



Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Senegal – July to December 2024

31 December 2024

01 July 2024

Human trafficking: Nigerian girls freed in Senegal

Members of the Senegalese NGO La Lumière, in cooperation with the Nigerian embassy in Dakar, freed around 25 trafficked Nigerian girls in Senegal on 23.06.24 and returned them to Nigeria. According to media reports, the girls and young women aged between 11 and 24 were trafficked to Senegal via the city of Cotonou in Benin and across the Malian-Senegalese border, they were then forced into prostitution in the regions of Tamaccounda and Kedougou. According to a media report, the girls are from the Nigerian states of Edo, Delta, Abia and Plateau. The rescue of the girls is a result of increased cooperation between Senegal and Nigeria to combat human trafficking. The Trafficking in Persons Report published by the U.S. Department of State in June 2024 shows that Nigeria does not fully meet minimum standards to combat human trafficking but continues to make considerable efforts to achieve them. Success stories from the Nigerian National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) regularly mention the number of victims of human trafficking freed during rescue operations and the number of people convicted of human trafficking (cf. BN of 04.10.21, 25.04. and 25.07.22, 07.08. and 09.10.23).¹

Draft law intensifying criminalisation of homosexuality

On 24.06.24, MP Cheikh Abdou Bara Dolly Mbacké submitted a bill to the Senegalese parliament to further criminalise homosexuality. According to media reports, the bill stipulates that same-sex sexual acts, which are described as "acts against nature", are punishable by ten to 15 years in prison without parole and a fine of 1,000,000 to 5,000,000 CFA francs (from around EUR 1,500 - around EUR 7,600, as at 01.07.24). Persons who defend homosexual acts are to be punished with a prison sentence of three to five years and a fine of 500,000 to 5,000,000 CFA francs (from around EUR 760 - EUR 1,500, as at 01.07.24), according to the bill. Mbacké maintains that the bill aims to counter the "immoral cultural values" introduced from the West. Parliament's adoption of the bill could have international repercussions and destabilise Senegal's diplomatic relations. Until now, same-sex sexual acts of any kind have been punishable by up to five years in prison and a fine of between 100,000 and 1,500,000 CFA francs (from around EUR 150 - around EUR 2,300, as at 01.07.24) under Article 319 of the Senegalese Penal Code of 1965. The bill adopts the provisions of an earlier proposal to further criminalise same-sex sexual acts of January 2022 under former President Macky Sall, which parliament rejected at the time. The reason given for rejecting the bill at the time was that the existing legislation was already sufficiently precise stipulating penalties that were severe enough. In addition to homosexuality, Mbacké's bill also covers "lesbianism, bisexuality, transsexuality, intersexuality, zoophilia, necrophilia and further similar practices".²

29 July 2024

Prisoners on hunger strike

Several inmates of the Liberté 6 prison in Dakar went on hunger strike on 19.07.24 to demand a visit from the Minister of Justice and an end to abuse and violence by prison guards. According to media reports, the violence by the guards began following confrontations with the wardens on the same day. Several prisoners were transferred to Rebeuss prison. One prisoner died after being transferred.³

Arrested for insulting the head of state

Senegalese security forces arrested opposition politician Amath Suzanne Camara of the Alliance pour la République (APR) party on 24.07.24 after he made critical remarks about President Bassirou Diomaye Faye on the Seneweb news channel on 23.07.24. Camara is said to have called the president a liar in an interview. According to media reports, the arrest has reignited a debate about the existing law on insulting the head of state. Including in the ranks of the ruling party Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité (PASTEF) some consider the current punishment of three months to five years in prison for insulting the head of state excessive. Camara's arrest for insulting the head of state is the third since President Faye took office on 02.04.24, reports said.⁴

19 August 2024

Protests by media companies

Media professionals from several Senegalese media companies did not publish any news on 13.08.24 to protest against what they consider a curtailment of press freedom in the country and to send a signal against the government's fiscal and economic measures. According to media reports, the television stations TFM, ITV and 7 TV, several radio stations and daily newspapers did not broadcast any news that day. Content-free editions of several newspapers are said to have shown a black cover page with the words "journée sans presse" and a picture of three raised fists. The reports say that several media companies accuse the current government under President Faye of confiscating their financial resources because they allegedly did not pay taxes. At the end of June 2024, Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko criticised the misappropriation of public funds, which he claimed had been committed by several media company executives. In a statement published on 06.08.24, the Coordination des associations de la presse (CAP) in Senegal warned of the closure of press companies and the loss of dozens of jobs due to pressure from the government, consisting of tax controls and reminders to pay fees. Two of the country's daily sports newspapers, Stades and Sunu Lamb, are said to have ceased publication in August 2024 after more than 20 years. From 2021 to 2024, Senegal slipped from 49th to 94th place on the World Press Freedom Index published by the organisation Reporters Without Borders.⁵

16 September 2024

Arrested for spreading false reports

Senegalese security forces arrested and detained Cheikhouna Keïta, the former head of the Central Office for Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking and chairman of the political movement Force dolel Askanwi, at the beginning of September 2024. According to the authorities, he allegedly spread false information on a Senegalese television programme about an alleged dispute between President Diomaye Faye and Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko. Already prior to the March 2024 presidential elections Keïta had repeatedly criticised Sonko and his ruling party Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité (PASTEF). He accuses him of being an ally of former President Macky Sall. Already on 24.07.24, security forces had arrested opposition politician Amath Suzanne Camara from the Alliance pour la République (APR) party for allegedly calling Faye a liar on the Seneweb news channel (cf. BN of 20.07.24).⁶

