

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Senegal Summary 21 November 2023

The supreme court on 17 November overturns the Ziguinchor district court ruling in favour of restoring opposition leader Ousmane Sonko to the voter rolls, officially ending his bid to run in the upcoming election. President Macky Sall (2012-present) on 3 November removes the 12 members of the Commission électorale nationale autonome (Cena) (autonomous national electoral commission), reportedly after a disagreement between Cena and the Direction générale des élections (DGE) (general directorate of elections) over Sonko's candidacy. United States-headquartered Kosmos Energy confirms on 6 November that United Kingdom-headquartered BP has officially withdrawn from the Yakaar-Teranga gas project, transferring the role of operator and its 60% stake to Kosmos, increasing its stake to 90%.

Supreme court rules Sonko cannot run ...

The **Supreme Court** on 17 November overturned the **Ziguinchor district court** ruling in favour of restoring opposition leader **Ousmane Sonko** to the voter rolls, officially ending his bid to run in the presidential election scheduled for 25 February 2024. Supreme court president **Ali Cire Ba** ordered the case to the **Dakar** high court for a retrial.¹ Sonko was removed from the voter rolls after a court found him guilty on 1 June of morally corrupting a young person and sentenced him, in absentia, to two years in prison. Sonko, who has embarked on several hunger strikes since his prison sentence began, returned to **Cap Manuel** prison from hospital on 14 November and was not present for the ruling.² The decision sparked another round of protests in Ziguinchor, with security forces using tear gas to dispel protestors.³

Even if Sonko were to get the decision overturned again, the deadline for obtaining the requisite sponsorships to run in the presidential election, is 10 December, making Sonko's presidential bid even less likely.⁴ On the same day, the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** court of justice also failed to rule in Sonko's favour in a case in which he claimed that his rights were violated when he was removed from the voters' roll.⁵ Sonko also lodged a case over the interior ministry's July decision to dissolve his **Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité (Pastef)** party. However, the court of justice ruled that the party was dissolved in accordance with domestic law.⁶

Pastef, on 19 November, nominated its co-founder and secretary general, **Bassirou Diomaye Faye**, to be its new candidate, asking supporters to start the sponsorship process.⁷ Faye needs a minimum of 44,559 citizenship sponsorships to be able to run. Faye has worked alongside Sonko since 2014. However, Faye is facing his own set of legal challenges and has been detained in prison since April on charges of contempt of court, defamation and dissemination of false news.⁸ Although Faye is awaiting trial, he is legally permitted to obtain the necessary sponsorships as he has not been found guilty. If Faye is found guilty, he too will be removed from the voter rolls and will face the same challenge as Sonko, effectively preventing Pastef from having a candidate in the election.

¹ Le Monde, 17 Nov 2023

² Jeune Afrique, 17 Nov 2023

³ Le Quotidien, 18 Nov 2023

⁴ Le Monde, 17 Nov 2023

⁵ Jeune Afrique, 17 Nov 2023

⁶ Le Quotidien, 18 Nov 2023

⁷ Jeune Afrique, 20 Nov 2023

⁸ Anadolu Agency, 21 Nov 2023

Sonko's case is increasingly attracting attention. A group of **African** opposition politicians, including **Martha Karua**, who ran for vice president in **Kenya**, and **Ugandan** opposition leader **Kizza Besigye**, have said a presidential race without Sonko “*would be a blot on Senegal's democratic record*”.⁹ The opposition candidates were speaking after carrying out a fact-finding mission to Senegal. The **Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)**, which represents 180 parliaments, also released a statement following a meeting in **Luanda (Angola)** on 27 October stating that it finds Sonko's situation worrying and a continuation of a trend in which Senegalese opposition candidates have been excluded from elections after being condemned by courts.¹⁰

... as President Sall reshuffles election commission

President **Macky Sall** (2012-present) on 3 November removed the 12 members of the **Commission électorale nationale autonome (Cena)** (autonomous national electoral commission), reportedly after a disagreement between Cena and the **Direction générale des élections (DGE)** (general directorate of elections) over the candidacy of opposition leader Ousmane Sonko.

