

## Republic of Senegal

**1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation:** In Senegal, the overall human rights situation remains generally satisfactory. The country has ratified major conventions on human rights, and authorities are generally open to discuss and engage in improving the rights of women and children, though the political scope for manoeuvre on these and other issues—sexual and gender minorities in particular—is hampered by social, cultural or religious factors. Senegal held two major elections in 2024 and reinforced its status of democratic inspiration in the region. After tense pre-electoral campaigns marked by political tensions and violence, both elections finally took place in a peaceful and credible manner on e-day and results were acknowledged by all political forces and losing candidates (with blessing of international observers). Tensions on separation of powers between executive and legislative, as well as between executive and judicial powers put the Senegalese democratic system under high pressure in the pre-electoral period. The Senegalese democracy proved to be resilient in particular with a positive role played by the Constitutional Court all along the pre-electoral political crisis. Senegal reforms its Senegalese Human Rights Committee. After the Committee lost its A Status in 2012 due to lack of independence, resources and funding, the reform was announced in January 2024 at its UPR. In September 2024, the National Assembly voted to replace the Committee with a National Human Rights Commission in an attempt to better meet international standards and regain A status according to the Paris agreement. The rights of women remained a concern over the period, particularly in rural areas, where women's access to protection, health and education services but also to employment, land, credit and justice is limited. Despite the adoption of the law criminalizing rape and paedophilia in 2020, violence against women, including sexual and gender based violence, persists. Although the representation of women in the National Assembly slightly decreased in the 2024 legislative elections, it remains among the highest in the region (42.5% with 68 seats). The situation of children's rights continues to remain worrisome in 2024. Senegal has still not adopted the Children's code, mainly due to socio-cultural obstacles opposing certain provisions deemed particularly sensitive, such as raising the age of marriage from 16 to 18 for girls, questions of inheritance, and begging. The adoption of the law on modernisation of 'daaras' (Koranic schools) and the strengthening of the protection of 'talibé' children, has not yet been submitted for examination to the National Assembly. On the rights of sexual and gender minorities in 2024, there has been no progress with the situation remaining particularly fragile. Senegal presents a relatively independent media environment. However, restrictive laws and intimidation have continued to constrain press freedom. Publishing 'fake news' likely to 'discredit public institutions' or 'prejudice public decency' can be prosecuted which could be used against against journalists and activists. While in 2019, Senegal was in 49th place out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom ranking, it is in 2024 in 94th place. Reform of the Justice system with the aim to put an end to its political instrumentalisation was launched in May 2024 by the new authorities. This reform is underway.

**2. EU action - key focus areas:** Women and girls' as well as children's rights; strengthening the action capacities of civil society and non-state actors and guarantees in terms of freedom of expression, association and demonstration; strengthening the judicial system, and in particular the mechanisms for combating money laundering and preventing corruption; fighting against human trafficking; non-discrimination, particularly related to sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBTI).

**3. EU bilateral political engagement:** The EU actively engaged with the Senegalese authorities on the human rights situation at the occasion of its regular Partnership Dialogues. In parallel, since 2023 the EU has engaged locally in a structured and regular EU-civil society dialogue to allow for a platform in which civil society can voice their concerns and proposals, in order to be able to integrate these into policy reflections and EU programming.

**4. EU financial engagement:** In the area of children's and women's rights, the EU implemented concrete projects and programmes to promote the priorities of the country level implementation plan (CLIP) of the third EU Gender Action Plan (GAP III). The EU has actively promoted the adoption of the Children's Code and the law on the modernization of 'daaras'. The EU supported various initiatives of civil society organizations in Senegal for the promotion and respect children's rights and in support of the law criminalizing rape and paedophilia.

The EU has been particularly engaged in strengthening Senegalese civil society, notably through the '*Programme d'appui à la société civile (PASC)*'. In the context of the EU Election Observation Mission's, the EU made recommendations to the authorities and civil society for addressing key issues of human rights, fundamental freedoms and electoral reform. The EU supported several Senegalese NGOs for monitoring and analysing risks of electoral violence, as well as for creating favourable conditions for political stability and social cohesion in Senegal.

The EU continued to support the strengthening of the rule of law, through contribution to the fight against corruption and money laundering. To this end, for example, the EU is supporting the capacitation and modernisation of the GIABA, an institution of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) responsible for facilitating the adoption and implementation of AML and CFT in West Africa. Progress was registered in 2024 in terms of anti-money laundering/counter-terrorist financing (AML/CTF), with Senegal de-listed in October from the FATF grey list, with a delisting from the EU's list to follow shortly.

The EU contributed to the fight against human trafficking and smuggling of migrants in Senegal by financing the '*Partenariat opérationnel conjoint (POC)*' implemented by CIVIPOL and FIIAPP. The EU also co-financed the OCWAR-T project aimed at strengthening national and regional capacities and frameworks to tackle transnational organized crime and trafficking. In addition, the EU mobilised EUR 30 million aid package from the EU's 'flexible mechanism' to support Senegal to prevent irregular migration under a Team Europe approach.

Concerning non-discrimination, particularly related to sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBTI), a constructive exchange is ongoing with the authorities in the framework of our regular partnership dialogues.

**5. Multilateral context:** In the framework of the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly's Third Committee on Human Rights and Democracy, Senegal has positioned itself as a middle-ground player, regularly abstaining in UN fora. A constructive dialogue is nurtured with the Senegalese authorities, and has proven useful to deepen the mutual understanding of respective positions and priorities. Senegal's UPR took place on 22 January 2024 in the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.