

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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The Supreme Court on 4 January upholds opposition leader Ousmane Sonko's suspended six-month sentence and 200m FCFA (\$332,134) fine for his defamation, insults and forgery case, initially heard in May 2023. This ruling all but confirms that Sonko will be unable to run in the upcoming 25 February presidential election. A constitutional council ruling on 5 January confirms the rejection of Sonko's application to run in the election. The council publishes the final list of 20 candidates for the upcoming election on 20 January. United Kingdom (UK)-headquartered BP signs a three-year contract with fellow UK-based company Petrofac for the management and maintenance of the floating production, storage and offloading vessel (FPSO) linked to the Grand-Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA) gas project on 8 January.

Sonko's presidential bid officially ends

The **Supreme Court** on 4 January upheld opposition leader **Ousmane Sonko's** suspended six-month sentence and 200m FCFA (\$332,134) fine in his defamation, insults and forgery case, initially heard in May 2023.¹ This ruling all but confirmed that Sonko would be unable to run in the upcoming 25 February presidential election, as the electoral code stipulates that any person receiving a suspended sentence of six months or less is ineligible to run for five years.² One of Sonko's lawyers, **Cheikh Koureychi Ba**, said the ruling was disappointing, calling it a "state conspiracy" to ensure that Sonko, who came third in the 2019 presidential election, is unable to run.³

Sonko's hopes of running were raised on 14 December after a **Dakar** district court ruled that he should be reinstated on the electoral roll. A judge in **Ziguinchor** initially made this ruling on 12 October but the supreme court overturned the ruling on 17 November and ordered the case be retried by the Dakar district court.⁴ The state appealed and it was ordered that the case be heard again. Following this ruling, Sonko had until 26 December to get the necessary sponsorships and submit his candidacy. On 20 December, Sonko's representative, **Ayib Daffé**, reported that the **Direction générale des élections (DGE)** (general directorate of elections) and the **Caisse des dépôts et consignation** (deposit and consignment office) refused to provide him with the necessary documentation. Despite this, Sonko filed on 25 December without the sponsorship forms, stating that the various legal cases had delayed his ability to garner the required 44,559 signatures.⁵

Sonko's party – **Parti des Africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité (Pastef)** – planned a nomination meeting for 29 December, but authorities banned the meeting, stating that it presented "threats of disturbance to public order, hindrance to the free movement of people and goods and risk of infiltration by ill-intentioned people".⁶

While the state was allowed to file an appeal against the 14 December Dakar district court ruling, this was not needed as the **Conseil constitutionnel** (constitutional council) rejected Sonko's application on 5 January, stating that it was incomplete.⁷ The constitutional council also rejected the applications of several other potential candidates, including former prime minister **Aminata Touré**.⁸ In a final

¹ Le Monde, 7 Jan 2024

² Le Monde, 7 Jan 2024

³ Le Monde, 7 Jan 2024

⁴ Jeune Afrique, 14 Dec 2023

⁵ Jeune Afrique, 26 Dec 2023

⁶ Le Monde, 30 Dec 2023

⁷ Jeune Afrique, 5 Jan 2024

⁸ Jeune Afrique, 5 Jan 2024

attempt, Sonko alongside 28 other candidates filed a collective request with the council to review its decisions.⁹ However, the council published its final list of candidates on 20 January (see below), which excludes Sonko.

Pastef has nominated **Bassirou Diomaye Faye** as its backup candidate. However, Faye is in pre-trial detention and could also be declared ineligible if he is found guilty before the election (*see ARC Briefing Senegal Dec 2023*). Pastef is also backing **Habib Sy**, a Pastef ally in the **Yewwi Askan Wi** opposition coalition. The outcome has left the opposition in a precarious position ahead of the election and has negatively impacted its ability to contest the election.

Field set for presidential election

The constitutional council on 20 January published the final list of 20 candidates for the 25 February presidential election. The list is the result of a vetting process that saw the number of candidates decrease from the 79 who submitted their candidacy before the 26 December deadline to the current 20.¹⁰ Alongside Sonko, another notable rejection is former president **Abdoulaye Wade's** (2000-2012) son, **Karim Wade**, who was excluded from the list on the grounds of holding dual **French-Senegalese** citizenship. The constitution requires that all candidates are exclusively Senegalese nationals.¹¹

President **Macky Sall's** (2012-present) selected successor, prime minister **Amadou Ba**, is on the list, as are former prime ministers **Idrissa Seck** and **Mahammed Boun Abdallah Dionne**, former **Dakar** mayor **Khalifa Sall** as well as Faye and Sy. Other candidates include:

- Doctor and independent candidate **Rose Wardini**;
- **Parti de l'unité et du rassemblement** candidate **Aliou Mamadou Dia**;
- Former minister **Aly Ngouille Ndiaye**;
- **Mouvement Tekki** founder **Mamadou Lamine Diallo**;
- Retired businessman **Boubacar Camara**;
- Former minister and **Réewum Ngor** candidate **Thierno Alassane Sall**;
- Businessman and **Kaolack** mayor **Serigne Mboup**;
- Former minister and **Parti socialiste** candidate **Malick Gakou**;
- Member of parliament **Pape Djibril Fall**;
- Former director general of **Caisse des Dépôts et des Consignations (CDC)** and **Coalition pour un Sénégal nouveau** candidate **Mame Boye Diao**;
- **Director del Centro Africano para el Comercio, la Integración y el Desarrollo (CACID)** (African centre for trade, integration and development) founder **Cheikh Tidiane Dieye**;
- Member of parliament **Déthié Fall**;
- Entrepreneur **Anta Babacar Ngom**;
- Pathologist **Daouda Ndiaye**.¹²

