

Civic Freedom Monitor: Senegal

Last updated: **December 8, 2025**

Recent Developments

In December 2025, a power struggle erupted between President Bassirou Diomaye Faye and his Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko, which destabilized the nation's ruling coalition. The crisis began when President Faye unilaterally announced the removal of Aïssatou Mbodj, a key Sonko ally, as head of the "Diomaye Président" coalition that secured his 2024 election victory. He replaced her with his own campaign coordinator, Aminata Touré. The move directly contradicted Sonko's public declaration days earlier that there would be "no change at the head of the coalition" and is seen as a deliberate challenge to the Prime Minister's influence. Please see the News section below in this report for additional details.

While we aim to maintain information that is as current as possible, we realize that situations can rapidly change. If you are aware of any additional information or inaccuracies on this page, please keep us informed; write to ICNL at ngomonitor@icnl.org.

Introduction

Associational life is deeply rooted in Senegalese society, where participation in family-based, professional, political, or religious organizations is a widespread cultural norm. Civil society in Senegal is strong and well-organized, playing a crucial role in defending human rights and advocating for the interests of the most vulnerable populations, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

A large number of CSOs are officially registered with the state as associations, foundations, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), though many unregistered organizations also operate actively and openly.

The legal environment governing civil society is generally supportive, allowing organizations to operate freely provided they comply with existing laws and regulations. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are able to conduct advocacy, service delivery, and development work with relative autonomy.

Civic Freedoms at a Glance

Organizational Forms	Associations, Foundations, and NGOs
Registration Body	Ministry of Interior (Associations); Ministry of Finance (Foundations); Line Ministry (national NGOs); Ministry of Foreign Affairs (international NGOs.)

Approximate Number	There are approximately 11,600 associations: 5,000 community associations; 2,500 sporting and cultural associations; 2,000 religious associations; 700 professional associations, including 250 trade unions, 300 educational, and 150 health associations; and more than 200 political associations. According to figures provided by the Directorate of Community Development of the Ministry of the Family, 487 registered NGOs work in Senegal, including 303 national organizations and 184 foreign organizations.
Barriers to Formation	To gain NGO status and enjoy all the benefits of that status, including exemptions, the organization must have existed for two years as an association.
Barriers to Operations	Groups whose goal and activities are contrary to penal laws or directed against “public order” are prohibited.
Barriers to Resources	No legal barriers.
Barriers to Expression	No legal barriers.
Barriers to Assembly	72 hours advance notification requirement; restrictions on places where participants may gather.

Legal Overview

This section provides a brief overview of Senegal's legal framework for the promotion and protection of civic freedoms. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

RATIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Key International Agreements	Ratification*
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	1978
Optional Protocol to ICCPR (ICCPR-OP1)	1978
International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	1978
Optional Protocol to ICESCR (Op-ICESCR)	2009
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)	1972
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	1985
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women	2000
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	1990

Key International Agreements	Ratification*
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW)	1999
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	2010

Key Regional Agreements	Ratification
African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR)	1982
African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	1992
Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community	2001
Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa	2003
Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights	2003

* Category includes ratification, accession, or succession to the treaty

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The [Constitution](#) of Senegal was adopted in a 2001 referendum and subsequently amended in a 2016 referendum.

Relevant constitutional provisions include the following:

Article 8

The Republic of Senegal guarantees to all citizens their individual fundamental freedoms, economic and social rights as well as group rights. These freedoms and rights are: Civil and political liberties, freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, press freedom, freedom of association, freedom to hold meetings, freedom of movement, freedom to protest, cultural freedoms, religious freedoms, philosophical freedoms, union freedoms, freedom of enterprise, the right to education, the right to literacy, the right to property, the right to work, the right to health, the right to a healthy environment, and the right to a variety of information. These freedoms and rights shall be exercised under the conditions provided by law.

Article 9

Any infringement of these freedoms and any international restriction of the exercise of a freedom shall be punishable by law. No-one may be convicted other than by virtue of a law which became effective before the act was committed. Defence is an absolute right at all stages and at all levels of the proceedings.

Article 10

Everyone shall have the right to freely express and disseminate his opinions by word, pen or image or peaceful march, provided that the exercise of these rights shall not undermine the honour of and respect due to other persons, nor threaten public order.

Article 11

The creation of a press body for information on politics, the economy, culture, sports, recreation or science shall be free and shall not be subject to prior authorisation of any kind. Press regulations shall be set by the law.

Article 12

All citizens shall have the right to freely constitute associations and economic, cultural and social groups as well as societies, on condition that they comply with the formalities set down by the laws and regulations. Groups whose aim or activity is contrary to the penal laws or directed against public order shall be prohibited.

Article 13

The secrecy of correspondence and of postal, telegraphic, telephonic or electronic communications shall be inviolable. This inviolability shall be subject only to such restrictions as are made applicable by law.

