

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Senegal Summary 26 October 2023

The sub-prefecture of Almadies notifies opposition leader Ousmane Sonko on 20 September that he will be removed from the electoral lists due to the two-year prison sentence a court handed him in absentia in June. The decision eliminates Sonko from the presidential election. However, the Tribunal d'instance de Ziguinchor (district court) rules on 12 October that Sonko should be reinstated. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) announces on 24 October that it has reached a staff-level agreement with Senegalese authorities on the policies needed to complete the IMF's first reviews of Senegal's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and Extended Credit Facility (ECF), which is combined with its Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). Secretary general of the presidency Oumar Samba Ba announces on 6 October that President Macky Sall (2012-present) is dissolving his government, retaining only prime minister Amadou Ba, whom he chose in September as his successor to run as the ruling Benno Bokk Yakaar (BBY) coalition's candidate. A new government is revealed on 11 October, comprising allies of Sall and Ba as Ba shores up support for the election.

Sonko removed and reinstated as presidential candidate

Opposition leader **Ousmane Sonko** has continued, and partially won, his fight to be a candidate in the February 2024 presidential elections. The sub-prefecture of **Almadies** notified Sonko on 20 September that he would be removed from the electoral lists due to the two-year prison sentence a court handed him in absentia in June (see *ARC Briefing Senegal Jun-Jul 2023*), as in Senegal conviction of a crime results in ineligibility to vote.¹ Sonko's removal from the electoral lists, according to Article 57 of the electoral code, would also make him ineligible to run in the February 2024 presidential election, as the article stipulates that eligibility to stand as a candidate in an election is contingent on eligibility to vote.²

Sonko's deputy, **Ayib Daffé**, attempted on 29 September to collect Sonko's sponsorship form for the presidential election, only to be denied by the **Direction générale des élections (DGE)** (director general of elections).³ The sponsorship form is a constitutional requirement for candidates to gather 45,000 citizen endorsements.⁴ Sonko alleged that he had not been told about his removal from the electoral list, and filed a case with the **Supreme Court** on 4 October to overturn the DGE's decision, after filing another case with the **Tribunal d'instance de Ziguinchor** (district court) on 2 October against his removal from the electoral list.⁵ Sonko is the mayor of Ziguinchor and would have been registered there. Sonko's lawyers argued in the Supreme Court that the DGE does not have the power to declare a candidate ineligible, but the court ruled in favour of the DGE.⁶

However, Sonko achieved a legal victory in the district court, which on 12 October ordered that Sonko be re-enrolled on the electoral lists.⁷ Sonko's lawyers based their case on the fact that Sonko, who was sentenced in June in absentia, was arrested again on 31 July for another case. His lawyers state that according to the criminal procedure code, his two-year prison sentence should have been annulled after his re-arrest and a new trial started, essentially restarting his legal challenges but meaning that

¹ Le Quotidien, 27 Sep 2023

² Le Quotidien, 27 Sep 2023

³ Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2023

⁴ The Africa Report, 7 Oct 2023

⁵ Africanews, 4 Oct 2023

⁶ Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2023

⁷ The Africa Report, 13 Oct 2023

he was not yet convicted.⁸ Sonko's lawyers filed the formal objection to the two-year sentence in August, but there has been no movement on this, which his lawyers cited as evidence that his removal from the electoral list was premature. The state lawyers have already stated their intention to appeal the ruling with the supreme court.

Daffé returned to the DGE on 19 and 20 October to collect the sponsorship form but was once again denied. The DGE noted that while the court had ruled in Sonko's favour, his reinstatement would not be immediate, as other legal pursuits are still underway.⁹ It is clear that the government will not make Sonko's attempts to rejoin the electoral list easy and it appears to be delaying his sponsorship collection, which could disqualify him regardless. Outside of these legal battles, another challenge facing Sonko is that the government also dissolved his party, **Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité (Pastef)**, on 31 July (see *ARC Briefing Senegal Aug 2023*). Pastef launched an appeal with the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** court of justice in September to overturn this, but nothing further has been reported on it.¹⁰ If Pastef is reinstated and Sonko cannot run, the party has put in place measures to ensure it can field a candidate in the election, sending five other executives to collect DGE sponsorship forms. While the party is working hard to maintain its place in the election, the uncertainty surrounding it may be its downfall, and the likelihood of Pastef and Sonko presenting a challenge to the ruling **Alliance Pour la République (APR)**, which heads the ruling **Benno Bokk Yakaar (BBY)** coalition, is getting slimmer.

