

Amnesty International Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Senegal 2022

Freedom of assembly and expression were restricted. Forced begging by children continued. Fires broke out in health facilities due to poor maintenance. The authorities expressed commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and climate change continued to cause coastal erosion, affecting people's livelihoods.

Background

The opposition gained several municipalities during the January local elections and the ruling coalition kept their majority in the July parliamentary elections.

In March, the Senegalese army launched operation "Nord Bignona" to dismantle the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) rebel bases next to the Gambian border and to combat illegal logging and wood trafficking. According to the Gambia National Disaster Management Agency, these operations forced 691 Senegalese people to seek refuge in Gambia. More than 5,600 Gambian villagers living near the border were also displaced from their villages. In August, Senegal signed a preliminary peace agreement with a faction of the MFDC, committing them to disarm and allowing refugees to return home.

Freedom of assembly

On 31 March, the ECOWAS Court of Justice stated that Ministerial Order no. 7580 of 20 July 2011, which prohibits "demonstrations of a political nature" in the centre of the capital, Dakar, violates the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and asked the Senegalese authorities to repeal it.¹ As of December, the authorities had refused to implement the judgment.

In June, during a period of pre-electoral tension, Senegalese authorities prohibited several demonstrations by the opposition. On 17 June, security forces arrested at least three opposition leaders and prevented others from leaving their homes, with the aim of preventing a banned protest in Dakar the same day. Dethié Fall, the national representative of the opposition parliamentary list, was given a six-month suspended sentence for "participating in an unauthorized protest". Ahmed Aidara, mayor of Guediawaye, was given a one-month suspended sentence for "participating in an unarmed gathering".²

In Ziguinchor, opposition leader Guy Marius Sagna was arrested by the police on 18 June with two others on his way to visit 33 protesters arrested the day before. They were all tried for “participating in a prohibited protest” and “disturbing public order”. Guy Marius Sagna and two other activists, Cheikh Sourate Sagna and Amadou Tom Mbodj, were given a one-month suspended sentence and a XOF 50,000 (around USD 76) fine. The others were acquitted.

Freedom of expression

On 10 June, opposition leader Cheikh Abdou Mbacké Bara Dolly was arrested and charged with “defamation, diffusion of false news, and offence against the head of state”, after a speech he made during an opposition protest. He was provisionally released in July.

On 3 August, Pape Ibra Gueye, an activist also known as “Papito Kara” was arrested and detained for “disseminating false news and for deletion, modification, fabrication and use of computer data to subvert newspaper headlines”. Five days later another activist, Outhmane Diagne, was arrested and detained on the same charges. They were accused of creating satirical false news headlines in daily newspapers.

On 6 November, Pape Alé Niang was arrested by the police, three days after the release of a live Facebook video in which he commented on the hearing of opposition leader Ousmane Sonko and published an internal investigation report by the gendarmerie. He was accused of “concealment and publication of unauthorized military documents that could harm national defense, calling for rebellion and propagating false news”.

Excessive use of force

On 17 June, in Ziguinchor and Bignona, security forces fired at protesters during a protest, killing two men, taxi driver Idrissa Goudiaby and Albert “Abdoulaye” Diatta. The initial autopsy for Idrissa Goudiaby identified “violent death by hemorrhagic shock following a penetrating neck wound caused by a blunt and sharp-edged weapon such as an axe or a sword”. A second autopsy requested by the family and conducted by three independent medical examiners identified death from bullet wounds, corroborating witness testimonies.

There was no further information on the investigations into the deaths of 14 people – 12 of from bullet wounds – during protests in cities across Senegal in March 2021.

Torture and other ill-treatment

During the June protests, security forces arrested 11 people on 16-17 June, accusing them of planning to “threaten state security”, among other charges. One of those arrested, former soldier François Mancabou, was taken from his police cell on 29 June and brought to Dakar’s Hôpital Principal with serious injuries. He fell into a coma and died on 13 July. The family accused the police of causing François Mancabou’s death by torturing him in detention. The police denied the accusations and claimed the wounds were self-inflicted while in detention. No investigation was opened to ascertain the causes of his fatal injuries acquired during detention.

Children’s rights

Despite the government's adoption of a draft law modernizing Qur'anic education, it had not been submitted to a parliamentary vote. The law would help to prevent forced begging by children and protect children's rights in the educational system.³ The draft children's code bill had still not been considered by the government.

LGBTI people's rights

In January, the National Assembly rejected a proposed bill that was intended to criminalize LGBTI orientation. Senegal's Criminal Code already criminalizes same-sex relations. This followed a month-long anti-LGBTI campaign by a coalition of groups that accused the authorities of weakening social mores. LGBTI people continued to face various discriminatory practices, harassment and public intimidation.

Right to health

Serious incidents occurred due to poor maintenance in certain health facilities. In May, 11 newborn babies died after a fire caused by poor maintenance broke out in the maternity ward of the Tivaouane hospital. In August, the maternity ward of the Mbour hospital caught fire due to poor maintenance. The babies were rescued and there were no fatalities.

Failure to tackle climate crisis

Climate change continued to cause drought, flooding during the rainy season, and water scarcity. The rise in sea level continued to cause erosion in fishing villages and neighbourhoods, including Guet-Ndar in Saint-Louis, threatening livelihoods and forcing some communities to further move inland. Construction of a coastal protection dyke on part of the Langue de Barbarie peninsula was ongoing.⁴

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1. ["Senegal. ECOWAS Court of Justice orders repeal of decree banning political demonstrations in the centre of Dakar", 13 May \(French only\)](#)
 2. ["Senegal: Prohibitions, violence, arbitrary arrests: the right to protest is under threat", 29 June](#)
 3. ["Senegal: The State must move from commitment to strong action to protect talibé children", 12 December](#)
 4. [Any Tidal Wave Could Drown Us – Stories from the Climate Crisis, 3 November](#)

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ecoi.net description:

Report on the human rights situation covering 2022

Country:
Senegal

Source:

Original link:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/west-and-central-africa/senegal/report-senegal/>

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

27 March 2023

Available on ecoi.net since:

30 March 2023

Document ID:

2089600

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Documentation (ACCORD)

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ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

