



Gambia Civil Society Statement on the Current Political Situation in Senegal

In Solidarity with the People of Senegal for Democracy

Banjul, the Gambia. 5th February 2024

The Gambian Civil Society has received with grave concern the announcement by Senegalese President Macky Sall on February 3rd, 2024 suspending the forthcoming Presidential Elections indefinitely. In his address to the Senegalese people, President Sall noted the dispute involving the National Assembly and the Constitutional Council on allegations of corruption of judges relating to the disqualification of Presidential candidate Karim Wade, and the emerging information regarding the dual citizenship of another Presidential aspirant Rose Wardini. President Sall said that while he did not wish to intervene between the Judicial and legislative bodies, he was committed to ensuring that national institutions function. As a result, he has decided to postpone the February 25 presidential election until the matter is resolved in the wake of the parliamentary inquiry.

The Gambian Civil Society hereby wishes to state categorically that it has great reservations about the position taken by President Macky Sall, which is not only a violation of the Constitution but also threatens the peace and stability of both Senegal and The Gambia, and undermines the democratic gains Senegal has registered over the years. We note with deep dismay that after serving his full two terms, President Macky Sall, who enjoyed a peaceful transfer of power from former President Abdoulaye Wade in 2012, would end his tenure and legacy by creating an unnecessary legal and institutional crisis in his country.

In line with democratic principles and the rule of law, the verdict of the Constitutional Council should have been respected by all parties. Those who stand affected by its decisions have a right to seek legal redress through due process. Hence, we do not hold the view that the disqualification of a Presidential candidate or allegations of corruption against Judges warrants the postponement of a Presidential election. Those who allege have a right and opportunity to go to court, but the democratic process must not be made to suffer and plunging the country into chaos as is evident over the past 48 hours with violent clashes in the cities and towns of Senegal since the announcement of the postponement.

The Gambia Civil Society is indeed deeply concerned by the recent events in Senegal orchestrated by the Government of President Sall. These events relate to the incidence of arbitrary arrest, detention, torture of political opponents, Civil Society actors, Journalists, and ordinary citizens for merely expressing dissent. We have noted with great concern the hundreds of Senegalese under detention without trial including Presidential candidates while groups, parties and media houses are either banned or closed for merely exercising their democratic rights.

As our most immediate neighbour and with whom we share close social and cultural ties, the Gambian Civil Society just like the Gambia Government and indeed all Gambians have a historic duty to stand with the people of Senegal to ensure peace and democracy prevail. We all share the same responsibility to care for each another. The destiny of the Gambia and Senegal are intertwined and cannot be separated hence the people of these two sister Republics cannot and must not ignore the prevailing conditions in either society, whether good or bad. This fact has been manifested many times in various situations that erupted in our two countries. We note how in our hour of need

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during 22 years of a brutal dictatorship the Senegalese people and Government stood with The Gambia in our fight to end tyranny and restore democracy.

In this regard, The Gambia Civil Society hereby calls on President Macky Sall and indeed all the relevant institutions in Senegal especially the National Assembly to:

1. Withdraw from any acts or omissions that will undermine democracy and threaten the peace and stability of the country.
2. We call on President Macky Sall in particular to immediately rescind his announcement to postpone the election but to rather provide all the necessary resources, space, and security to ensure that Senegalese go to the polls on 25 February 2024 to elect their new leaders.

We are also calling on the Government of The Gambia to:

1. Take a leading and instrumental role in ensuring that Senegal does not veer off the democratic path at this most important time.
2. We call on President Adama Barrow to hold discussions with President Macky Sall to obtain his assurances and commitment for a free, fair and peaceful Presidential election on February 25.

To ECOWAS and the African Union we say this matter is of utmost urgency therefore should ensure democracy does not suffer in Senegal and our Senegambia Region. We strongly hold that if ECOWAS and AU have indeed keenly followed the situation in Senegal over the past few years and engaged the Government of Macky Sall accordingly the current situation could have been avoided. Therefore, we call on the ECOWAS Heads of States and the Commission to ensure that nothing undermines constitutionalism in Senegal. As a region grappling with several military juntas amidst the broader context of longstanding armed conflicts, every effort must be exerted to ensure that Senegal does not become the latest basket case of a state to face unconstitutional change of government or a civil strife.

Senegal must not be allowed to fall. Up until these unfortunate actions Senegal was a leading beacon of democracy and hope for not only West Africa but also for the rest of the continent. Senegal has been cited and noted with admiration for maintaining a democratic society in which civil and political rights were fully enjoyed. If we allow democracy to slide down in Senegal it may indeed signal an irreparable damage to the future peace and stability of not only this beautiful country but indeed for the rest of the continent.

Until then the Gambian Civil society stands in full solidarity with the people of Senegal for peace and democracy.

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