



PEACE AMBASSADORS - THE GAMBIA

PAG - Election Watch 2021 Pre-Election Observation Deployment Strategy

Peace Ambassadors - The Gambia (PAG) is observing different phases of the 2021 presidential elections. The PAG observation effort started with observing political party congresses, the voter registration process, the candidate nomination period and now the campaign.

For the campaign period, PAG has trained and will on tomorrow, 9th November, deploy 59 long-term observers to include 6 regional coordinators and 53 constituency observers to observe the process in all regions and constituencies.

All 59 observers will observe and send campaign observation checklist reports on two designated days (one in the middle and one at the end of the period) as well as send in critical incidents reports throughout the process anytime they occur.

PAG observers will observe and report on campaign processes such as political rallies, campaign marches and demonstrations, debates, the use of the media, flyers, posters, billboards or community outreach events. They will also watch out for campaign violence within their assigned areas such as propagation of hate speeches and divisive messages, intimidation and harassment targeted at electoral actors and other groups. Observers will further report on civic and voters' education activities, awareness of and adherence to COVID-19 health and safety measures as well as the IEC preparatory activities for the Election Day at the regional and constituency levels.

In addition to observers, PAG also train five data clerks that will be stationed at the PAG National Information Center in Kanifing to collect checklist reports from constituency observers on the two designated reporting days as well as critical incidents from all observers all through the campaign process.

REGIONAL COORDINATORS AND CONSTITUENCY OBSERVERS DEPLOYMENT BREAKDOWN:

REGION	NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES	NO OF REGIONAL COORDINATORS	NO. OF CONSTITUENCY OBSERVERS
Banjul	3	1	3
Kanifing	7		7
West Coast Region	13	1	13
North Bank Region	7	1	7
Lower River Region	6	1	6
Central River Region	11	1	11
Upper River Region	6	1	6
TOTAL	53	6	53

REPORTING AND COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR THE CAMPAIGN

For the Pre-Election Period (Candidate Nomination and Campaign), PAG will issue three public updates to communicate its observation findings. These updates will be in the form of a report or brief that will either be posted on a social platform or shared directly into emails to various stakeholders to communicate PAG’s findings.

This initial update covers the PAG Campaign Deployment Strategy and Candidate Nomination Observation will be followed by two additional updates. One will be issued on Friday, 19th November that will include the PAG first Campaign Update. A second and final update will be issued on Friday, 3rd December.

This final update will also communicate the PAG Deployment Strategy for Election Day Observation. All PAG Campaign reports will be based on the direct observations from PAG’s 59 observers located in all constituencies and regions.

In addition to the two Campaign Updates, PAG will immediately share with the appropriate authorities any verified critical incident reports or any other relevant information so that actions would immediately be taken to address the issue(s).

To communicate its observation findings, PAG will hold two press briefings/conferences on the two updates which will also be shared with the IEC, members of the media and major electoral stakeholders. Throughout the campaign period, there will also be regular posts of PAG activities on its social media page and official website for the public to access.

PAG Pre-Election Reporting Timeline:

Report/Update	Observation Period	Press Conference and Statement Release
Candidate Nomination and Public Scrutiny	Saturday, 30 th October- Saturday, 6 th November	Monday, 8 th November - Update on Nomination Submission and Preview of Campaign
Campaign Update-1	Tuesday, 9 th November – Wednesday, 17 th November	Friday, 19 th November - 1st Campaign update
Campaign Update-2	Thursday, 17 th November – Wednesday, 1 st December	Friday, 3 rd December - 2nd Campaign update + E-day preview

PAG OBSERVATION OF THE 2021 CANDIDATE NOMINATION PROCESS

The PAG deployed an observer to observe the IEC candidate nomination process and public scrutiny for a total of eight days (30th October-6th November) at the IEC Headquarters in Kanifing. The observer was trained to report on specific issues of the process based on a comprehensive checklist.