Secretary general of the presidency **Oumar Samba Ba** said in a press release on 3 November that Sall had by decree n°2023-2152 appointed 12 new members to Cena upon the expiration of the mandates of outgoing members, including Cena president **Doudou Ndir**, who had spoken in favour of Sonko receiving the necessary sponsorship forms to run for the presidential election.¹¹ Sall appointed **Abdoulaye Sylla**, a retired state inspector general, in Ndir's place.¹² Ndir had held the role since 2009, making his replacement even more unexpected. On 13 November, Sylla assumed the presidency of Cena, stating that the election commission would examine Sonko's case.¹³

Cena controls and supervises the electoral process, while the interior ministry, which oversees the DGE, organises the elections. Ndir on 31 October ordered that Sonko be placed on the electoral lists again and be provided with the requisite sponsorship forms to enable him to run as a candidate in the February 2024 presidential election. The request came after a 12 October ruling by the **Tribunal d'instance de Ziguinchor** (district court) to overturn Sonko's removal from the electoral lists, which cleared a path for him to run in the election again. However, the DGE responded that it did not have the jurisdiction to carry out this order.¹⁴ A Cena spokesperson confirmed that Cena cannot compel the DGE to comply with its order.

The opposition has not welcomed the move. On 11 November, a new opposition coalition, **Front pour l'inclusivité et la transparence des élections (FITE)**, emerged, comprising 35 members who are advocating for the organisation of transparent and free elections. Members include Sonko and former prime minister **Aminata Touré**.¹⁵ FITE has turned to the supreme court to have the decree authorising their appointment annulled.¹⁶ Civil society figure **Ndiaga Sylla** has also lodged a challenge to the decree.

Cena's members are supposed to be independent and are chosen, according to the electoral code, for their “*moral integrity, their intellectual honesty, their neutrality and their impartiality*”.¹⁷ However, doubts linger over two newly appointed members – **Cheikh Awa Balla Fall** and **Serigne Amadou Ndiaye**. Fall was previously the district head of **Limamoulaye**, as a representative of the ruling **Alliance pour la République (APR)**. Ndiaye was a candidate in the commune of **Mboss** in the 2014

⁹ Bloomberg, 13 Nov 2023

¹⁰ Jeune Afrique, 8 Nov 2023

¹¹ Jeune Afrique, 4 Nov 2023

¹² Jeune Afrique, 4 Nov 2023

¹³ Le Quotidien, 14 Nov 2023

¹⁴ RFI, 1 Nov 2023

¹⁵ RFI, 12 Nov 2023

¹⁶ Le Quotidien, 17 Nov 2023

¹⁷ Jeune Afrique, 3 Nov 2023

local election, also under the APR. He campaigned in the 2016 constitutional referendum, which Sall proposed, encouraging voters to vote yes.¹⁸

The optics of Sall's decision are not good. Sall is seen as seeking to manipulate electoral bodies to ensure that his chosen successor, prime minister **Amadou Ba** and the ruling **Benno Bokk Yakaar (BBY)** coalition secure another win. The decision to reshuffle Cena comes against a background of years of tension, protests and democratic backsliding in what has historically been a beacon of democracy in **West Africa**, adding further pressure to the election and increasing the likelihood of continuing tensions and social unrest.

Yakaar-Teranga changes shareholders

United States-headquartered **Kosmos Energy** confirmed on 6 November that **United Kingdom**-headquartered **BP** had officially withdrawn from the **Yakaar-Teranga** gas project, transferring the role of operator and its 60% stake to Kosmos, increasing its stake to 90%.¹⁹ State-owned **Petrosen** holds the remaining 10%. Kosmos said following the takeover that it plans to accelerate the development of the field and extract the first cubic metres of gas by 2027.²⁰

Delays in the development of the deposit on behalf of BP are reportedly why the energy giant withdrew from the project, choosing to focus on the **Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA)** field.²¹ Kosmos is aiming to extract up to 555 million cubic feet of gas per day, while BP was reportedly only aiming for 85 million per day. However, other sources have told the media that the asset no longer fits into BP's strategy.²² It has since been reported that Kosmos will also help to develop an offshore liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility for the project, with plans for domestic gas to be transported via a pipeline and gas for exports to be liquefied on a floating LNG vessel.²³

Yakaar-Teranga is a key gas project in the region, with an estimated 25 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Petrosen director general **Thierno Seydou Ly** has noted that it is also a key asset for the government's energy transition plan and **Plan Sénégal Emergent**.²⁴ Unlike the GTA field, which is 50% shared with **Mauritania**, Yakaar-Teranga is 100% within Senegalese territory, which will enable the country to exploit the reserve more fully. The change in ownership may also offer Petrosen an opportunity to renegotiate and increase its ownership stake in the project.

