

Table of Contents

- ***Gambia bans music, drumming and dancing in Ramadan***
-

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Gambians ordered to report anyone engaging in activities which have been outlawed during Islamic holy month.

Aljazeera (14.06.2016) - <http://bit.ly/28AzLUe> - The Gambia has banned music, dancing and drumming during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, on pain of being arrested - and people are complying, police said.

Ordinary citizens in the small West African country - whose president declared it an Islamic state in December - are being urged to report anyone seen engaging in the activities to authorities, a spokesman said on Monday.

"People are complying with the police order banning drumming and dancing during the month of Ramadan and so far no one has been arrested by the police for violating it," police spokesman Lamin Njie told the AFP news agency.

A police statement published last week warned that "all ceremonies, festivities and programmes that involve drumming, music and dance during the day or at night are prohibited".

"All those engaged in the practice are therefore warned to desist from such acts otherwise they will be eventually apprehended and face the full force of the law without compromise," it said.

Gambia: An Islamic state

President Yahya Jammeh announced in December that the Gambia had become an Islamic state, but stressed that the rights of the Christian minority would be respected and that women would not be held to a dress code.

A few weeks later it emerged that female civil servants had been ordered to cover their hair at work, according to a leaked government memo, although the presidency subsequently announced the measure had been dropped.

A former British colony, the Gambia has a population of nearly two million, 90 percent of whom are Muslim. Of the remainder, 8 percent are Christian and 2 percent are defined as having indigenous beliefs.

Jammeh, 50, a military officer and former wrestler, has ruled the country with an iron fist since he seized power in a coup in 1994.

Critics regularly accuse him of making unilateral decisions and controversial statements, notably about other countries, migrants and homosexuality.

The next presidential election in the Gambia, for which Jammeh is a candidate, is scheduled in December.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation announced in April that its next summit will be held in the Gambia, although a date has not yet been fixed.

During the holy month of Ramadan, observant Muslims abstain from eating and drinking during daylight hours.