NATIONAL LAWS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

Several laws have been passed to implement the Constitutional provisions, including, among others, the following:

- [Basic Law No. 65-60](#) establishing the Penal Code;
- [Law No. 68-08 establishing the Civil and Commercial Obligations Code \(CCOC\)](#), which in 1968 replaced the French Law of July 1, 1901 on associations, which had remained in effect after independence in 1960;
- Law No. 76-040 on associations with goals related to popular education, sport, and culture;
- Decree No. 76-199 on setting the conditions for granting the recognition of public utility to associations;
- Law No. 79-02 on the dissolution of any association whose activities harm public order;
- Law No. 81-77 on racial discrimination and the dissolution of any association whose activities are in whole or in part devoted to practicing social, ethnic, or religious discrimination or inciting such practices;
- [Law No. 84-37 of May 11, 1984](#) on Economic Interest Groups;
- [Decree No. 96-103](#) amending Decree 89-775, setting the modalities of intervention of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs);
- [Decree No. 2010-1490](#) amending Decree No. 96-103, setting the modalities of intervention of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs);
- Decree No. 2012-554 related to accreditation for election observation in Senegal;
- Decree No. 2015-145 amending Decree No. 96-103 related to the submission of a bi-annual investment programs for NGOs intervening in Senegal and for NGO accreditation;
- Decree No. 2015-145 related to the submission of a bi-annual investment programs and the control of the sources of funding of NGO interventions;
- [Law No. 2016-30](#) modifying the Penal Code, including combatting terrorism;

- [Law No. 2016-35](#) on the Senegal National Budget for 2017;
- Law No. 2017-11 updating the electoral law for the election of the President of the Republic, the deputies, and local councils;
- [Law No. 2017-15](#) instituting a National Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services and regional bodies to ensure the compliance of commerce chambers to the new economic environment;
- [Decree No. 2016-1536](#) instituting the ECOWAS biometric ID card for all Senegalese citizens;
- Law No. 2017-12 modifying the Electoral Code prior to the 2019 presidential election;
- Law No. 2017-27 on press freedom;
- Law No. 2018-28 regulating all electronic communication activities from or in direction to the national territory;
- Law No. 2010-11 setting gender equality between women and men in all elective and semi elective assemblies;
- Law No. 2010-15 called Social Orientation Law for the protection and promotion of people with disabilities;
- [Law No. 2025-14](#) defining the status and the protection whistleblowers; and
- [Law No. 2025-15](#) on access to information.

In addition, the Law establishing the Labor Code establishes the freedom to form trade unions as non-profit associations for the defense of the professional and moral interests of their members.

PENDING REGULATORY INITIATIVES

We are unaware of pending legislative/regulatory initiatives affecting NGOs at this time. Please help keep us informed; if you are aware of pending initiatives, write to ICNL at ngomonitor@icnl.org

Legal Analysis

This section provides an in-depth assessment of Senegal's legal environment for civic freedoms, including the barriers to the exercise of the freedoms of association (formation, operations, resources), expression, and peaceful assembly. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS

Senegal recognizes several legal forms of civil society organizations (CSOs), each governed by distinct legal frameworks and administrative processes:

Associations

Associations are the most common form of CSO in Senegal and are regulated under the Civil and Commercial Obligations Code (CCOC) of 1968. To be legally recognized, an association submits its application materials to the regional governor, who then forwards these on to the Directorate of General Affairs (DAGAT), within the Ministry of the Interior. Once approved, associations must also register with the Directorate of Statistics to obtain a national identification number.

Associations of Sport and Culture (ASCs) are a specialized category of associations established by youth in the same urban community (quartier). These groups are governed by Article 821 of Law No. 68-08 and Decree No. 76-040, which stipulate that any profit from their income-generating activities must not be shared among the members. ASCs, along with associations contributing to public health, can receive subsidies from the state and local councils under Article 821, Paragraph 3 of the CCOC even without being recognized as public utility organizations.

Professional trade unions are another recognized form of association, formed by individuals in the same or related professions. They are governed by Article 6 of the Labor Code and include three primary types: federations of employers, unions of salaried workers, and unions of informal sector workers.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) lack any defined legal framework and work on a local level, especially in small neighborhoods and rural areas, without formal status. They are widespread and have become valuable interlocutors in their fields of activity, which include health, child protection, and rural economic affairs.

Foundations

Foundations are legal entities created by one or more individuals who contribute assets to pursue a public interest goal. They are governed by Law No. 95-11 of April 7, 1995, and its implementing Decree No. 95-415 of May 15, 1995.