IMF staff-level agreement reached

The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** announced on 24 October that it had reached a staff-level agreement with Senegalese authorities on the policies needed to complete the IMF's first reviews of Senegal's **Extended Fund Facility (EFF)** and **Extended Credit Facility (ECF)**, which is combined with its **Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF)**.¹¹ The agreement is the outcome of an IMF staff visit to Senegal between 12 and 24 October to review progress under these arrangements. The agreement is subject to IMF board approval, which is highly likely, and will allow Senegal to benefit from \$212m under the EFF/ECF arrangement and \$63.7m under the RSF.¹²

The IMF affirmed its previous forecast that economic growth will reach 4.1% in 2023, lower than anticipated due to a tense socio-political situation in the first half of 2023 (see *ARC Briefing Senegal Sep 2023*). However, growth is expected to reach 8.3% in 2024, driven by the start of hydrocarbon production.¹³ If hydrocarbon production is delayed, growth is still expected to reach a solid 5.4%. Inflation is anticipated to drop to 6% this year, down from 9.7% in 2022, but still outside the **Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine (UEMOA)** (West African economic and monetary union) target of 3%.¹⁴ The IMF expects inflation will only reach this level again in 2025.

The IMF also noted that all performance criteria and indicative targets were met except one and that three out of six structural benchmarks had been completed. Government also committed to implementing the remaining three before the IMF board meets to review the agreement. The date of the meeting to review Senegal's agreement has not yet been announced. The IMF also encouraged Senegal to continue its efforts to exit the **Financial Action Task Force's (FATF)** grey list.

While the overall feedback from the IMF is positive, the production of hydrocarbons is in question. In August, **United Kingdom**-headquartered **BP** announced that production of the **Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA)** gas project would be delayed past the last quarter of 2023 and into 2024. Production was initially expected in 2022 but has faced several delays. **Australia**-headquartered **Woodside Energy** also announced in July that the **Sangomar** oil field's production would be delayed

⁸ The Africa Report, 13 Oct 2023

⁹ Jeune Afrique, 21 Oct 2023

¹⁰ Africanews, 19 Sep 2023

¹¹ IMF, 24 Oct 2023

¹² IMF, 24 Oct 2023

¹³ IMF, 24 Oct 2023

¹⁴ IMF, 24 Oct 2023

until mid-2024 from its initial end-of-2023 date. The cost of the project has also been revised upwards from \$4.6 billion to between \$4.9 billion and \$5.2 billion.¹⁵

Minor government reshuffle

Secretary general of the presidency **Oumar Samba Ba** announced on 6 October that President **Macky Sall** (2012-present) was dissolving the function of his government, only retaining prime minister **Amadou Ba**, whom he chose last month as his successor to run as the ruling BBY coalition's candidate.¹⁶ The new government, comprising 39 ministers, was revealed on 11 October. Ba noted in the announcement that this new government would be responsible for four key tasks over the next months, namely the organisation of the February presidential election, addressing economic and social challenges such as youth unemployment and high inflation, ensuring the adequate functioning of public sectors and finalising Sall's priority projects and launching the action plan of the **Plan Sénégal émergent (PSE)** (emerging Senegal plan) in the last quarter of 2023.¹⁷

The new government is largely the same, with the minor reshuffle focused on consolidating previous changes, including the resignation of sports minister **Yankhoba Diattara** and livestock minister **Aly Saleh Diop** in April 2023. These portfolios were temporarily given to Ba; however, with the presidential election on the horizon, this was not practical. **Daouda Dia** replaced Saleh Diop and **Lat Diop** replaced Diattara. Daouda Dia's older brother, **Harouna Dia**, was the primary sponsor of Sall's 2012 campaign, while Lat Diop is a known ally of Ba.¹⁸ Agriculture minister **Aly Ngouille Ndiaye** resigned in September over Sall's decision to appoint Ba as his successor and was replaced by **Samba Ndiobène Ka**.

