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President Macky Sall (2012-present) orders the release of former Dakar mayor Khalifa Sall from prison after serving two of five years of jail time for a fraud conviction. President Sall and former president Abdoulaye Wade (2000-2012) publicly reconcile following almost a decade of non-communication between the two leaders. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts that Senegal's economy will grow by 6% in 2019 and will rise to 7% from 2020 to 2021. The IMF notes a favourable economic outlook for Senegal.

Former Dakar mayor Khalifa Sall released from prison

President **Macky Sall** (2012-present) issued an executive order on 29 September for the release and “a full surrender of the main sentences” against the former mayor of **Dakar, Khalifa Sall**.¹ The decision appears to be part of an appeasement drive by President Sall, but may also bring a formidable figure back into **Senegal's** political scene. Sall (no relation to the president) was arrested in March 2017, during his tenure as mayor of Dakar (2009 to 2017) on charges of forgery and fraud and fraud on public money.² He was found guilty and sentenced on 30 March 2018 to five years' imprisonment and a 5m FCFA (\$8,364) fine.³ Following an appeal, Sall's conviction was upheld on 30 August 2018.⁴ Sall and three co-defendants were also ordered to jointly pay a sum of 1.8 billion FCFA (\$3m) to the state.⁵

Sall's lawyer, **Khoureychi Ba**, said Sall had been reluctant to leave the prison premises, since he had not asked the president to provide clemency for him.⁶ After his release was announced, many of Sall's family members and supporters waited for his departure from the **Rebeuss** prison until security forces dispersed the crowds with teargas.⁷ After his release, Sall retreated to his hometown of **Tivaouane**, 100 km north-east of Dakar.⁸

Sall's release has elicited significant reaction and commentary both in Senegalese society and abroad. Presidency spokesperson **Abdou Latif Coulibaly** said that the amnesty gesture is in line with President Sall's desire to pursue political dialogue and appease social tension, which he announced following his victory in the presidential election on 24 February.⁹ President Sall's party, the **Alliance pour la République (APR)**, issued a statement in which it welcomed the decision as one that will help the president to consolidate peace in Senegal.¹⁰ Opposition **Patriotes du Sénégal pour le Travail, l'Éthique la Fraternité (Pastef)** MP and 2019 presidential candidate **Ousmane Sonko** expressed his satisfaction with Sall's release on social media platform **Twitter**.¹¹ Sonko also called for all of Sall's civil and political rights to be restored. On the international stage, **Paris (France)** mayor

¹ Jeune Afrique, 29 Sep 2019

² Le Point, 29 Sep 2019

³ Jeune Afrique, 29 Sep 2019

⁴ Jeune Afrique, 29 Sep 2019

⁵ Le Point, 29 Sep 2019

⁶ Dakar Actu, 30 Sep 2019

⁷ RFI, 30 Sep 2019

⁸ RFI, 30 Sep 2019

⁹ Jeune Afrique, 29 Sep 2019

¹⁰ Jeune Afrique, 29 Sep 2019

¹¹ Jeune Afrique, 29 Sep 2019

Anne Hidalgo welcomed the move and described it as an act of appeasement towards national reconciliation.¹² Hidalgo and Sall were both members of the **Internationale Socialiste** movement.

Throughout his imprisonment, Sall and his supporters maintained his innocence and claimed that his arrest was politically motivated. Sall is a political heavyweight and was seen as a potential challenger to President Sall in the lead up to the 2019 presidential election. However, his candidacy was rejected as a result of his prison sentence. In testament to his popularity, he was elected as an MP during the 2017 legislative elections despite his incarceration.¹³ Sall was first elected as mayor of Dakar in 2009 and was re-elected in 2014, while he was a member of the opposition **Parti Socialiste (PS)**.¹⁴ Following his arrest, Sall was removed as mayor of Dakar.¹⁵