The Ministry of Finance exercises administrative oversight over foundations that are recognized as being of public utility, while technical oversight is provided by the line ministry relevant to the foundation's area of activity. In addition, the state designates representatives to serve on the foundation's board of directors.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

NGOs are defined as "non-profit private associations or organizations whose goal is to offer support to development in Senegal and that are accepted in this capacity by the government." They are governed by the CCOC, as well as Decrees No. 96-103 and No. 2015-145.

NGO status confers several benefits, including exemption from duties and taxes on supplies, materials, and equipment, as well as provisional registration of utility vehicles acquired or purchased locally or imported for programmatic use.

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATUS

Senegalese law recognizes two main forms of special status for CSOs. First, associations may be recognized as serving the public utility under Decree No. 76-193. Second, associations may obtain formal NGO status upon approval by the Ministry of Interior. This status is recognized under Article 820 of the Civil and Commercial Obligations Code (CCOC) for NGOs and Article 825 for authorized foreign associations.

To obtain public utility status, an association must meet the following criteria:

- Operate in Senegal for two years;
- Have activities of sufficient size and influence;
- Operate in a field of recognized public interest;
- Maintain a sound financial position;
- Function in a democratic manner in line with its statutes; and

- Demonstrate independence in decision making, particularly with regard to public authorities.

To apply for NGO status, an association must submit a formal letter of request to the Ministry of Interior with the following information:

- a list of activities carried out over the previous two years;
- two copies of the association's governing statutes, including the address of its headquarters;
- a receipt of declaration for Senegalese associations or an authorization or certificate of registration from the country of origin for foreign organizations;
- a list of the members of the governing body, including details on age, nationality, profession, and address;
- a memorandum presenting the private association or organization making the request; and
- a program of activities, including anticipated sources of funding.

In addition, applicants must submit an investment program to the Minister of Finance for approval, following consultation with a commission formed for this purpose. This program describes the organization's planned operations and corresponding budget for a two-year period. At the end of the period, a joint government-NGO evaluation is organized.

NGO status confers several benefits, including exemption from duties and taxes on supplies, materials, and equipment, as well as temporary admission of utility vehicles acquired or purchased locally or imported for programmatic use.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Article 12 of the Constitution of Senegal guarantees that all citizens have the right to freely form associations, as well as economic, cultural, and social groups and societies, as long as they respect relevant laws and regulations.

Senegalese laws and regulations generally protect the participation of marginalized groups in public life. There is broad societal consensus around the importance of including minority ethnic or religious groups in civic life, which is exemplified by the use of local languages to disseminate official decisions and messages to diverse communities. Community-based organizations (CBOs) likewise provide information and training to various target groups, including individuals without formal education. However, members of the LGBTI community face significant barriers to civic participation stemming from the Penal Code's criminalization of "unnatural acts," which is generally understood to refer to same-sex sexual activity.

In mid-2025, President Bassirou Diomaye Faye initiated a political dialogue aimed at reforming Senegal's political and electoral systems to increase transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability. All political parties and CSOs were invited to participate. However, amid ongoing legal proceedings against five former ministers and other prominent figures from the former regime for alleged embezzlement of COVID-19 relief funds, former President Macky Sall's party and several of its allies declined the invitation. Despite their absence, the political dialogue opened on May 28, 2025, and concluded one week later. It brought together more than 700 representatives from across Senegalese society, including political parties, CSOs, religious leaders, youth, women, labor unions, academics, and entrepreneurs, as well as more than 15,000 virtual participants, primarily young people.

BARRIERS TO FORMATION

Freedom of association is constitutionally recognized. Registration of an organization with the

administrative authority is not mandatory, and many associations operate legally and openly without formal registration.

Senegalese law imposes some barriers on the permissible purposes of an organization. Article 4 of the Constitution requires all organizations “to respect the Constitution, as well as the principles of national sovereignty and democracy. It is forbidden for them to identify themselves with a race, an ethnic group, a sex, a sect, a language, or a region.” In addition, Article 5 forbids any act of “racial, technical, or religious discrimination that can harm the internal security of the state or the territorial integrity of the Republic, public order, or the republican nature of the state.” Additionally, Law No. 79-02 of January 4, 1979, allows the government to dissolve any association, whether registered or not, if its activities are deemed to “harm public order.”

LGBTI organizations are generally unable to register officially. Some members of the LGBTI community have instead formed organizations focused on issues such as HIV/AIDS awareness and support to continue their work within legal constraints.

There are no special restrictions on the registration of foreign NGOs, but such organizations must not pursue goals contrary to international conventions ratified by Senegal, particularly those related to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

BARRIERS TO OPERATIONS

Paragraph 2 of Article 12 of the Constitution prohibits organizations whose objectives or activities are contrary to penal laws or pose a threat to “public order.” Aside from these two limitations, organizations are generally free to define their goals, internal structures, and activities. Notably, no NGO has been forcibly dissolved by the government since 2000. However, Decree No. 2015-145 emphasizes the government’s authority to oversee NGO funding sources and requires compliance with reporting procedures.

