

Freedom in the World 2017 - Senegal

Publisher [Freedom House](#)

Publication
Date 12 July 2017

Cite as Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2017 - Senegal*, 12 July 2017, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/59831e803.html> [accessed 6 August 2018]

Disclaimer This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it necessarily endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher and do not necessarily reflect those of UNHCR, the United Nations or its Member States.

Freedom Status: Free

Aggregate Score: 78/100 (0 = Least Free, 100 = Most Free)

Freedom Rating: 2.0/7 (1 = Most Free, 7 = Least Free)

Political Rights: 2/7 (1 = Most Free, 7 = Least Free)

Civil Liberties: 2/7 (1 = Most Free, 7 = Least Free)

Quick Facts

Population: 14,800,000

Capital: Dakar

GDP/capita: \$900

Press Freedom Status: Partly Free

OVERVIEW

Senegal is one of Africa's most stable democracies and has undergone two peaceful transfers of power between rival parties since 2000. The government's respect for civil liberties has improved over time, and the country is known for its independent media and public engagement in free expression and debate. Ongoing challenges include corruption in government, weaknesses in the rule of law, and inadequate protections for the rights of women and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people.

Key Developments in 2016:

- In March, referendum voters approved constitutional amendments that reduced the presidential term from seven years to five, effective after President Macky Sall's current term.
- In May, former Chadian dictator Hissène Habré was convicted and sentenced to life in prison for crimes against humanity, torture, and sex crimes at the Extraordinary African

Chambers in Dakar. The special tribunal was created to try Habré, who had lived in Senegal since he was overthrown in 1990.

- In June, President Sall commuted the prison term of Karim Wade, the son of former president Abdoulaye Wade, who had been sentenced to six years in prison for illicit enrichment in 2015. Though he was released early, Wade was still required to pay a fine of \$229 million.

Executive Summary:

Senegalese citizens voted "yes" on a March 2016 constitutional referendum that, among other amendments, reduced presidential terms from seven to five years, not counting President Sall's current term.

Corruption in government remained the subject of lively public debate. Karim Wade, the son of former president Abdoulaye Wade, had been sentenced in 2015 to six years in prison for illicit enrichment after a controversial trial at the Court of Repression of Illicit Enrichment (CREI); human rights groups had criticized the court for due process violations including prolonged pretrial detention. In June 2016, President Sall commuted the remainder of Wade's sentence but left him responsible for paying a \$229 million fine.

Meanwhile, Sall's administration faced allegations of nepotism and opacity. In May, the National Anti-Corruption Commission (OFNAC) published its first annual report, which included critiques of officials close to Sall. The commission's head, Nafi Ngom Keïta, was fired in July. The government said she had leaked confidential state data and attempted to manipulate public opinion, but her supporters claimed that her firing was retaliatory. In August, Sall fired the country's chief inspector of taxes and customs, Ousmane Sonko, after Sonko voiced concerns about corruption in the government. Sonko, who was also the head of a political party, was accused of violating rules of professional discretion, a charge he denied. In October, the president's brother, Aliou Sall, resigned from the Senegalese branch of an international corporation that held stakes in oil and gas fields in the country, following criticism about the impropriety of his position.

While freedoms of expression and assembly remained relatively robust, they faced ongoing pressure. In February and March, authorities attempted to punish unfavorable coverage of the constitutional referendum by the media outlet Walfadjri, temporarily detaining a journalist, demanding recordings of a particular television segment, and trying unsuccessfully to cut the outlet's broadcast signal. The state has considerable discretion to prohibit or control public assemblies, and officials banned or rerouted a number of demonstrations in 2016. In February, the authorities prohibited a proposed rally against the constitutional referendum.

The rule of law was generally respected during the year, though the judiciary is exposed to executive and other influences, and marginalized groups are subject to discrimination. Same-sex sexual activity is a crime punishable by up to five years in prison. In March, on a university campus in Dakar, a male student accused of making sexual advances to another male student was chased and threatened by a violent mob. Violence against women, trafficking in persons, and forced begging by Quranic school students are long-standing problems; the government announced a new crackdown on child begging in 2016. Conditions for women have gradually improved in some respects. For example, rates of female genital mutilation are thought to have declined over time due in part to campaigns to discourage the practice.

Explanatory Note:

This country report has been abridged for *Freedom in the World 2017*. For background information on political rights and civil liberties in Senegal, see [*Freedom in the World 2016*](#).

Copyright notice: © Freedom House, Inc. · All Rights Reserved