The 43 candidates rejected during the sponsorship process, including Touré and former higher education minister **Mary Teuw Niane**, met with a representative from the **European Union (EU)** on 15 January to discuss their view that irregularities marred the process and that “*electoral chaos*” is taking shape.¹³

Senegal's electoral system requires a candidate to achieve 50% of the vote otherwise a second round of voting is required. While the opposition is in a weakened position ahead of the election, Ba is not very popular and may struggle to achieve 50% of the vote in the first round. However, he remains the likely winner even if it involves a second round of voting.

Steps taken for management of GTA gas project

⁹ Jeune Afrique, 8 Jan 2024

¹⁰ Le Monde, 21 Jan 2024; Africanews, 27 Dec 2023

¹¹ Le Monde, 21 Jan 2024

¹² Le Quotidien, 22 Jan 2024

¹³ Jeune Afrique, 17 Jan 2024

United Kingdom (UK)-headquartered **BP** signed a three-year contract with fellow UK-based company **Petrofac** for the management and maintenance of the floating production, storage and offloading vessel (FPSO) linked to the **Grand-Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA)** gas project on 8 January. The GTA project is located along the Senegal-**Mauritania** maritime border. BP owns a 61% stake in the GTA project, alongside **Kosmos Energy** (29%), state-owned **Société des pétroles du Sénégal (Petrosen)** (10%) and Mauritania's **Société Mauritanienne des Hydrocarbures et de Patrimoine Minier (SMHPM)** (10%).¹⁴

The project has faced repeated delays and postponements. Commissioning of the first phase of GTA was delayed from 2022 to the last quarter of 2023 and most recently to the first quarter of 2024. As a result, first exports are anticipated in the first half of this year.¹⁵ Senegal's **Sangomar** oil project has also faced delays, with production initially planned for end-2023 and now expected in mid-2024.

The signing of the contract is a likely indicator that the GTA project is on track to meet its anticipated start date, a boost for Senegal and its economy. The project is expected to produce 2.3 million tonnes of natural gas per year before reaching annual production of 10 million tonnes per year by 2030.¹⁶ Petrosen CEO **Thierno Seydou Ly** said in September that between GTA and Sangomar, combined revenues are expected to be 700 billion FCFA (\$1.16 billion) per year over 30 years.¹⁷ Outside of revenues, the gas project will also help the government reduce the cost of electricity production and adopt a 'greener' energy source. Senegal's **Yakaar-Teranga** gas field is set to start production in 2027, but will mainly be used for local consumption.

¹⁴ Jeune Afrique, 10 Jan 2024

¹⁵ Jeune Afrique, 9 Aug 2023

¹⁶ Jeune Afrique, 9 Aug 2023

¹⁷ Jeune Afrique, 20 Sep 2024

Planner

- 2024 **(Senegal) Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA)** offshore gas field production of natural gas 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

- 16 Jan 2024 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance**. President **Macky Sall** announces a 7 billion FCFA (\$11.66m) national strategy on artificial intelligence (AI) that will focus on raising awareness, training students and professionals on the concepts of AI, creating research centres and developing start-ups offering solutions using AI;
- 14 Jan 2024 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance**. President **Macky Sall** inaugurates the bus rapid transit (BRT) after four years of work on building the transport system;
- 14 Jan 2024 **Dakar (Senegal) EU Report. European Union (EU)** confirms the Senegalese authorities have extended an invitation for an EU electoral observation mission (EOM) ahead of the 25 February presidential election, which the EU has accepted;
- 11 Jan 2024 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Soleil**. President **Macky Sall** arrives in **Mauritania** for an official visit at the invitation of his counterpart, **Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani**;
- 5 Jan 2024 **Dakar (Senegal) Jeune Afrique**. The navy continues searching for five of its members who went missing after boarding a ship suspected of transporting drugs;
- 4 Jan 2024 **Dakar (Senegal) Bloomberg Tax. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** announces that Senegal has committed to implement the OECD standards for the automatic exchange of financial information (AEOI) by September 2025;
- 25 Dec 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Africanews**. The navy seizes 690kg of cocaine being transported to **Europe** via boat, arresting five **Spanish** citizens on the ship;
- 22 Dec 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Morocco World News**. Petroleum and energy minister **Antoine Felix Abdoulaye Diome** reiterates Senegal's support for the planned gas pipeline that will run from **Nigeria** to **Morocco** through several **West African** countries, citing it will benefit the populations and economies of the region;
- 17 Dec 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Jeune Afrique**. The navy seizes three tonnes of cocaine worth an estimated \$209.65m from a ship anchored off the coast of Senegal, arresting five Senegalese citizens, a **Venezuelan** and five **Bissau-Guineans**;
- 15 Dec 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) APA News. Côte d'Ivoire's** trade minister, **Souleymane Diarrassouba**, speaking at the **Dakar International Affair**, says trade between the two countries reached over 200 billion FCFA (\$332.77m) in 2022;
- 15 Dec 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) AFP**. Four soldiers are killed after their vehicle hit an anti-tank mine in **Casamance**;



About Africa Risk Consulting:

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