30 September 2024

Dissolution of parliament and planning of new elections

Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye announced the dissolution of the opposition-dominated parliament at a press conference in Dakar on 12.09.24. He also scheduled new elections for 17.11.2024. The Constitutional Council agreed to the dissolution. Faye had won the presidential elections at the end of March 2024 with the promise of radical change (cf. BN of 08.04.24). According to media reports, the government's plans have so far been hampered by the lack of a parliamentary majority. With the early parliamentary elections Faye intends to secure the necessary majority for his camp in parliament to implement his political agenda. The current 165 MPs were elected in July 2022 under former President Macky Sall. Cooperation with the National Assembly had become difficult for Faye after members refused to enter into discussions on the budget law.⁷

28 October 2024

Opposition figure arrested

On 19.10.24 Senegalese security forces arrested Bougane Gueye Dany, opposition politician and leader of the Gueum Sa Bopp movement, on his way to the town of Bakel in the east of the country. He had refused to stop at a road block when instructed to do so by the security forces. According to reports in the media, he was on his way together with two members of the Sàmm Sa Kàddu opposition party to support flood victims in the regions of Senegal which have been hit by flooding when he refused to give way to president Diomaye Faye's convoy. He was subsequently charged with "insubordination", "rebellion" and "insult". Gueye Dany was taken into custody at Tambacounda prison on 21.10.24. A court will decide on 30.10.24 whether he must remain in custody. The Geum Sa Bopp movement has reportedly demanded his immediate and unconditional release, criticising the inhumane prison conditions resulting, for example, from overcrowding and degrading treatment. Gueye Dany is said to be well known as a critic of both prime minister Sonko and former president Macky Sall. Dany's arrest took place some four weeks ahead of the early parliamentary elections on 17.11.24, in which he will run as a candidate of the Sàmm Sa Kàddu opposition party.⁸

04 November 2024

Unrest ahead of parliamentary elections

On 28.10.24 unknown actors destroyed the campaign headquarters of Barthélémy Dias – opposition party Sàmm Sa Kàddu's leading candidate and the mayor of the capital, Dakar. The incident occurred during campaigning for the early parliamentary elections on 17.11.24. Members of the opposition party believe that the attack was carried out by supporters of the governing party Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité (PASTEF).

On 30.10.24 unknown actors attacked the convoy of the prime minister, Ousmane Sonko of the PASTEF party, in the town of Koungheul (Kaffrine region) while he was on his way to campaign rallies in the centre of the country. According to reports in the media, several members of the Grand Parti (GP) who were accompanying him were injured in the attack. GP is a party allied with Sonko. Sonko himself is reported to have remained unscathed.⁹

18 November 2024

Disturbances and arrests ahead of the parliamentary elections

On 11.11.24 the police detained some 81 people who had become violent in the city of Saint-Louis on 17.11.24, during campaigning ahead of the parliamentary elections. According to reports in the media, they were arrested for violent offences such as physical attacks, damage to public property and incitement to violence in connection with election campaigning. The majority of those arrested are said to belong to the security service of the opposition coalition "Sàmm Sa Kàddu". Arrest warrants were reportedly issued for the detained individuals on 14.11.24.¹⁰

Provisional results of the parliamentary election: Victory for ruling party

With nearly all votes counted, the party of president Bassirou Diomaye Faye, Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité (PASTEF), claimed victory on 17.11.24. According to reports in the media, the opposition parties have conceded defeat. At the end of March 2024, Faye's party failed to obtain a majority in parliament, with less than one third of the seats (cf. BN of 08.04.24). On 12.09.24 Faye announced the dissolution of the opposition-dominated parliament (cf. BN of 30.09.24). With his party's latest victory in the parliamentary elections, Faye's camp now has the necessary majority in parliament to assert his political agenda. Former president Macky Sall of the opposition party Takku Wallu Senegal is claiming that the election was marred by ballot rigging. The first official results are to be announced on 19.11.24.¹¹

25 November 2024

Results of the parliamentary elections: Victory for ruling party

With all votes counted, the party of president Bassirou Diomaye Faye, Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité (PASTEF), claimed victory in the parliamentary elections on 17.11.24, taking around 80 % of the vote. According to reports in the media, it will hold 130 of the total of 165 seats in future. The parliamentary majority will reportedly enable president Bassirou Diomaye Faye and prime minister Ousmane Sonko to carry through their announced reforms, which are said to include provisions to fight corruption and to revive the fishing industry. In the presidential and parliamentary elections at the end of March 2024, Faye's party failed to obtain a majority in parliament, winning less than one third of the seats (cf. BN of 08.04. and 18.11.24). Faye dissolved the parliament in September 2024. International election monitors report that the election was largely peaceful. Turnout stood is said to have been just under 50 %. On the basis of the election results, the front runner of opposition party Takku Wallu, former president Macky Sall, won only 16 seats in parliament. The other opposition parties reportedly won only a particularly small number of votes.¹²

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Briefing Notes
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