Despite the overall enabling legal environment, there have been examples of the government interfering in CSOs’ operations. In November 2018, the Ministry of Interior revoked the accreditation of the NGO Lead Africa Francophone for its alleged involvement in the irregular funding of the youth association Y’en Marre. In response, several prominent organizations—including COSCE, Amnesty International, RADDHO, Article 19, and M23— formed a coalition to defend the right of association in Senegal.

There are no legal restrictions preventing associations or NGOs from contacting or cooperating with other organizations, whether in the country or abroad, as long as they respect the law. However, some internationally affiliated NGOs, such as Amnesty International and Transparency International, are suspected of serving foreign interests, occasionally prompting hostile reactions from the state. For instance, following the release of Amnesty International’s [2012 Report](#), the Attorney General and Minister of Justice sent a letter to the organization’s Secretary General strongly objecting to comments made by the Executive Director of Amnesty’s Senegal office.

BARRIERS TO RESOURCES

There are no legal barriers to CSOs’ access to domestic or foreign funding. Both associations and NGOs are permitted to receive financial support from both local and international sources and are free to engage directly with donors to solicit funds.

However, NGOs are subject to government oversight of their funding sources. In accordance with Decree No. 2015-145, the Ministry of Finance and Planning has the authority to verify the origin and use of NGO funding. This oversight is intended to ensure transparency and alignment with national development priorities but may impose additional administrative burdens on some organizations.

BARRIERS TO EXPRESSION

Senegal’s Constitution protects the right to freedom of expression, and in principle, there are no legal

restrictions on criticizing the government. However, recent legal reforms and government actions have raised significant concerns among civil society and press freedom advocates.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

The 2016 Penal Code (Law No. 2016-30), introduced under the pretext of combating terrorism, contains several provisions that can be used to suppress dissent and critical speech. According to a 2017 Amnesty International report, the Code criminalizes the production and dissemination of “immoral material” online and empowers authorities to restrict access to “illicit content.”

In June 2017, the National Assembly passed a new Press Code after eight years of debate. While the Code aimed to modernize media regulation, it was met with concern from press freedom advocates as it retained criminal defamation laws and increased the punishment for violations. The new Press Code also authorized the government to ban foreign news sources, shut down press outlets without the approval of a judge, and block access to websites with content deemed to be “contrary to morality.”

In June 2021, the National Assembly passed amendments to the Penal and Penal Procedure Codes via emergency procedure. These revisions, intended to bolster the fight against terrorism, broadened the definition of “terrorist acts” to include “seriously disturbing public order,” “criminal association,” and “offenses linked to information and communication technologies,” all punishable with life in prison. The changes also introduced the crime of “inciting others” to commit terrorism, without defining incitement. Critics—including opposition parties, human rights groups, and labor unions—warned that these vague terms could be used to criminalize peaceful protest, political speech, and media reporting. Despite an appeal to the Constitutional Council, the amendments were upheld and enacted.

Crackdowns and Censorship

Notable examples of the government restricting freedom of expression include:

- In August 2019, activist Guy Marius Sagna was charged with issuing a “false alert of terrorism” over Facebook posts criticizing the lack of adequate medical facilities in Senegal and French military presence in Africa.
- In March 2021, social media and messaging apps were blocked for several hours. The restrictions came amid intensifying clashes between protesters and anti-riot police in Dakar following the arrest of opposition leader Ousmane Sonko. The National Audiovisual Regulatory Council (CNRA) also suspended two television stations for their coverage of the protests.
- Following the implementation of the Anti-Terrorism Law in 2021, authorities under President Macky Sall increasingly targeted dissenting voices. Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained journalists and activists, restricted mobile internet access and several social media platforms, and banned opposition demonstrations. These measures contributed to the shooting deaths of nearly 60 protesters during violent crackdowns.
- In November 2022, investigative journalist Pape Alé Niang was arrested after Dakarmatin, a privately-owned news site, published a gendarmerie report allegedly exonerating opposition leader and then-presidential candidate Ousmane Sonko of rape.

Challenges for LGBTI Advocacy

LGBTI individuals face severe barriers to free expression and civic participation. The Penal Code’s criminalization of “unnatural acts,” punishable by up to five years in prison, has a chilling effect on LGBTI advocacy. During the 2019 election period, a wave of politically motivated arrests targeted LGBTI individuals. In May 2024, religious leaders criticized Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko for allowing French politician Jean Luc Mélenchon to speak on LGBTI rights at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop.

BARRIERS TO ASSEMBLY

Senegal's Constitution recognizes the right to the freedom of assembly. Article 10 affirms:

"Everyone has the right to express and spread freely his opinions by speech, pen, image, peaceful marching, provided that the exercise of his rights does not harm the honor or consideration of others or public order."

