

# The West African Examinations Council



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## REACTION TO MR. SAM SIDEEN SARR'S ALLEGATION THAT HIS BOOK, MEET ME IN CONAKRY WAS DROPPED FOR POLITICAL REASONS

The attention of The West African Examinations Council, Banjul Office has recently been drawn to a post on the University of The Gambia EDUSA WhatsApp page by the author of *Meet me in Conakry*, Mr. Sam Sideen Sarr in which he alleged that his book was cancelled for inclusion among GABECE prescribed Literature in English text due to his support for the APRC Party.

The allegation is absolutely incorrect and the Banjul Office wishes to set the record straight.

Literature in English texts are subject to a periodic review of every five years and procedurally, the decision of which texts to adopt is the prerogative of an independent committee of stakeholders. In this regard, in the first half of 2018, The Council invited suggestions from schools and other stakeholders to propose texts for review and selection by a Working Committee.

Upon receipt of the suggested texts, a National Working Committee was constituted in June 2018 to review both the existing texts and the ones received as suggested GABECE Literature in English Texts for the period 2021 to 2025. This committee comprised a representative from the University of The Gambia, a representative from Curriculum Research and Development Department of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE), Chief Examiners and a select number of schools with large entries for the subject. The committee met from June 11 to 15, 2018 and reviewed the suggested texts and poems to ascertain their suitability in line with set criteria, agreed upon by all the panelists. These included:

- Suitability of the text in terms of the language level
- Topicality of the themes and issues raised in the book

➤ Text not used in the recent past

The Committee selected a number of texts including *Meet me in Conakry*. It may be of interest to note that Mr. Sam Sideen Sarr's political profile was public knowledge at the time. However, that did not prevent the committee from selecting his book in the first place.

However, in November 2019 (about one year six months later) the Office received information from schools that the text was not available in the market. This was corroborated by some panel members who were mainly examiners. The council deemed it necessary to call another meeting of the Committee which reconvened on November 28, 2019 for the purpose of coming up with a replacement. After a day's work, it settled for *So Long a Letter* as replacement for *Meet me in Conakry*. All the panelists confirmed to WAEC that the text (*so long a letter*) was available. Consequently, schools were written to on the replacement on December 17, 2019. After the letters were sent, the Banjul Office did not receive any complaint from schools that the book (*So long a Letter*) was not available in the book market.

Months later, we received information from a man who claimed to be the supplier that *Meet me in Conakry* was not available at the time but that it had been printed. He further said that the consignment got stuck somewhere along the Nigerian border and that delayed the arrival. That, its printing coincided with the closure of Nigeria's land borders. He strongly appealed for a reversal of our decision to replace *Meet me in Conakry* with *So Long a Letter*. His appeal was not however acceded to since a decision had been made based on the information available at the time.

In fact, the author himself spoke with one of our officials while abroad to express his concern over the issue. It was explained to him in no uncertain terms that his book's withdrawal was as a result of its unavailability in the market but assured him that it could be considered in the next review once the panelists settle for it. "that's well understood", he remarked, at the time.

Thank you.



Mr. Sanji Fatty

**FOR: HEAD OF NATIONAL OFFICE**

WAEC, Banjul.