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RSF – Reporters Sans Frontières (Author)

Increase in threats to journalists in Senegal

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is concerned about threats to journalists and media in Senegal and, in particular, Walf TV crime reporter Pape Ndiaye's disproportionate arrest after he got something wrong in his coverage of a high-profile rape case involving an opposition politician. RSF calls on the authorities to free Ndiaye and to decriminalise press offences.

Arrested on 3 March and still waiting to appear before an investigating judge, **Pape Ndiaye** was transferred to prison four days later on charges that include "disseminating false news," which alone carries a possible three-year prison sentence, according to his lawyer, Moussa Sarr. The other charges are "inciting a crowd," "contempt of court", "intimidation and reprisals against a member of the judiciary," "speech discrediting a jurisdictional act" and "endangering the life of others."

After Ndiaye reported during *Walf TV's* "Breakfast" programme on 1 March that assistant public prosecutors were opposed to trying opposition politician Ousmane Sonko before a criminal court for the alleged rape of a young woman, the Dakar public prosecutor's office ordered his arrest on the grounds that his information was wrong.

Pierre Edouard Faye, the editor-in-chief of *Walf TV*, which is part of one of Senegal's leading privately-owned media, told RSF that Ndiaye may have been mistaken, but he insisted that Ndiaye had acted in good faith and blamed the reliability of his source rather than his professionalism.

As there are mechanisms for rectifying mistaken information disseminated in good faith, Pape Ndiaye's imprisonment is totally disproportionate. With less than a year to go a presidential election, we are seeing an escalation in attacks on media freedom in Senegal, which for a long time was regarded as a democracy with a thriving press. We call on the authorities to release Pape Ndiaye at once and to decriminalise press offences.

Sadibou Marong,
the head of RSF's sub-Saharan Africa desk

A journalist specialising in covering crime and court cases, and a former president of Senegal's Association of Young Reporters, Ndiaye hosts a weekly [Wolof-language programme](#) with a big following. After addressing the rape case against Sonko several times in the past, he received [death threats](#) which RSF condemned at the time.

Authorities target Walf TV, other media

The authorities have been tightening their grip on the media in the run-up to the 2024 presidential election. Ndiaye is the second journalist to have been jailed in less than four months and one of several to have been harassed in various ways in recent weeks, indicating that the environment is becoming more hostile for the media.

Sidya Badji, a photo-reporter for the *Sud Quotidien* newspaper, was [arrested](#) while covering protests in Sonko's neighbourhood on 16 February. The police seized his equipment and accused him of taking "compromising images," which he was forced to delete.

On 10 February, the National Audiovisual Regulatory Council (CNRA) suspended *Walf TV* for a week for the second time in two years, accusing it of providing "irresponsible coverage" of clashes between security forces and Sonko supporters, whose meeting in Mbacké, a city 200 km east of Dakar, was banned. The CNRA said *Walf TV* had repeatedly broadcast "images of violence exposing adolescents, accompanied by dangerous remarks, including from reporters." RSF [denounced](#) the suspension at the time as "disproportionate."

Fatou Dione, a video reporter for the *Buur News* website, was attacked by police while covering a [banned demonstration](#) on 5 November. *Dakar Matin* news website director **Pape Alé Niang** was arrested the next day and then transferred to prison on [charges](#) of revealing information "likely to harm national defence," "receiving confidential administrative and military documents" and disseminating "false news likely to discredit state institutions."

He was [briefly released](#) only to be [returned to prison](#), prompting a hunger strike by Niang and a major campaign for his release, including a [joint appeal](#) by 78 African journalists and media freedom groups rallied by RSF. He was finally released on 10 January.

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Article on Walf TV crime reporter Pape Ndiaye's arrest after he made a mistake in his coverage of a rape case in which an opposition politician was involved; threats to journalists and media in general have increased

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