



Gambia: US Charges Alleged ‘Death Squad’ Member with Torture *Correa Indictment is Major Advance for Victims of Abuses during Jammeh Rule*

(Banjul, June 12, 2020) – The indictment in the United States on June 11, 2020 of an alleged former [Gambian](#) “death squad” member on torture charges is an important step for Gambian victims and international justice, a coalition of human rights groups said today.

Michael Sang Correa, 41, was an alleged member of the notorious “Junglers” death squad, set up by then-president Yahya Jammeh in the mid 1990s. Jammeh’s 22-year rule was marked [by widespread human rights violations](#), including enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, [sexual violence](#), torture, and arbitrary detention. Jammeh is currently in Equatorial Guinea, where he fled after losing the 2016 presidential election to Adama Barrow.

“I want to see justice done for me and for all the others who were victimized by Yahya Jammeh and his security forces,” said Baba Hydara, son of a newspaper editor, Deyda Hydara, who was killed in a 2004 operation in which Correa allegedly took part. “For us, the most important thing is to ensure that such abuses never happen again in Gambia or anywhere else.”

In its [indictment](#) before the US District Court of Colorado, the US Department of Justice alleges that Correa is responsible for the torture of at least six people in 2006, following an attempted coup against Jammeh. Correa and other Junglers allegedly beat their victims with plastic pipes, wires, and branches, covered the victims’ heads with plastic bags, and subjected some to electric shocks. The indictment further alleges that one victim was suspended over the ground in a rice bag and beaten severely while molten plastic or acid was dripped on other victims’ bodies.

Correa is also implicated in some of the Jammeh government’s other notorious crimes. Former Junglers [told](#) the Gambian [Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission](#) that Correa not only tortured people accused of planning the coup but also allegedly participated in the execution of former intelligence chief Daba Marenah and four associates in April 2006. In addition to these and the Hydara murder, former Jungler members also accused him of participating in the killing of Chief Ebrima Manneh, a journalist; nine prison inmates in August 2012, and two Gambian-Americans, Alhagie Mamut Ceesay and Ebou Jobe, in 2013.

The truth commission is documenting human rights violations committed during Jammeh’s rule, including alleged crimes committed by the Junglers. The Gambian government, which has cooperated with the US investigation of Correa, has postponed prosecuting most alleged rights abusers until after the commission completes its work.

In September 2019, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement [arrested Correa](#) in Colorado for overstaying his visa. Since his arrest, a coalition of victims and human rights organizations have



urged justice officials in the United States to investigate credible allegations of grave international crimes committed by Correa in Gambia. On February 18, US Senators Patrick Leahy and Richard Durbin also [urged](#) the government to investigate Correa and, if warranted, to prosecute him in the United States.

The indictment of Correa is the first prosecution of a member of Jammeh's death squads anywhere in the world, said the human rights groups, which include the **African Network Against Extrajudicial Killings and Enforced Disappearances, the Center for Justice and Accountability, the Gambia Center for Victims of Human Rights Violations, the Guernica Centre for International Justice, Human Rights Watch, the Solo Sandeng Foundation, and TRIAL International**. Gambia's former interior minister [Ousman Sonko](#), another Jammeh associate, is now in pre-trial detention in Switzerland, where he is under investigation for crimes against humanity.

The Correa case, if it moves forward, will be only the second case to be tried by US officials under the federal extraterritorial torture statute, [18 USC §2340A](#), since its passage in 1994. The statute makes it a crime for anyone present in the United States, regardless of whether they are a US citizen, to commit torture abroad. The law applies regardless of the nationality of the victim. The only other prosecution was of Charles "Chuckie" Taylor, Jr., the son of former Liberian President Charles Taylor, who was [convicted in](#) 2008 by a court in Miami and is serving a 97-year sentence.

“Using the US torture statute to prosecute one of Jammeh's key henchmen is an important moment for justice in Gambia,” said Ya Mamie Ceesay, mother of slain businessman, Alhagie Mamut Ceesay. “Perpetrators of international crimes need to be held accountable wherever they may be found.”