



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **“Convicted criminals too deserve to have their dignity respected”: Gambian prison officials receive human rights training**

**BANJUL, 1 February 2019** – A human rights workshop for Gambian prison officials was organised at the Metzky Residence Hotel in Banjul on 31 January and 1 February 2019. Fourteen women were among the 25 participants. This was an occasion for all of them to reflect on how international human rights standards should inform the work they do.

Organised jointly by the West Africa Regional Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR-WARO) and the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA), the workshop presented key human rights instruments that law enforcement institutions must implement, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention against Torture, which was ratified by The Gambia on 28 September 2018. In particular, participants were introduced to human rights associated with persons in detention, including those with special protection needs.

Ms. Nessie Golakai, representing The Gambia UN Country Team, highlighted that: “One of the tests of state respect for human rights lies in the way in which a society treats those who have broken, or are accused of having broken the criminal law. These are people who may well have themselves shown a lack of respect for the dignity and rights of others.”

“When the law enforcer becomes the lawbreaker, the result is not only an assault on human dignity and on law itself, but the creation of barriers to effective functioning of the law enforcement”, she added. Her comment is all the more relevant in the context of a country emerging from an oppressive 22-year dictatorial rule, where violations of human rights were systematic, in particular in the prison system.

In his remarks, IHRDA Executive Director Gaye Sowe noted it was important for prison officials to be aware there are human rights standards they have to abide by in the course of their duties to the public, and urged participants to endeavour to promote human rights education among their peers upon returning to their duty stations.

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The **West Africa Regional Office of the Office of the United High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR-WARO)** is the leading agency of the UN system responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights in West Africa. The **Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA)** is a pan-African non-governmental organisation working to promote awareness of human rights in Africa and improve the effectiveness of the African Human Rights system through defending, educating, and informing about human rights.

**For more information and media queries**, please contact:

Ms. Mariana Gomes Neto: [mgomesneto@ohchr.org](mailto:mgomesneto@ohchr.org) / +221777404665 and  
Djeugoue Brice Martial: [bmdjeugoue@ihrda.org](mailto:bmdjeugoue@ihrda.org) / +2207751208.