbitrary arrest and detention

Solo Bojang, Salifou Corr, Saikou Jallow, Omar Jawo (the witness), Pa Wally Njie

Persecution, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Yahya Jammeh, Solo Bojang, Salifou Corr, Saikou Jallow

Aiding and abetting persecution, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Omar Jawo (the witness), Kebba Jammeh

The Lead Counsel then asked if the witness knew it was unlawful to corral people and accuse them of witchcraft. Again, the witness said he did.

Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Ambassade de Suisse au Sénégal

About ANEKED

Led by women African human rights activists, the African Network against Extrajudicial Killings and Enforced Disappearances (ANEKED) campaigns against forced disappearances and summary executions. ANEKED combines the power of technology, innovation, traditional media and legal expertise to make issues related to enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings much more visible, advocating for justice for victims and their families.

www.aneked.org
 @theANEKED

About The Point Newspaper

The Point Newspaper is a major independent Gambian newspaper, co-founded by Deyda Hydara, a fierce advocate of press freedom and a fierce critic of the government of then President Yahya Jammeh, who was allegedly killed under the orders of Jammeh in 2004. The current co-publisher is his son, Baba Hydara.

www.thepoint.gm
 @ThePointNewspaper

#NeverAgain

Designer- Alexis Stern