

**African Commission on
Human & Peoples' Rights**

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**FINAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE 24TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE
AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

**BANJUL, THE GAMBIA
22nd – 31st OCTOBER, 1998**

1. The 24th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights was held from 22nd to 31st of October 1998 in Banjul, The Gambia.
2. The opening ceremony took place on 22nd October, 1998 under the Chairmanship of Mr. Youssoupha Ndiaye, Chairman of the Commission.
3. The Session was declared opened by the Honourable Justice F. M. Chomba, the President of the Court of Appeal of the Gambia.
4. Speeches were also delivered by Mr. Harry Octavianus Olympio, Minister for the Promotion of Democracy and the Rule of Law, of the Republic of Togo on behalf of State Parties to the Charter and Ms. Sy Aissata Satigui of the Mauritania Association for Human Rights as a representative of the NGOs with observer status with the Commission.
5. The Chairman of the Commission informed delegates and participants at the Session of the tragic and untimely death of Commissioner Alioune Blondin Beye, who died in a plane crash near Abidjan, Cote d' Ivoire on 26th June, 1998. A minute's silence was observed in honour of the departed Commissioner. The 24th Ordinary Session of the Commission was appropriately termed "Alioune Blondin Beye Session"

In his memory, the 24th Ordinary Session of the Commission was termed "Alioune Blondin Beye Session", and at the fourth sitting of the Session his surviving colleagues paid tribute to him. Commissioners recalled his dedicated service to the African Commission as well as his zeal in the promotion and protection of human rights in Africa. The Commission decided to institute a human rights award named "the Alioune Blondin Beye Award" in his honour.

6. State delegates from Angola, Ethiopia, Zambia, Benin, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Rwanda, Cameroon and Sudan addressed the Commission.

7. With respect to the human rights situation in Africa, various NGOs representatives expressed their concerns about the deteriorating human rights situation in the Great Lakes Region- (Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo), and in other parts of Africa.

The representatives of the Governments of Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Zambia and Nigeria also responded to the statements of the NGOs concerning the human rights situation in their respective countries.

8. The Commission was briefed on the disturbing humanitarian situation in Burundi due to the embargo imposed on this country by States of this region. It therefore decided to take up the matter with the current Chairman of the OAU with a view to asking him to intercede with his colleagues who imposed the said sanctions against Burundi for them to consider the possibility of lifting them, in accordance with the spirit of the decisions of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in June 1998.
9. The relationship between the Commission and NGOs was discussed with contributions from States delegates and NGOs observers.
10. The Commission has decided to use the existing revised and simplified guidelines for the preparation of State Report. The Commission resolved to organise a seminar for African Ambassadors in Addis Ababa on the issue of submission of States Reports to the Commission. The Secretary was directed to write to States Parties attaching the said revised guidelines together with an explanatory note on procedures and time-table for the consideration of outstanding States reports.
11. Angola presented its initial State report in accordance with Article 62 of the Charter. Consideration of the initial reports of South Africa, Seychelles and Chad was postponed to the 25th Ordinary Session. The Commission expressed strong displeasure at the absence of these states to present their reports to the Commission.
12. The Commission took note of the bombing of a pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum and deplored the harmful consequences on human rights.
13. The Commission decided to send Commissioner Ben Salem to Sierra Leone to meet President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah so as to ask him not to proceed with further execution of those sentenced to death.
14. The representatives of the Governments of Senegal and Mauritania addressed the Commission on issues arising from the missions undertaken to their countries on 1st – 7th and 19th – 27th June, 1996 respectively.
15. The Commission welcomed the holding of talks between the parties to the Guinea-Bissau conflict and expressed its support for the ongoing peace process, paying particular tribute to the Head of State of The Gambia Col (Rtd) Yahya J. J. Jammeh. A resolution to this effect was adopted by the Commission.

16. In commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Commission decided to issue a statement, which would be circulated to all States parties to the Charter.
17. During the private sessions, the Commission considered a total number of 66 communications and made the necessary recommendations
18. The Commission adopted six resolutions.
19. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights expresses its profound gratitude to the Government of the Republic of the Gambia for its efforts in making the session a success.
20. The session was declared closed on 31st October, 1998 by Hon. Justice G. Gelaga-King of the Gambia Court of Appeal.
21. The Chairman of the Commission will hold a press conference after the closing ceremony.

DONE IN BANJUL ON 31ST OCTOBER, 1998

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