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**UN Human Rights Council
Twenty-seventh session, 8-26 September 2014**

**Item 6:
General Debate**

Mr. President,

Amnesty International is deeply concerned at the ongoing trend of intimidation and reprisals against those who engage with UN human rights mechanisms, including the UPR. The recent report by the Secretary General specifically addresses reprisals arising from the engagement of individuals with the reviews of Cameroon, China, Egypt, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Alleged reprisals reported include intrusive surveillance, arbitrary detention, and in one shocking incidence in Cameroon, murder.

No-one should face sanction for engaging with or seeking to engage with UN human rights mechanisms. Intimidation and reprisals are a direct violation of the affected individuals' human rights, and a tactic designed to dissuade others from advocating for their rights. They are also an attack on the UN human rights system itself. It is incumbent on UN member states to be aware of recourse to intimidation and the risks of reprisals and to be prepared to take action to prevent them.

Mr. President,

Amnesty International is alarmed at the deterioration of the situation of human rights in **Gambia** since its UPR examination in 2010. Human rights defenders and journalists face attacks, and impunity for human rights violations, including those adjudicated by the ECOWAS Court of Justice, remains the norm. In 2012, the government arbitrarily executed nine death row inmates by firing squad. In 2013 human rights defender and Muslim cleric Imam Baba Leigh was forcibly disappeared in retaliation for his work against the death penalty and female genital mutilation. This year, Gambia unilaterally postponed the visits by the Special Rapporteurs on torture and on extra-judicial executions. We urge Council members and observers to use the

upcoming UPR to demand accountability by the government for human rights violations.

Mr. President,

Amnesty International believes there are intimidation and a real risk of reprisals against Gambians who seek to engage with the upcoming UPR examination for Gambia. We urge this Council to ensure sustained attention to the human rights situation in Gambia and to actively monitor that Gambian human rights defenders are able to engage actively with UN human rights mechanisms free from intimidation and reprisals.

Thank you, Mr. President.