

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

Senegal Monthly Briefing April 2023

Senegal Summary 21 April 2023

*Political tensions continue to rise in Senegal, with 112 political parties and civil society organisations forming a coalition, **Mouvement des forces vives du Sénégal F24**, on 16 April against President Macky Sall (2012-present) running for a third presidential term in February. A Dakar court sentences opposition **Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité (Pastef)** leader Ousmane Sonko on 30 March to a two-month suspended prison sentence and orders him to pay 200m FCFA (\$333,000) in damages in the defamation trial brought against Sonko by tourism minister Mame Mbaye Niang. The sentence does not disqualify Sonko from running in the 2024 presidential elections. Agriculture minister Aly Ndiaye announces on 1 April that Senegal plans to start growing its own wheat from November, as the country works to decrease its import bill. Senegal imports nearly all of its wheat from Russia and France and with the conflict in Ukraine, prices have grown to a point where the government no longer views importing as sustainable.*

Opposition forms coalition against Sall as political tensions continue rising ...

Political tensions continue to rise in Senegal, with 112 political parties and civil society organisations forming a coalition, **Mouvement des forces vives du Sénégal F24**, on 16 April against President **Macky Sall** (2012-present) running for a third presidential term in February 2024. While Sall has not officially announced a third term, he has said that he does not believe there is a legal reason why he cannot run.¹ Senegal's constitution limits a president's tenure to two five-year terms; however, a constitutional amendment enacted in January 2016 effectively "reset" Sall's terms, as it only came into effect during his second term, allowing him to run for a third term (see *ARC Briefing Senegal Jan 2016*).

The coalition has called for a mass demonstration on 5 May against his potential third term.² The coalition has also demanded that other issues be addressed, including the release of political prisoners arrested during demonstrations against opposition leader **Ousmane Sonko's** trial (see below). Opposition coalition **Yewwi Askan Wi (YAW)** has called on the ruling **Benno Bokk Yakaar** coalition to respect the rule of law and the memory of those who lost their lives in the post-election violence in 2011 when former president **Abdoulaye Wade** (2000-2012) attempted to run for a controversial third term.³

Civil society organisations have continued to express concern over the rising political tensions, noting that social unrest is becoming increasingly likely amid the rising cost of living. **Coalition des Centrales Syndicales du Sénégal (CCS)**, a coalition of several trade unions, has urged politicians to calm tensions and resort to dialogue and consultations to "preserve peace and stability in Senegal".⁴ The CCS noted that the rising political tensions are taking place in the context of restricted freedoms, mass arrests and recurring demonstrations, resulting in a slowing down of economic activities and adding to instability.⁵

... and Sonko trial continues to dominate

A Dakar court sentenced opposition **Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité (Pastef)** leader Ousmane Sonko on 30 March to a two-month suspended prison sentence

¹ Anadolu Agency, 17 Apr 2023

² Anadolu Agency, 17 Apr 2023

³ Le Quotidien, 14 Apr 2023

⁴ Le Quotidien, 1 Apr 2023

⁵ Le Quotidien, 1 Apr 2023

and ordered him to pay 200m FCFA (\$333,000) in damages in the defamation trial brought against Sonko by tourism minister **Mame Mbaye Niang**. The sentence does not disqualify Sonko from running in the 2024 presidential elections, as the electoral code only disqualifies candidates from running if they have received a six-month or longer suspended sentence.⁶

The trial, which opened on 2 February, has been marred by demonstrations, with Sonko's supporters maintaining that the trial was an attempt to disqualify him from running in the 2024 elections. The sentencing date was no different, with opposition YAW coalition (of which Pastef forms part) planning demonstrations for 29 March, 30 March and 3 April, despite the authorities banning any demonstrations, citing "*real threats of disturbance to public order*".⁷ In anticipation of the unrest, schools and the **University of Dakar** brought forward the easter holidays, keeping campuses empty. The demonstrations went ahead, and a series of arrests took place.

Following the sentencing, both legal teams announced they would appeal the ruling. Niang's lawyer, **Pierre-Olivier Sur**, called the verdict an "*appeasement*" ruling that would allow Sonko to remain in the political realm ahead of the elections. If Sonko had been eliminated from running in the elections due to a heavier sentence, it is likely that there would have been severe unrest and protests by his supporters. Given the possible outcomes, it may well have been a lighter ruling to ensure political stability. The appeal trial date has been set for 8 May, after Sonko failed to appear in court on 17 April.⁸ Further unrest can be expected ahead of the new trial date.

Senegal looks to decrease import reliance on food

Agriculture minister **Aly Ndiaye** announced on 1 April that Senegal plans to start growing its own wheat from November, as the country works to decrease its import bill. Senegal imports nearly all its wheat from **Russia** and **France** and with the conflict in **Ukraine**, prices have grown to a point where the government no longer views importing as sustainable.⁹ Ndiaye confirmed that the ministry is considering starting to cultivate 1,000 hectares but said that private partners are asking government to produce at least 5,000 hectares to meet demand. Sall aims to reduce imports by half in the coming years.