This right is reinforced by Article 9, which declares that, "Any infringement on freedoms and any deliberate hindrance to the exercise of a freedom are punished by law."

Vague Provisions

Despite these constitutional guarantees, the right to assembly is frequently curtailed by vague and broadly interpreted limitations, particularly the concept of "disturbance to public order." Authorities may invoke terms such as "social peace," "national defense," "economic harmony," or "state security" to limit or ban demonstrations. In times of crisis, authorities can further restrict freedoms by declaring a state of siege or state of emergency or invoking exceptional circumstances.

Advance Notification

Senegalese law requires prior notification for any public demonstrations. Organizers must submit a written notice to the prefect at least 72 hours before a planned assembly. This notice should include the full names and addresses of the organizers (who must reside in the prefecture) and the goal, location, date, time, and proposed route of the demonstration.

The prefect must respond at least 48 hours before the event. If the prefect deems the assembly a threat to public order, it may issue an injunction prohibiting the demonstration. Organizers can appeal to the Supreme Court for a suspension of the injunction, which may be granted within 48 hours, effectively nullifying the ban if successful.

Although not legally recognized, spontaneous demonstrations are tolerated in practice when they involve cultural, traditional, or religious practices and customs, such as funerals or religious gatherings. The law is silent on counter-demonstrations, but in practice, they are allowed to occur, especially during election periods, as long as they do not violate public order laws.

Time, Place, Manner Restrictions

There is a so-called "Arrêté Ousmane Ngom" ministerial decree dating from 2011, which prohibits political demonstrations in the city center of the capital, Dakar, for security reasons. During the presidential elections in 2012, authorities banned demonstrations at Independence Square, which is near the presidential palace.

Demonstrations are also frequently prohibited when authorities believe that they could interfere with traffic or be accompanied by violence. Authorities cited such concerns when banning an opposition march organized by the Senegalese Democratic Party on May 8, 2013, and a protest by street vendors on November 11, 2012. During the political crisis from 2021 to 2024, the government of former President Macky Sall has increasingly cited the "risk of trouble to public order" to ban opposition and civil society demonstrations and to justify violent crackdowns. These actions resulted in more than 50 deaths and the arrest of up to 1,500 political prisoners, signaling a marked deterioration in the protection of assembly rights.

Additional Resources

This section contains links to external reports and news reports relevant to civic freedoms. The Historical Notes section contains links to past developments which ICNL has reported on. Click a subheading for more, or [click here to expand all subheadings](#).

GLOBAL INDEX RANKINGS

Ranking Body	Rank	Ranking Scale (best - worst possible)
UN Human Development Index	169 (2023)	1 - 193
World Justice Project Rule of Law Index	60 (2024)	1 - 142
Fund for Peace Fragile States Index	70 (2024)	179 - 1
Transparency International	69 (2024)	1 - 180
Freedom House: Freedom in the World	Status: Partly Free Political Rights: 30 Civil Liberties: 39 (2025)	Free/Partly Free/Not Free 40 - 0 60 - 0

REPORTS

UN Universal Periodic Review Reports	Senegal UPR page
UN Human Rights Reports	Senegal
Bertelsmann Stiftung	BTI 2020 Country Report Senegal (2020)
U.S. State Department	Senegal Human Rights Report (2024)
Internews	The Impact of Senegal's 2023 Internet Shutdowns on Society, the Economy, and Trust in Democracy (2024)
IMF Country Reports	Senegal and the IMF
Government of Senegal	sec.gouv.sn
ICNL Online Library	Senegal

NEWS

[Political war erupts in Senegal between President Faye and PM Sonko](#) (December 2025)

A fierce public power struggle has erupted between Senegal's President Bassirou Diomaye Faye and his Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko, shaking the nation's ruling coalition and raising fundamental questions about who truly holds political authority. The crisis ignited when President Faye unilaterally announced the removal of Aïssatou Mbodj, a key Sonko ally, as head of the "Diomaye Président" coalition that secured his 2024 election victory. He replaced her with his own campaign coordinator, Aminata Touré. The move directly contradicted Sonko's public declaration days earlier that there would be "no change at the head of the coalition," marking a deliberate challenge to the Prime Minister's influence.

[Rule of Law Lab and Article 19 Senegal and West Africa Welcome Access to Information Bill](#) (August 2025)

The Rule of Law Lab at NYU School of Law and Article 19 Senegal and West Africa today welcomed the Government of Senegal's steps towards adopting the country's first access to information law. The organizations called on parliamentarians, who began an extraordinary session meeting on August 18, to

improve the bill before its adoption by aligning it with international legal standards that enshrine access to information as a fundamental right.