¹⁸ Jeune Afrique, 14 Nov 2023

¹⁹ Energy Intelligence, 6 Nov 2023

²⁰ RFI, 8 Nov 2023

²¹ RFI, 8 Nov 2023

²² Bloomberg, 19 Oct 2023

²³ Energy Capital Power, 20 Nov 2023

²⁴ Energy Capital Power, 20 Nov 2023

Planner

2024 **(Senegal) Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA)** offshore gas field production of natural gas is set to begin;

2024 **(Senegal) Sangomar** offshore oil field production set to begin;

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

2027 **(Senegal) Yakaar-Teranga** gas project set to begin production;

Chronology

20 Nov 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance**. President **Macky Sall** inaugurates the **Mbane Niakhar** power plant, which has a capacity of 225 kilovolts (KV) and will connect four regions;

19 Nov 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance**. Mines and geology minister **Oumar Sarr** says the mining sector will contribute 150 billion FCFA (\$250.55m) to tax revenues in 2023;

18 Nov 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Soleil**. National assembly adopts the 2024 budget set at 7 trillion FCFA (\$11.64 billion);

17 Nov 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. Former prime minister and presidential candidate **Mimi Touré** forecasts that the February 2024 election will need a second vote to elect the new president;

16 Nov 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Anadolu Agency**. Senegal and **France** carry out a joint military exercise focused on counterterrorism and hostage release scenarios;

16 Nov 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Jeune Afrique**. Tax authorities order **United Kingdom**-headquartered **Capricorn Energy** and **Australia**-headquartered **Woodside Energy**, the main operator of the **Sangomar** offshore oil project, to pay \$42.7m for the repurchase of the Sangomar operating rights in 2020;

16 Nov 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Reuters**. **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)** confirms Senegal has applied to join as a shareholder, which would enable it to apply to become a recipient economy;

15 Nov 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. **Tunisia's** ambassador to Senegal, **Rachid Saïdani**, says trade between the two countries increased 18.8% between January and October, reaching 45 billion FCFA (\$74.83m);

13 Nov 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance**. President **Macky Sall** announces during a tour of the **Kédougou** region that the government will allocate 600 billion FCFA (\$980.93m) for the period 2024 to 2026 for the region;

13 Nov 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Soleil**. President **Macky Sall** embarks on an economic tour in the regions of **Kédougou**, **Kaolack**, **Kaffrine** and **Fatick**, in a likely bid to continue shoring up support for the ruling **Benno Bokk Yakaar (BBY)** coalition ahead of the February elections;

10 Nov 2023 **Doha (Qatar) Zawya**. **Senegal's** commerce minister, **Abdou Karim Fofana**, meets with his Qatari counterpart, Sheikh **Mohammed bin Hamad bin Qassim Al Thani**, to discuss strengthening cooperation in trade, investment and industry;

9 Nov 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Monde**. President **Macky Sall** calls for emergency measures to stem illegal emigration, which has seen a sharp uptick in Senegal;

3 Nov 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Agence Ecofin**. **Institut national de recherches agricoles (ISRA)** (institute for agricultural research) director general **Momar Tall Seck** says the government aims to reduce wheat imports by at least 40% over the next five years;

2 Nov 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. Opposition coalition **F24** organises a demonstration to demand the release of political detainees, with media reporting that some demonstrators carried **Russian** flags;

30 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Agence Ecofin*. Authorities confirm Senegal will launch its first satellite into orbit in the first quarter of 2024;

30 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Africanews*. **Dakar-Plateau** district mayor **Alioune Ndoye** confirms **Faidherbe** avenue, running through Dakar, will be renamed after President **Macky Sall**;

30 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Reuters*. **Spain** delivers six drones to Senegal to help reinforce its deployed security personnel who are tackling its migration crisis;

29 Oct 2023 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *APA News*. President **Alassane Ouattara** hosts **Senegal's** President **Macky Sall** to discuss regional and continental issues;

26 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Lejecos*. Prime minister **Amadou Ba** opens the **Senegal-Gambia** economic forum, encouraging investors on both sides to explore opportunities in the countries;

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Please contact us by email info@africariskconsulting.com or call + 44 (0) 20 7078 4080

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