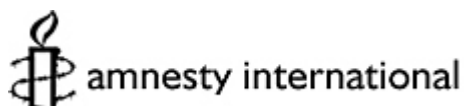


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Amnesty International Report 2009 - Senegal

Head of state: Abdoulaye Wade
Head of government: Cheikh Hadjibou Soumaré
Death penalty: abolitionist for all crimes
Population: 12.7 million
Life expectancy: 62.3 years
Under-5 mortality (m/f): 120/108 per 1,000
Adult literacy: 39.3 per cent

The peace process in southern Casamance made no progress and civilians were sporadically attacked. Police cracked down on people demonstrating against high prices. Independent media and journalists were harassed and some journalists were detained. The long-awaited investigation in the case of former Chadian President Hissène Habré did not begin.

Background

Four years after the 2004 general peace accord, no progress was made in the peace process in southern Casamance where civilians continued to be victims of landmines and sporadic attacks by separatist fighters. In April, several leaders of the Democratic Forces of Casamance Movement (Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance, MFDC) met in an attempt to reunify the separatist movement. By the end of the year divisions between the armed and civilian wings had not been overcome.

Excessive use of force

In December, security forces clamped down on demonstrators after protests over poor living conditions in the mining region of Kedougou (700km south east of Dakar) turned violent with government property and buildings being damaged and burned. Security forces used live bullets killing at least one person, Sinad Sidibé, and wounding several others. In the days following this protest, security forces arrested and tortured dozens of people who were still held without trial at the end of the year. Many others went into hiding to escape the wave of arrests launched by the security forces.

Freedom of assembly

In March, police officers broke up a banned demonstration against rising prices for basic commodities such as rice, oil, milk and soap. Police used batons and tear gas to crack down on the demonstrators and they also assaulted journalists covering the demonstration. At least 24 people including two consumer group officials, Muammar Ndao and Jean-Pierre Dieng, as well as an opposition leader, Talla Sylla, were briefly arrested.

Freedom of expression

Independent media and individual journalists were targeted in an attempt to stifle freedom of expression and criticism of President Abdoulaye Wade.

- In March, police raided a private television station after it transmitted images of police beating demonstrators during the protest against high prices.
- In September, El Malick Seck, publisher of the daily newspaper 24 Heures Chrono, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment after publishing an article implicating the Head of State in money-laundering. The newspaper was suspended for three months.

Abuses by armed group

Self-proclaimed members of the MFDC attacked and abducted civilians in Casamance, apparently to punish them for entering land they considered as their territory. The MFDC denied any involvement in these attacks.

- In May, 16 villagers harvesting cashew nuts in Tampe, 15km east of Ziguinchor, Casamance's main city, were attacked by self-proclaimed MFDC members who tied their hands and sliced off their left ears.

Discrimination – lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people

Individuals faced arbitrary arrest, harassment and discrimination because of their suspected engagement in consensual same-sex sexual conduct.

- In February, nine men and one woman were arrested following media condemnation of a party at which some of them were photographed. Commentaries subsequently posted online called for the men to be killed. As a consequence, several individuals had to flee the country.
- In August, a Belgian national and his male Senegalese domestic helper were sentenced to two years' imprisonment for "homosexual marriage and acts against nature". Amnesty International considered them prisoners of conscience.

International justice – Hissène Habré

Despite the elimination of the last legal obstacles to a criminal investigation, the investigation of Hissène Habré's case did not begin during 2008.

In April, the National Assembly adopted a constitutional amendment introducing retrospective legislation for crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide and torture which would permit the trial of the former Chadian head of state who was living in exile in Senegal. In May, a coordinating judge was appointed to organize the trial. On 16

September Chadian victims filed a further complaint. The Senegalese authorities claimed that there were no more obstacles to the trial except lack of funds, but took no further steps despite financial assistance from the European Union.

In August, Hissène Habré was sentenced to death in his absence in Chad. Human rights groups stressed that this conviction in Chad was based on different charges and should have no impact on the prosecution in Senegal.

Amnesty International report

- Senegal: Amnesty International Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review (1 September 2008)

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