

Monitoring of the first trial for international crimes in The Gambia by students of the Georg-August-University Göttingen

On 25 April 2022, the first trial for international crimes committed in The Gambia in 2003 and 2006 commences at the Higher Regional Court (*Oberlandesgericht*) in Celle, Germany. The charges are based on the German Code of Crimes against International Law (*Völkerstrafgesetzbuch*), and the Court's jurisdiction is based on the principle of universal jurisdiction. Bai L., a 46-year-old Gambian citizen, is [charged with three counts of crimes against humanity](#). Allegedly, he was a member of the so-called "Junglers" death squad, a paramilitary unit created by former Gambian President Yahya Jammeh. This trial will be the first to prosecute international crimes committed in The Gambia during the Jammeh era.

Cases based on universal jurisdiction have gained importance in international efforts to ensure accountability for the commission of international crimes. Germany is at the forefront of this emerging trend. At the same time, however, the proceedings have been criticized for a lack of transparency, especially due to the failure to make court records accessible to the general public. Since the court record in the trial against Bai L. will also not be accessible, a team of students from the Georg-August-University of Göttingen, supervised by Professor Kai Ambos and his team, will conduct a trial monitoring for the entire duration of the trial. The result will be detailed English reports for the public, published online. By providing this documentation, it is hoped that Gambian civil society, especially those affected by the Jammeh regime, as well as the international community, will be able to follow the proceedings.

The project is carried out in cooperation with Human Rights Watch, TRIAL International, the International Commission of Jurists as well as the Göttingen chapter of the European Law Students' Association (ELSA).