The government launched a pilot programme in October 2022, in collaboration with the **Institut national de recherche agricole (ISRA)** (national institute for agricultural research) with three kinds of wheat seeds sourced from **Egypt** and one varietal developed by the ISRA.¹⁰ The government and ISRA needed to determine if Senegal would be able to grow the crop in its tropical climate and planted the seeds in northern Senegal, believed to have the best growing conditions for wheat, as part of an experiment.¹¹ ISRA representatives have confirmed the results are positive thus far, but cultivation is still underway.

Growing the crop locally will not only help reduce the import bill, but will also help Senegal to achieve greater food security. While figures for 2022 are not available yet, Senegal spent \$248m in 2021 importing 754,000 tonnes of wheat. This figure will be far higher for 2022.

The government's focus on promoting this area appears to be paying off. In January, it launched the **Stratégie nationale de souveraineté alimentaire** (national food sovereignty strategy), investing 5,000 billion FCFA (\$8.4 billion) between 2024 and 2029. On 12 April, Sall launched the 2023/2024 agricultural campaign with an allocation of 100 billion FCFA (\$168m), an increase of 30 billion FCFA (\$50.16m) compared to the previous year.¹² The success of this experiment may also prompt the

⁶ Anadolu Agency 30 Mar 2023

⁷ France24, 29 Mar 2023

⁸ Africa News, 17 Apr 2023

⁹ Agence Ecofin, 5 Apr 2023

¹⁰ Anadolu Agency, 19 Apr 2023

¹¹ Agence Ecofin, 5 Apr 2023

¹² Agence Ecofin, 13 Apr 2023

government to explore growing other crops previously believed to be unviable in Senegal, or growing production of crops such as rice, which would further decrease the import bill.

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

18 Apr 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Agence Ecofin. Investigative Journalism Reportika**, an international investigative journalism network, publishes a report which shows 20% of the world's illegally caught fish, allegedly by **Chinese** trawlers, comes from six **West African** countries including **Mauritania**, **Senegal**, **Gambia**, **Guinea-Bissau**, **Guinea** and **Sierra Leone**;

17 Apr 2023 **Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) Sika Finance. International Monetary Fund's** latest regional economic outlook report for **Sub-Saharan Africa** shows five **West African** countries – **Senegal**, **Côte d'Ivoire**, **Niger**, **Benin** and **Togo** – are in the top ten growth projections for 2023 and 2024;

17 Apr 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. Former minister **Karim Wade** requests to register on the 2024 electoral lists despite being disqualified due to corruption charges;

17 Apr 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance. Agence Nationale de Statistique et de la Démographie** (national statistics agency) reports that annual inflation increased to 9.5% in March from 9.4% in February;

17 Apr 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. Former prime minister **Idrissa Seck** declares his candidacy for the 2024 presidential election;

13 Apr 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance**. President **Macky Sall** receives **Portugal's** foreign affairs minister, **Joao Gomes Cravinho**, for the third session of the Senegal-Portugal joint commission;

12 Apr 2023 **Thiès (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. Forty fishermen appear before the court of **Thiès** on charges of assault and battery after violent clashes in the **Grande-Côte** fishing community on 2 April left one fisherman dead;

11 Apr 2023 **Mbodiène (Senegal) RFI**. Over 1,700 citizens sign a petition to block the renewal of **Sénégal Mines'** contract for the exploitation of clay;

8 Apr 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. Prime minister **Amadou Ba** meets with representatives of Senegal's financial and economic partners, assuring them that the political situation is under control and that the court of auditors' report on the misuse of **Covid-19** funds is under investigation;

8 Apr 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Jeune Afrique**. Researchers continue harvesting an experimental wheat crop as Senegal tries to reduce dependence on imports;

7 Apr 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) APA News**. **World Bank** and finance minister **Mamadou Moustapha Bâ** sign an agreement for 90 billion FCFA (\$151.5m) to help improve Senegal's digital economy;

6 Apr 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. Sports minister **Yankhoba Diattara** resigns after renewing his political commitment to former prime minister and 2024 presidential candidate **Idrissa Seck**;

4 Apr 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Anadolu Agency**. President **Macky Sall** calls for dialogue and consultation to preserve peace, stability and national cohesion during his Independence Day speech;

4 Apr 2023 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Agence Ecofin*. A cargo of 20,000 tonnes of sugar arrives at the port of Dakar, imported under special authorisation from the commerce ministry, as the price of sugar soars during the Ramadan period;

31 Mar 2023 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Sika Finance*. Government and **Banque Ouest Africaine de Développement (BOAD)** (West African development bank) sign an agreement for 41 billion FCFA (\$62.16m) intended to help reduce poverty and build resilience to climate change;

31 Mar 2023 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Le Quotidien*. Interior ministry expels lawyer **Juan Paulo Lopez Branco**, who was meant to defend opposition leader **Ousmane Sonko** in his trial, citing a social media post Branco made which addressed President **Macky Sall** as a "tyrant";

27 Mar 2023 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Sika Finance*. Infrastructure minister **Mansour Faye** visits the **Bus Rapid Transport (BRT)** pilot project, which he says is 70% complete;

23 Mar 2023 **Dakar (Senegal)** *RFI*. President **Macky Sall** calls on government to restore public order after protests linked to opposition leader **Ousmane Sonko**'s defamation trial leave one person dead;

22 Mar 2023 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Anadolu Agency*. President **Macky Sall** announces the establishment of a national space agency, **Agence sénégalaise d'études spatiales (Ases)**;

About Africa Risk Consulting:

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