

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Senegal Summary 21 February 2023

Interior minister Antoine Félix Abdoulaye Diome confirms 25 February 2024 as the date for the next presidential election. President Macky Sall (2012-present) has not declared his intention to run in the elections, but the revision of the electoral list and announcement of the election date have prompted politicians to begin showing their support for or against a third run by Sall. Opposition leader Ousmane Sonko and his supporters mobilise in communes on the outskirts of Dakar including Touba and Mbacké on 10 February, which ends in clashes between his supporters and the police. Sonko appears in court on defamation charges on 16 February and is briefly arrested after leaving the courthouse. The arrest sets off further clashes between his supporters and security forces. Sall highlights plans to invest 1,500 billion FCFA (\$2.4 billion) in the Thiès region between 2023 and 2025 as part of a new priority investment programme.

Election date set for 25 February 2024 as race heats up

Interior minister **Antoine Félix Abdoulaye Diome** confirmed on 16 February that the date for the next presidential election has been set for 25 February 2024, after confirming on 1 February that the interior ministry had begun an exceptional revision of the electoral lists ahead of the election.¹ While President **Macky Sall** (2012-present) has not declared his intention to run in the elections, the revision of the electoral list and announcement of the election date have prompted politicians to begin showing their support for or against a third run by Sall.

Prime minister **Amadou Ba** met with members from Sall's political party, **Alliance pour la République (Apr)**, on 5 February, stating that Sall is the party's candidate for the 2024 presidential election.² Ba told a crowd of party members and activists that Apr has thrown its full weight behind another Sall candidacy:

*"We don't have a plan, no A, no B, no C, let alone anything else. We only have Macky. It is he whom we observe. It is he whom we follow, today, tomorrow; this will be the case in 2024 and 2029."*³

Ba also took a stab at **Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité (PASTEF)** leader **Ousmane Sonko** and those who support him, stating that his supporters are outdated and that he is ashamed that people would follow Sonko, who has been accused of rape.⁴

Air transport minister **Doudou Kâ**, representative for the ruling **Benno Bokk Yaakaar (BBY)** coalition in **Ziguinchor**, told supporters gathered on 12 February that he and **Casamance** region, where Ziguinchor is located, will also support and promote Sall for another term in 2024.⁵ Kâ expressed hopes that other BBY leaders in the region will follow his lead in promoting Sall for another term. State minister **Mbaye Ndiaye** and several other cabinet ministers were also present at the meeting.

However, Sall has not enjoyed support from all quarters of society. On 31 January, several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) created the **Jàmm a Gën 3e mandate** collective, calling on Sall to declare that he will not be running for another term.⁶ **Mamadou Mbodj**, who is coordinating the

¹ Le Quotidien, 3 Feb 2023; Le Quotidien, 17 Feb 2023

² Le Quotidien, 6 Feb 2023

³ Le Quotidien, 6 Feb 2023

⁴ Le Quotidien, 6 Feb 2023

⁵ Le Quotidien, 12 Feb 2023

⁶ Jeune Afrique, 14 Feb 2023

collective, has described the current situation as a repeat of the 2012 election, where former president **Adoulaye Wade** (2000-2012) sought an unconstitutional third term, which led to demonstrations across the country.⁷ Former prime minister **Idrissa Seck**, also former mayor of **Thiès**, also called on Sall to not run for a third term during Sall's tour of Thiès between 8 and 11 February.⁸

Reports have emerged that the ruling party from 1960 to 2000, **Parti socialiste du Sénégal (PS)**, which forms part of Sall's BBY coalition, may not support a third term bid by Sall.⁹ PS spokesperson **Abdoulaye Wilane** told radio station **RFM** on 15 January that the constitution prohibits a third term. PS is considered a main ally of the Apr party and is also part of the ruling BBY coalition, but has seen declining support in years since aligning with Sall in 2012, and recently only won seats in the national assembly versus 15 seats in 2017.¹⁰ This may push the party to rather throw its full weight behind its own candidate and work on rebuilding its political power.

The tense political climate has prompted religious actors, such as **Collectif associations islamiques sénégalais** (Islamic associations collective), to call for dialogue and the promotion of a peaceful environment ahead of and during the elections. Sall's potential third term bid, which is looking increasingly likely, will remain in the hands of the constitutional court. The court will examine the candidacies for the presidential election ahead of the election, but until then, Sall's decision to remain silent regarding his ambitions is causing some political instability. The longer Sall draws out his silence, the tenser the political environment will become, and the more likely that an announcement that he will run will spark social unrest.

