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Latest News Legal Affairs

Six Vessels Intercepted for Illegal Fishing to Decide their Settlements

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By Mustapha Jallow

Six foreign vessels that were intercepted recently after found illegally fishing on Gambia's territorial waters will each be served with a notification letter, asking them to indicate whether they want their matter be settled in court or out of court.

This information was made available to Foroyaa by Omar Gibba, the acting Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Fisheries on Thursday.

Mr. Gibba said the individuals' crew will chose, once the letter is sent to them, whether to settle out of court or face the court.

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"I'm heading to Director's office to discuss over the matter to ensure a notification letter is prepared and send it to them (vessels owners) as whether to settle it out of court or go to court," he said.

Gibba declined to make further comments on the matter, saying they are yet to come to any conclusion. But he said he can confirm that the vessels are still berthed at the Fisheries Jetty under the guard of the army.

Why out-of-court settlement?

The Gambia fishing law clearly states that any vessel found illegally fishing on the country's waters should pay a minimum fine of five million dalasi. This law was pronounced under the regime of former Gambian President Yahya Jammeh.

But some officials of the current President Adama Barrow-led government think that law is unreasonable. James Gomez, minister and Bamba Banja, permanent secretary (now on administrative leave), both at the ministry of Fisheries and Water Resources think the law "does not make sense" and will "kill the industry."

Meanwhile, it could be recalled that six foreign vessels were arrested after found illegal fishing on Gambia's waters.

"The Gambia Navy from the month of October to November 2020 has made significant gains against illegal fishing as six major arrests have been executed during different patrols within the country's waters," a military report revealed.

The report disclosed that the Gambia Navy continued to survey the coast and fisheries protection zones.

It further said since the Government of the Gambia issued COVID-19 regulations, which includes the closure of the country's borders, sea, air and land in a bid to curtail the spread of the viral disease, the Gambia Navy intensified patrols and surveillance along the country's waters.

"The Navy on two separate incidents, on the 6th and 29th October 2020, carried out arrests on two different vessels for fishing in a prohibited zone. The vessels were SUPER FLY 1 and BETTY (DAK 709)," the report stated.

The report continued to state that in a similar activity on November 4th 2020, the Gambia Navy in collaboration with the Fisheries Department and Sea Shepherd conducted Joint Coastal Surveillance and Fisheries protection during which four arrests were executed for fishing in prohibited zone.

"The vessels were three Chinese fishing vessels, marked: F/V GORDE 105, F/V GORDE 106, and F/V GORDE 107. On 07 November 2020, the boarding team on board the Sea Shepherd arrested F/V FINSI WANG for being in possession of wrong fishing gear."

"They are all currently berthed at the fisheries jetty, under armed guards. The Gambia Navy will continue to collaborate with relevant agencies in a bid to protect the country's territorial waters as mandated by the constitution," the report indicated.



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