There are reports in Senegal that President Sall had considered granting clemency to Sall at various times following his arrest, but Senegalese law only allows the president to pursue such an action following a conviction.¹⁶ If President Sall had taken the decision before Sall's sentence was upheld in August 2018, this would have given the impression that Sall was a political prisoner and afforded the former mayor significant political capital ahead of a presidential election.¹⁷ **Abou Diallo** established the **Front Citoyen pour la Liberation de l'Otage Politique Khalifa Sall** (citizen's movement for the liberation of political prisoner Khalifa Sall).¹⁸ Through this initiative, Diallo launched a petition and obtained 1.2 million signatures calling for Sall's release.¹⁹ President Sall's reportedly made his decision on 27 September, during the inauguration of the **Massalikoul Djinane** mosque in Dakar.²⁰ The **Mouribe** Muslim brotherhood caliph general, **Serigne Mountakha Mbacke**, facilitated the amnesty.²¹ Sall's former chief of cabinet, **Babacar Thioye Ba**, refutes allegations made by Khalifa Sall's former lawyer, **Khassiomou Toure**, that Khalifa Sall had mandated Toure to request that President Sall pardon his client.²² According to Ba,

"There was no discussion between us and the presidency... Let it be clear, Sall has not made any request for pardon and he did not introduce an amnesty request. That would be tantamount to cover Sall's crimes."²³

Sall's supporters are hopeful that he can return to the political scene ahead of the 2022 legislative and 2024 presidential elections.²⁴ However, the presidential amnesty does not erase his conviction and in terms of the Senegalese electoral code he is not allowed to register as a voter, vote, or be an electoral candidate.²⁵ This scenario is similar to that which prevented former minister **Karim Wade** from contesting the 2019 presidential elections (see below).²⁶ Sall still has to pay the joint fine imposed on him, and, with his expulsion from the Parti Socialiste in December 2017, he may have lost access to an important political base.²⁷ However, if President Sall's promised dialogue continues, these issues may be addressed, allowing Khalifa Sall to once again become an active participant in Senegalese politics.²⁸

¹² Jeune Afrique, 29 Sep 2019

¹³ Le Point, 29 Sep 2019

¹⁴ Le Point, 29 Sep 2019

¹⁵ Le Point, 29 Sep 2019

¹⁶ La Tribune Afrique, 30 Sep 2019

¹⁷ La Tribune Afrique, 30 Sep 2019

¹⁸ RFI, 30 Sep 2019

¹⁹ RFI, 30 Sep 2019

²⁰ RFI, 30 Sep 2019

²¹ RFI, 30 Sep 2019

²² Jeune Afrique, 29 Sep 2019

²³ Jeune Afrique, 29 Sep 2019

²⁴ RFI, 30 Sep 2019

²⁵ RFI, 30 Sep 2019

²⁶ RFI, 30 Sep 2019

²⁷ Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2019

²⁸ Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2019

President Sall and former president Wade reconcile

President **Macky Sall** and former president **Abdoulaye Wade** (2000-2012) have publicly reconciled after almost a decade without communication between the two leaders. Sall and Wade had not met publicly since Sall was sworn in as president in March 2012.²⁹ Their rapprochement will increase the possibility of a return from exile of Wade's son, Karim Wade. Wade is in **Qatar** over fears he will be arrested in connection with a €210m (\$231m) fine imposed on him that the presidential clemency did not eliminate.³⁰ Wade's return and restoration of his civil and political rights would significantly impact the Senegalese political landscape.