Other notable changes include the appointment of former armed forces minister **Sidiki Kaba** as interior minister. Kaba, a human rights lawyer, will now be responsible for the organisation of the 2024 election. Senegal drew strong criticism for its harsh crackdown on demonstrations in the first half of 2023; appointing a human rights lawyer to organise the elections may be an attempt to address any concerns ahead of the election. Interior minister **Antoine Félix Diome** was moved to the oil docket, a significant docket for Senegal at the moment, replacing **Aïssatou Sophie Gladim**. **Oumar Youm** will replace Gladim, who has left the government. Another notable swap is that of foreign affairs minister **Aïssata Tall Sall** to the justice ministry, while justice minister **Ismaila Madior Fall** assumes the foreign affairs docket. **Mouhamadou Makhtar Cissé** also returned as chief of staff to the president, while local authorities minister **Mamadou Talla** was replaced by **Modou Diagne Fada**.

The new government will lead the country into the run-up to the elections and will be crucial in shoring up support for Ba. Distinct choices were made to ensure that allies of Sall and Ba are in the government to help this process, while also ensuring that there is a balance of the parties from the BBY coalition in government.

¹⁵ The Africa Report, 16 Aug 2023

¹⁶ Jeune Afrique, 7 Oct 2023

¹⁷ Anadolu Agency, 12 Oct 2023

¹⁸ Jeune Afrique, 13 Oct 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;

Chronology

24 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. President **Macky Sall** meets with **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** mission head **Edward Gemayel** for the last time as president. Gemayel tells Sall that his leadership has been noted, not only in Senegal but in **Africa** and thanks him for maintaining good relations between Senegal and the IMF;

24 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Soleil**. **Morocco** repatriates 184 illegal Senegalese migrants who were attempting to cross into **Spain** by sea;

23 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) RFI**. Presidential candidates including **Khalifa Sall** and **Malick Gakou** allege they are being prevented from raising sponsorship for election bids, a key part of the election process;

23 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Soleil**. **United Kingdom (UK)** and Senegal hold the first session of high-level political dialogue chaired by foreign affairs minister **Ismailia Sall** and UK Africa and development minister **Andrew Mitchell**. The two emphasise the need to deepen their partnership in order to promote peace and prosperity

16 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance**. Official data indicate that annual inflation dropped to 3.8% in September, its lowest level in six months;

11 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. Council of ministers adopts a draft decree in connection with targeted financial sanctions linked to the financing of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction;

7 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) RFI**. The public endorsement process for the selection of presidential candidates for the 2024 election begins. Over 70 people have declared their intention to run, but need to secure a minimum level of support from the public to be eligible;

7 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Sika Finance**. **Economic Community of West African States Bank for Investment and Development (EBID)** approves financing of 65 billion FCFA (\$104.75m) for two key infrastructure projects in Senegal;

7 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Soleil**. **French** navy intercepts 1,078 migrants in the last two weeks who departed from Senegal;

6 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Quotidien**. **Direction Générale des Elections** (general directorate of elections) announces that the deposit for participation in the February 2024 elections will be 30m FCFA (\$48,350), considerably lower than the 65m FCFA (\$104,758) required in the 2019 elections;

2 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Le Soleil**. Prime minister and presidential candidate for the ruling **Benno Bokk Yakaar** coalition, **Amadou Ba**, signs the coalition's ethical and political pact, cementing his candidacy'

1 Oct 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) RFI**. Five members of opposition leader **Ousmane Sonko's** party, **Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité (Pastef)**, obtain sponsorship forms for the presidential election in case the party is allowed to run;

28 Sep 2023 **Dakar (Senegal) Africanews**. **Air Senegal** and **Royal Air Maroc** sign a memorandum of understanding for a strategic partnership and to consolidate cooperation between the two airlines;

22 Sep 2023 **Dakar (Senegal)** *North Africa Post*. Senegal secures a €76m (\$80.8m) credit facility from **Togo-based West African Development Bank (BOAD)** for the implementation of two projects including the construction of a 30MW solar energy plant at **Niakhar** and a 19-km railway and associated infrastructure connecting **Blaise Diagne airport** to the **Diarniadio-IABD** network;

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