[**Senegal passes law to protect whistleblowers in 'historic moment for democracy'**](#) (August 2025)

Senegalese parliamentarians have adopted a law to protect whistleblowers, in order to strengthen transparency in the country – a promise made by the government that came to power in April 2024. The country has become the first French-speaking sub-Saharan country to adopt such a law, according to the Platform for the Protection of Whistleblowers in Africa (PPLAAF). The text, adopted by members of parliament, aims to protect individuals who, in the course of their professional activity, report or disclose information relating to a crime, financial offence or harm to the public interest. Whistleblowers can report their information anonymously if they wish, through internal channels within government departments or externally to the relevant authorities.

[**Senegal's President Faye opens dialogue on political reform**](#) (May 2025)

Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye formally opened a national dialogue aimed at steering the West African country through political reform and “consolidating democracy” after a series of violent crises. The move, which the head of state launched along with his prime minister, Ousmane Sonko, comes against a backdrop of tension between Faye’s administration and the opposition. Several opposition parties boycotted the process, however, including that of former President Macky Sall, who was succeeded by Faye last year after 12 years at the helm and who accuses the authorities of persecuting his party’s officials.

[**The uncertain future of USAID in Senegal**](#) (February 2025)

Donald Trump wants to drastically reduce USAID’s funding and staff. Estimated at several hundred million dollars each year, U.S. development assistance to Senegal covers almost every sector: the economy, security, health, education and research, as well as democracy, human rights, social inclusion, and gender. It helps fight poverty and manage public health approaches, particularly with programs to combat AIDS and malaria. This decision by President Donald Trump to close USAID should primarily affect the health sector, according to Seydina Oumar Seye, economist and consultant.

[**Senegal's top court confirms ruling party's big election win**](#) (October 2024)

Senegal’s ruling party, PASTEF, has secured an overwhelming parliamentary majority following the country’s legislative election held on November 17. PASTEF won 130 of 165 seats, up from the 56 it held before the vote, the Constitutional Council confirmed. The win gives President Bassirou Diomaye Faye a clear mandate to implement the ambitious reforms he promised during the election campaign.

[**Sonko announces the “Senegal 2050” breakthrough program**](#) (October 2024)

Senegal’s government, led by Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko, unveiled its 25-year development plan, “Senegal 2050,” on October 14. The plan aims to reduce foreign dependency and debt, focusing on local resources and human capital. Sonko emphasized that past development models have failed and praised Japan’s success as a model for African countries.

[**Senegalese President Faye's Mandate Meets Parliamentary Resistance**](#) (September 2024)

Senegal’s President Bassirou Diomaye Faye and the opposition-controlled National Assembly are in a precarious standoff that could lead to the dissolution of parliament and snap elections. The extraordinary session of the National Assembly, convened on September 5, 2024, has revealed the deep-seated divisions between the executive and legislative branches. Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko’s general policy statement (DPG) has become a focal point of contention. The Benno Bokk Yakaar (BBY) coalition, which holds a majority in parliament with 81 out of 165 seats, has signalled its intent to lodge a censure motion against Sonko. If successful, this move would force the resignation of the prime minister and his cabinet, compelling President Faye to appoint a new government.

[**Senegal President Set To Dissolve Parliament**](#) (September 2024)

Senegal’s new president is set to dissolve the opposition-dominated parliament in the coming days and launch a vast anti-corruption campaign that could target dozens, Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko said. Sonko was appointed as head of the government in April by his running mate Bassirou Diomaye Faye,

who swept to presidential victory in March on a promise of radical change. Sonko was addressing prime ministerial staff as his government was threatened by a motion of censure tabled a day earlier by the coalition of former president Macky Sall.

[Senegal newspapers go dark amid press freedom warnings](#) (August 2024)

Senegalese commuters hoping to browse the news on their way to work were left disappointed – most national newspapers refused to publish in protest against what they see as shrinking media freedom under the new government. The media is experiencing “one of the darkest days of its history,” the local Council of Press Distributors and Publishers (CDEPS) said. It accuses the government – led by former opposition politicians – of freezing the bank accounts of media companies and seizing their equipment over alleged non-payment of taxes.

[Senegal’s youngest-ever president appoints ‘breakaway’ government](#) (June 2024)

Senegal’s President Bassirou Diomaye Faye named a new government, appointing a host of fresh faces to top roles following his landslide election win. According to Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko, Faye’s former mentor, the government “embodies ... a systemic transformation voted for by the Senegalese people”.

[Two held in Senegal after criticising PM on gay rights](#) (May 2024)

An activist and a preacher were taken into police custody in Dakar after filming videos criticizing Senegal’s prime minister for perceived tolerance towards gay people. A source close to the case said that the two men are being investigated for “spreading false news” and “offending” the head of government.