The public meeting between Sall and Abdoulaye Wade took place at the 27 September inauguration of the Massalikoul Djinane mosque in Dakar, at the request of Mouribe Muslim brotherhood caliph general Serigne Mountakha Mbacke.³¹ During the ceremony, Mbacke thanked both leaders for their symbolic act of reconciliation.³² At the end of the event, President Sall and Wade left together in the presidential vehicle, with Sall reportedly escorting Wade to his private residence.³³

Before the mosque inauguration, it was rumoured that President Sall, former president Wade and 2019 presidential election runner-up **Idrissa Seck**, would all be present at the ceremony.³⁴ Seck was Wade's former prime minister and is at odds with him because he did not endorse him during the elections.³⁵ The feud between President Sall and Abdoulaye Wade dates back to 2008, when Wade removed him from his government.³⁶ His side-lining was seen as a move to bolster the political career of Wade's son and cabinet minister, Karim Wade.

Abdoulaye Wade has been at loggerheads with Sall since Karim's arrest and subsequent three-year imprisonment.³⁷ Despite Karim Wade's release from detention in 2016, he remains in exile in Qatar, as the presidential clemency did not erase the fine imposed on him.³⁸ The dispute between the two leaders escalated in February when Wade, in a pre-recorded video to members of the opposition **Parti Democratique Senegalaise (PDS)**, called for a boycott of elections and for voters to destroy ballot papers.³⁹ **Guinea's** President **Alpha Condé** (2010-present) invited Wade to **Conakry** (Guinea) in an attempt to ease tensions between both leaders.⁴⁰ Heads of states from **Burkina Faso, Congo-Brazzaville, Cote d'Ivoire** and **Niger** took similar steps contacting Wade to reconcile with President Sall in order to preserve the stability of Senegal.⁴¹ The leaders had a private meeting on 11 August, during the Muslim feast of **Tabaski**, at which they agreed to put their differences behind them and reconcile.⁴²

Senegalese media reports that Abdoulaye Wade is open to finding a compromise that will enable full-fledged amnesty to be granted to Karim Wade.⁴³ However, Karim appears opposed to this, stipulating that he wants a re-trial to prove that he is innocent of all charges against him.⁴⁴

²⁹ Jeune Afrique, 28 Sep 2019

³⁰ Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2019

³¹ Jeune Afrique, 28 Sep 2019

³² Jeune Afrique, 28 Sep 2019

³³ Jeune Afrique, 28 Sep 2019

³⁴ Afrik.com, 28 Sep 2019

³⁵ Afrik.com, 22 Sep 2019

³⁶ Jeune Afrique, 28 Sep 2019

³⁷ Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2019

³⁸ Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2019

³⁹ Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2019

⁴⁰ Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2019

⁴¹ Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2019

⁴² Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2019

⁴³ Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2019

⁴⁴ Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2019

The reconciliation between President Sall and Wade is a sign of political maturity of the Senegalese domestic political scene. While the tension between them was unlikely to breed political violence in the near future, the calming of political tensions is a positive development. The most significant outcome of the reconciliation is the possibility of Karim Wade returning to Senegal. This will be contingent on the outcome of the political dialogue initiated by President Sall on 28 May.⁴⁵

IMF predicts 6% growth for Senegal in 2019

The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** predicts that Senegal will achieve 6% economic growth in 2019, and growth will increase to 7% from 2020 to 2021.⁴⁶ The IMF said Senegal's economic outlook is "*favourable*" and commercial production of hydrocarbons from 2022 should further boost growth.⁴⁷ This will be welcome news for both the Senegalese government and prospective investors in Senegal. The IMF attributes Senegal's economic growth to an increase in private investment.⁴⁸ However, it also indicates that the country's current account deficit is expected to increase until 2021, mainly because of the imports needed for "*construction of hydrocarbon projects*".⁴⁹ The deficit should decrease with the start of production and export of oil and gas.⁵⁰

