

**Contributions by the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA) to
the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances
February 2024**

IHRDA is only capable of responding to Question 19 because our work does not predominantly focus on electoral processes.

From 2019 to 2021, the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA) and Trial International conducted a mapping of cases of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings (ED/EJK) in The Gambia which occurred between July 1994 and January 2017. During this period, IHRDA also documented ten (10) cases of ED/EJK and conducted case-building exercises for possible litigation, either before domestic courts or regional/international courts. We noted that all of the incidents of enforced disappearances targeted persons who were accused of either the attempted coup on, or other forms of dissent towards, former Gambian President Yahya Jammeh.

As part of our case-building exercise, IHRDA interviewed witnesses, including family members of victims of ED/EJK. IHRDA also hired an expert to assess the psycho-social consequences that the victims and their families had suffered due to EJK/ED and to assess whether they had received adequate psychosocial support. The expert's report established that there is a need for psycho-social support for victims of Jammeh's regime as all victims interviewed report varying degrees of mental health and trauma. There were and have been extremely limited psycho-social support efforts, and the ones that are or have been available do not meet the needs of all victims. It is important to note that all victims who received psycho-social support described it to be beneficial, but 77% of victims interviewed stated that they had not received any support, psycho-social or otherwise.

After the publication of the Gambian Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Committee (TRRC) recommendations, the Gambian Government developed a white paper to prosecute perpetrators of various crimes including enforced disappearances. Government has since promulgated a Victims' Reparations Act in October 2023. However, until now, perpetrators have not been prosecuted and victims have not received reparations.

Going forward, IHRDA has observed a loss of trust in the Government's will and ability to address harms to victims. As a result, we are seeing that some of these victims have or are now turning to the ECOWAS Court of Justice to access remedies that are not available locally.