[Civil society and opposition step up protests to break political deadlock](#) (February 2024)

Several hundred people demonstrated in Dakar calling on President Macky Sall to set a date to elect his successor before his term ends on April 2. Meanwhile, researchers, teachers, economists and analysts have been gathering to try and break the political stalemate. Sall has invited political parties and civil society to take part in talks.

[Bassirou Diomaye Faye sworn in as Senegal’s new president](#) (April 2024)

Senegal inaugurated Bassirou Diomaye Faye as its new president, completing the previously little-known opposition figure’s dramatic ascent from prison to the palace in recent weeks. Faye was released from prison less than two weeks before the March 24 election, along with popular opposition figure and mentor Ousmane Sonko, following a political amnesty announced by outgoing President Macky Sall. It is the former tax inspector’s first time in elected office.

[Senegal is a new risk for democracy in Africa](#) (February 2024)

The sudden actions by Senegal’s president to postpone this month’s presidential election by 10 months threaten to seriously undermine political stability and peace in a nation that has been a resilient democracy in West Africa, where multiple military coups d’état have occurred in recent years. This move poses risks of authoritarianism, violence and economic setbacks for Senegal’s 17 million people, and deeper regional insecurity. Friends of Senegal and democracy, in the United States, Africa and beyond, must unite behind the clear desire of Senegal’s people to maintain peaceful, freely elected democracy under its constitution.

[Electoral commission calls to reinstate voting rights for opposition leader Sonko](#) (November 2023)

Senegal’s electoral commission asked that sponsorship forms be given to main opposition leader Ousmane Sonko, whose candidacy for the upcoming presidential election has been called into question over the past year amid a series of criminal charges. The move comes as Sonko remains hospitalized because of a hunger strike he began earlier this month and as he awaits a decision from a West African regional court.

[Senegal deploys army as Dakar braces for more unrest](#) (June 2023)

Army troops were deployed to parts of the Senegalese capital Dakar as the city braced for more unrest after a jail sentence for opposition leader Ousmane Sonko sparked one of the deadliest days of violence in the country’s recent memory. Nine people were killed in clashes between riot police and Sonko supporters after he was sentenced to two years for corrupting youth. The opposition says the verdict,

which could prevent Sonko from running in elections next year, was politically motivated.

[Senegal's Sonko claims he is being 'illegally held' as 'national dialogue' opens](#) (May 2023)

Senegal opposition leader Ousmane Sonko broke his silence after his recent arrest, and said that he felt he had been “kidnapped” by the security forces. He also called on his compatriots to protest against the current government by using social media. Sonko was arrested while leading supporters from his native Zighinchor, in Casamance, towards the Senegalese capital, Dakar.

[President of Senegal launches national dialogue amid rising tensions](#) (May 2023)

The president of Senegal, Macky Sall, launched his national dialogue initiative nine months ahead of presidential elections in February next year. In his address, Macky Sall pledged to be firm in the face of growing tensions. The presidential initiative takes place against a background of popular unrest in the run-up to a court verdict against political opponent Ousmane Sonko.

[Senegalese CSOs file complaint after billions lost to misuse of Covid funds](#) (February 2023)

A group of Senegalese CSOs and citizens filed a complaint with a Dakar court to ask it to take up a COVID-19 mismanagement case. The move follows the publication of a report by the Court of Auditors, which detailed the management of the COVID-19 response funds in 2020-2021.

[Fight breaks out after female MP hit in Senegal parliament](#) (December 2022)

Lawmakers in Senegal's parliament exchanged blows and a hurled chair while one slapped a female MP in the face as issues became heated in the assembly. The scuffles occurred amid growing acrimony between ruling and opposition party politicians.

[Senegal journalist back in jail in high-profile case](#) (December 2022)

Senegalese authorities re-arrested journalist Pape Alé Niang less than a week after his release on bail. Niang, the director of the privately owned website Dakarmatin, was arrested in early November, criminally charged over a video report, and released on bail with various conditions on December 14.

[Senegalese journalist detained after reporting on politician's rape charges](#) (November 2022)

Pape Alé Niang, an investigative journalist for the privately owned website Dakarmatin, was reportedly arrested in the capital Dakar after police accused him of breaching professional secrecy and publishing information likely to harm national defense and public security. On November 3, Dakarmatin published a video in which Niang reported on the contents of an internal gendarmerie report that purportedly exonerated Ousmane Sonko, an opposition leader and 2024 presidential candidate charged with rape. The Committee to Protect Journalists is calling for his release.

[Senegal opposition leader asks supporters to defend their votes](#) (August 2022)

A Senegalese opposition leader on Wednesday called on supporters to be ready to defend their votes by any means, accusing the ruling party of President Macky Sall of wanting to steal a legislative election the opposition claims to have won. “Macky Sall wants to confiscate our victory but we will not accept it,” opposition leader Ousmane Sonko of the coalition Yewwi Askane Wi (YAW) said at a news conference.