In a bid to mitigate these effects and capitalise on its optimistic economic outlook, Senegal has entered an agreement with the IMF to improve its public governance.⁵¹ Both parties agreed on a set of macroeconomic policies and reforms on 23 September, which will help improve transparency in the management of hydrocarbons. The agreement, which the IMF's executive board is expected to approve by mid-December, will allow Senegal to benefit from the IMF's **Economic Policy Coordination Instrument (ICPE)**.⁵² According to **Corinne Delechat**, who led an IMF mission to Dakar from 12 to 23 September, the ICPE, which was created in 2017, does not grant IMF financing, but "*is a pledge of good performance of public finances and maintenance of macroeconomic stability*".⁵³ The ICPE enables members who comply with the directives to access budgetary support from the **African Development Bank (AfDB)** and the **World Bank**, and borrow at lower rates on the international debt market.⁵⁴ The ICPE implementation will be in line with Senegal's medium term economic development plan, the **Plan Senegal Emergent II (PSE II)**.⁵⁵ The IMF said that PSE II aims for "*sustained and inclusive growth, driven mainly by the private sector, macroeconomic stability, fiscal sustainability and prudent debt management*".⁵⁶

The government's decision to improve the management of the hydrocarbons sector is a welcome development and will encourage potential investors. In June, **Aliou Sall**, younger brother of president Sall was accused of receiving a \$250,000 bribe from **Australian-Romanian** mining tycoon **Frank Timis**, to ensure Timis was granted oil and gas concessions.⁵⁷ The incident, which has been dubbed "*Sallgate*", has called into question Senegal's erstwhile reputation as one of **Africa's** least corrupt nations (see *ARC Senegal Briefing June 2019*). Senegal scored 45 points in **Transparency International's 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index**, in which the average score in **sub-Saharan Africa** was 32/100.⁵⁸ If Senegal can remedy governance in this sector, it will be able to capitalise on its impressive growth projections and attract the investment necessary to build the economy.

⁴⁵ Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2019

⁴⁶ Agence Ecofin, 24 Sep 2019

⁴⁷ Agence Ecofin, 24 Sep 2019

⁴⁸ Agence Ecofin, 24 Sep 2019

⁴⁹ Agence Ecofin, 24 Sep 2019

⁵⁰ Jeune Afrique, 25 Sep 2019

⁵¹ Jeune Afrique, 25 Sep 2019

⁵² Jeune Afrique, 25 Sep 2019

⁵³ Jeune Afrique, 25 Sep 2019

⁵⁴ Jeune Afrique, 25 Sep 2019

⁵⁵ Jeune Afrique, 25 Sep 2019

⁵⁶ Jeune Afrique, 25 Sep 2019

⁵⁷ RFI, 3 Jun 2019

⁵⁸ www.transparency.org, 29 Jan 2019

Planner

4-5 Nov 2019 **Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates)** Second session of the Senegalese-Emirati Joint Commission;

Dec 2019 **Dakar (Senegal)** Municipal elections;

2022 **Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA)** offshore gas field: production of natural gas set to begin.

Chronology

7 Oct 2019 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Agence Ecofin*. The **European Union** will allocate \$30m to the Senegalese government to fund sustainable development projects;

2 Oct 2019 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Agence Ecofin*. **Air Senegal** set to include **Marseille (France)** and **Barcelona (Spain)** as travel destinations from December 2019;

29 Sep 2019 **Dakar (Senegal)** *RFI*. Former mayor of Dakar **Khalifa Sall** is released from prison after President Macky Sall signs an executive order granting him amnesty;

28 Sep 2019 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Jeune Afrique*. President **Macky Sall** and former president **Abdoulaye Wade** publicly reconcile following almost a decade of non-communication between the two leaders;

27 Sep 2019 **Dakar (Senegal)** *RFI*. Thousands of Muslims in Senegal inaugurate the **Massalikul Jinaan** mosque, the largest mosque in **West Africa**;

23 Sep 2019 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Agence Ecofin*. The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** predicts that Senegal will attain 6% economic growth in 2019 and 7% from 2020 to 2021;

17 Sep 2019 **Dakar (Senegal)** *RFI*. A boat accident off the coast of Dakar near the **Magdalen Islands** registers four deaths and 35 survivors;

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