Sonko supporters clash with police

Opposition leader Ousmane Sonko and his supporters mobilised in communes on the outskirts of Dakar including **Touba** and **Mbacké** on 10 February, culminating in clashes between his supporters and the police. The government had banned a planned meeting by Sonko's Pastef party, but supporters met in Touba and Mbacké despite the government's warnings.¹¹ Reports emerged of ransacking and looting of a petrol station and supermarket during the clashes. These incidents came days before Sonko was set to appear in court on a case of defamation and forgery on 16 February, creating fears of further violence. The trial was ultimately postponed to 16 March, but Sonko was briefly arrested following his emergence from the courtroom, prompting further clashes between supporters and police.¹²

The defamation case, which tourism minister **Mame Mbaye Niang** is leading against Sonko, is a determining factor in Sonko's candidacy for the 2024 elections.¹³ If found guilty, there is a high chance that Sonko will be unable to run, which would add to an already tense political environment amid widespread allegations that the case is fabricated.

Thiès region focus of significant development

President Sall, during a tour of the Thiès region between 8 and 11 February, has highlighted plans to invest 1,500 billion FCFA (\$2.4 billion) in the region between 2023 and 2025 as part of a new priority investment programme. The programme covers several areas including the military vocation, acceleration of development of the fishing and maritime economy and strengthening the region's security network.¹⁴ The region has benefited from 2,744 billion FCFA (\$4.504 billion) in investment since 2014, which Sall pointed out is far beyond commitments made in 2014 of 447 billion FCFA

⁷ RFI, 2 Feb 2023

⁸ La Nouvelle Tribune, 10 Feb 2023

⁹ Jeune Afrique, 19 Jan 2023

¹⁰ Jeune Afrique, 19 Jan 2023

¹¹ Jeune Afrique, 17 Feb 2023

¹² Jeune Afrique, 16 Feb 2023

¹³ TV5 Monde Afrique, 16 Feb 2023

¹⁴ Le Soleil, 10 Feb 2023

(\$725m). Thiès governor **Alioune Badara Mbengue** further underscored that 56 of the 81 planned projects under the initial investment programme from 2013 have been completed, 16 are in progress and nine are in the start-up phase.¹⁵

Thiès city, the capital of the region, has the third largest population in Senegal and is considered an important city for several reasons. The city serves as a transport hub between the coast, Dakar, and **Bamako (Mali)**, and is considered the 'gateway' to the capital, Dakar. During the 2012 elections, candidates' chances of winning the presidential election were said to be higher with a Thiès victory.¹⁶

Planner

2023 **(Senegal) Sangomar** offshore oil field production set to begin;

2023 **(Senegal) Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA)** offshore gas field production of natural gas is set to begin.

25 Feb 2024 **(Senegal)** Presidential elections;

Chronology

14 Feb 2023 **Thies (Senegal) Lejecos**. President **Macky Sall** inaugurates the 120-megawatt **Malicounda** power plant during his economic tour of the **Thies** region;

13 Feb 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Lesoleil.sn**. Senegal sends a detachment of firefighters to **Turkey** in response to the country's call for international assistance in rescue efforts after suffering a devastating earthquake;

13 Feb 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Agence Ecofin**. **African Development Bank (AfDB)** and economy, planning and cooperation minister **Oulimata Sarr** sign two loan agreements for 134.89 billion FCFA (\$219.4m) intended for livestock development projects and the construction of a highway;

12 Feb 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance**. **Agence Nationale de Statistique et de la Démographie** (national statistics agency) data indicates inflation decreased to 10.3% year-on-year in January from 12.8% in December;

10 Feb 2023 **Touba-Mbacké (Senegal) Le Monde**. Police and supporters of opposition leader **Ousmane Sonko** clash during a meeting the government had banned from taking place;

7 Feb 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance**. **Petrosen E&P** managing director **Thierno Seydou Ly** confirms **Sangomar** oil field will enter production in the fourth quarter of 2023;

6 Feb 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) RFI**. A collective of 40 civil society organisations file a complaint with a Dakar court, calling for the opening of judicial investigations against the 12 individuals implicated in the court of auditors' report on the mismanagement of **Covid-19** funds;

1 Feb 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. Interior ministry begins the revision of the electoral lists for the 2024 presidential election, prompting civils society to call on President **Macky Sall** to declare his intentions on whether he will be running for a controversial third term or not;

29 Jan 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) RFI**. Civil society organisation **Le Forum civil** calls on the government to respond to the mismanagement of **Covid-19** funds and the 85 recommendations the court of auditors made to address to the mismanagement;

27 Jan 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) APA News**. **Islamic Development Bank (IDB)** commits 1,629.1 billion FCFA (\$2.7 billion) to Senegal for the period 2023-2027, consolidating the first partner country agreement between the IDB and a country in **sub-Saharan Africa**;

¹⁵ Le Soleil, 9 Feb 2023

¹⁶ Al Jazeera, 26 Feb 2012

27 Jan 2023 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Sika Finance. Société des pétroles du Sénégal (Petrosen)* announces it expects the first cubic metre of gas to be produced from the **Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA)** project in the fourth quarter of 2023;

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