Although the PAG observer was permitted by the IEC to observe the submission of nomination papers by aspirants, he was only given five minutes to carry out public scrutiny of all 23 aspirants who submitted nomination papers to the IEC. Therefore, observation findings only generally comprise the submission procedures and the general environment at the IEC office during the process.

The PAG observer reported that the IEC office opened on time daily with the Returning Officer and other IEC Officials present to receive nomination papers. The observer also noted the vast space between where observers were seated and the IEC tent where the nomination papers were submitted. This prevented observers from generally observing which documents were being submitted in the package. The observer reported that no aspirant was prevented from submitting their nomination papers. In instances where some aspirants did not submit all the legal requirements as outlined by the electoral laws of The Gambia the IEC provided them the opportunity to resubmit a complete nomination package.

PAG witnessed the total of 23 aspirants submit nomination papers, out of which only one was female. According to the IEC, only 6 of the 23 submissions were in compliance with the IEC guidelines and were later announced as candidates for the 2021 Presidential Elections. These include five political parties and one independent candidate.

The IEC noted that aspirants whose submissions were disqualified were based on the following reasons:

- a. Failure to submit the required number of registered voters who support their candidacy for all or some administrative areas,
- b. A signed copy of the code of campaign ethics,

- c. A complete assets declaration form,
- d. Forgery detected from the submissions
- e. Submitting under the banner of an unregistered party; all of which are outlined by the electoral laws of the Gambia.

Due to the limited amount of time provided for public scrutiny, PAG was not able to observe omissions or errors in candidates' nomination packages. Nevertheless, rejected candidates have the opportunity to appeal to the IEC.

PAG's observer also reported the presence of national security personnel at the IEC office during the nomination process including members of the Gambia Police Force, Gambia Immigration Department & Gambia Prisons Service.

According to the PAG observer, aspirants were accompanied by private security and large crowds supporting them during the submission of their nomination papers. There were no instances of violence observed. Only in one instance a supporter was seen bearing a knife and was immediately arrested by the state security. Further, all aspirants were treated equally, according to the laws of The Gambia during the submission of their nomination papers.

The COVID-19 safety regulations were implemented throughout the process. There were facemasks, hand sanitizers & handwashing buckets available for all who entered the IEC Election House. In addition to setting up COVID regulations, the Gambia Red Cross Society Volunteers were also responding to emergency situations using the ambulance situated for that purpose.

PAG's observer further reported the presence of the Gambia Press Union leadership and several media houses as well as personnel who observed the process amongst which were GRTS, QTV, Paradise TV, eye Africa, Kerr Fatou, The Fatu Network, HB TV, DW, GTTV, and many other digital, online & print media. There were also citizen observers' groups as well as other institutions observing the process including the Gambia Participate, National Human Rights Commission, CSO Coalition & the African Union.

About PAG

Peace Ambassadors - The Gambia is an International peace education and advocacy Organization operating in The Gambia and beyond since 2001, focusing mainly on Peace Education, Conflict Resolution, Youth and Civic empowerment. The Organization has, over the years, received accreditation from the Independent Electoral Commission availing us the opportunity to serve as an Election Observation Group in the Presidential, Parliamentary as well as Local Government elections.

Peace Ambassadors expanded its election observation efforts from Election-Day observation to systematic long-term observation covering major electoral processes within the entire election cycle. PAG is responsible for the design, implementation and conduct of its activities as well as the content of all public statements. PAG receives financial assistance from the

National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and technical support from the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI).

Contact Information-PAG Secretariat:

Yankuba Manjang, Executive Secretary – 3914415 / 7175382

Momodou Juju Jallow, Program Manager – 3438623 / 6429925

Mbaye Mballow, Communication Officer – 3053752 / 2309948

Website: www.peaceambassadors.gm

Facebook: Peace Ambassadors-The Gambia

Twitter- Peace Ambassadors-The Gambia