[Opposition claims victory in legislative elections](#) (August 2022)

The presidential camp and the opposition each stood firm in claiming to have won Sunday's parliamentary elections in Senegal, as the vote count continued. These legislative elections, the last before the presidential election of 2024, are a test after the local elections of January, which were won by the opposition in major cities of this country known for its stability, such as Dakar, Ziguinchor (south) and Thies (west).

ARCHIVED NEWS

[Voters flock to the polls in Senegal's local elections](#) (January 2022)

[Senegal opposition leader arrested again](#) (November 2021)

[Elections in Senegal: several opposition lists rejected, candidates cry “sabotage”](#) (July 2021) (French)

[Clashes at Dakar against anti-terrorism law](#) (June 2021)

[Senegal President Sall calls for day of mourning after unrest](#) (March 2021)

[Social media and messaging apps disrupted in Senegal](#) (March 2021)

[Renewed calls for protest in Senegal after days of clashes](#) (March 2021)

[Senegal police intercept more than 1,500 migrants](#) (December 2020)

[Canadian PM Trudeau Raises Gay Rights with Senegal Leader](#) (February 2020)

[Activist Arbitrarily Detained for Facebook Posts](#) (August 2019)

[Senegal's Macky Sall signs decree scrapping post of Prime Minister](#) (May 2019)

[EU welcomes the good organization of the presidential election in Senegal](#) (February 2019) *(French)*

[Civil society protests against withdrawal of Lead Africa Francophone accreditation](#) (November 2018)

[Protests in Senegal against proposed electoral law changes](#) (April 2018)

[Civil Society Instructs Macky](#) (January 2018) *(in French)*

["It takes more to tango" - cross-movement alliances of youth-led movements in West Africa](#) (August 2017)

[Senegal consolidating its democracy](#) (April 2016)

[YEAM youth movement is pro-democracy and anti-violence](#) (April 2015)

[Nigeria, Senegal Partner On Women for Democratic Leadership](#) (August 2013)

HISTORICAL NOTES

Associational life is deeply embedded in Senegalese culture. The earliest modern associations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) date back to 1921 and were primarily focused on cultural and sports activities. During the French colonial period, trade unions were also common.

With the drought of the 1970s, organizations devoted to development began to emerge. Their numbers increased significantly in the 1980s with the expansion of economic programs aimed at supporting Senegal's most vulnerable populations.

The first human rights organizations were established in the 1990s. They played a major role in the country's democratization. Women's organizations mobilized in the 1990s and early 2000s, paving the way for important gains in gender equality, which culminated in the passage of the [Law on Gender Parity](#) in 2010. Senegalese NGOs have continued to make important contributions to governance and transparency, such as successfully advocating for Senegal's membership in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2013.

In 2019, President Macky Sall was elected to a second five-year term. Sall often used his majority in the National Assembly and influence over the judicial system to suppress dissent, delay corruption investigations, and introduce electoral reforms perceived as politically motivated. Sall's government faced widespread condemnation for prosecuting investigative journalists, activists, and opposition leader Ousmane Sonko.

Sonko was barred from participating in the legislative elections in 2022 and was arrested on July 31, 2023, on charges of fomenting insurrection and political violence. His political party was also dissolved and hundreds of his supporters were arrested and detained without trial.

On February 3, 2024, President Sall suddenly postponed the presidential election scheduled for February 25, triggering a political crisis. The Constitutional Court swiftly reacted, ordering the vote to be held before Sall's term expired on April 2.

The election was ultimately conducted on March 25, 2024, resulting in a decisive victory for Bassirou Diomaye Faye, a close ally of Sonko, who became Senegal's fifth and youngest-ever president. Faye heralded a new era for democratic consolidation after three years of unprecedented political tension.

Upon taking office, Faye appointed Ousmane Sonko as Prime Minister. On April 5, 2024, Sonko formed a new 25-member government with a platform focused on transparency, economic renewal, social inclusion, and greater sovereignty over natural resources. One of the first major decisions taken by newly elected President Faye and Prime Minister Sonko was to launch a national dialogue to promote more transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the judiciary system. The dialogue will investigate issues relating to the exercise of freedoms and rights, anti-corruption, equal treatment of citizens, humanitarian treatment of incarcerated people, accountability, and ending impunity.

In October 2024, Prime Minister Sonko issued the "Plan Senegal 2050," a long-term strategy to reduce foreign dependency, manage debt responsibly, and invest in local resources and human capital. Successful implementation of the Plan will depend on the government's capacity and will be supported by the convincing win of the ruling party in the November 17, 2024, early legislative elections in which the party won 130 of 165 seats.

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