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**Contribution of Reporters Without Borders (a non-governmental organisation in special consultative status) about press freedom in SENEGAL**

**Introduction: Overview of press freedom situation**

Faced with an outcry over the imprisonment in 2004 of journalist Madiambal Diagne, President Abdoulaye Wade promised to reform the press law. Senegalese journalists are still waiting and the situation has not improved. Quite the contrary. In these circumstances, the independent press which had thoroughly applauded the changeover of political power when President Wade took office in 2000, became more and more wary or to put it another way more and more critical. Like in numerous other African countries, poverty and bitterness has fostered a press which is easily corrupted, exploited by business and political clans to outdo their rivals. In these conditions, press freedom is a precarious quality in Senegal. The politicians are the main beneficiaries, making use of badly or unpaid journalists to settle their scores with opponents through bogus “revelations”.

The journalists of these scandal sheets are, by way of consequence, frequent targets of the police and the justice, using an archaic piece of legislation that provides prison terms for journalists. Even though scores of newspapers appear in Dakar, no serious tools exist to handle the regulation of the media and no legislation exist to sanction fairly the journalists responsible for libel or publication of false news.

**1. Online freedom**

Reporters Without Borders has not observed any special problems with the free flow of news online in Senegal.

**2. Government steps to improve the situation**

No specific steps were taken by the government this year to improve the situation.

### **3. Working with non-governmental organisations (NGO)**

Reporters Without Borders deplores the lack of political will from the government to cooperate on the reform of the press law, for example, or to show more transparency and openness to proposals made by local or international NGOs whenever a journalist is arrested.

### **4. Recommendations**

- The government of Senegal should scrap the existing press law and adopt a new legislation adapted to democratic standards, eliminating prison terms for press offenses and providing a credible regulation tool for the media.
- The armed forces (police and army) should receive training on human rights and press freedom, while mechanisms of sanctions should be put in place in order to tackle the impunity benefiting some elements of law enforcement whenever the attack or wrongfully detain journalists.

*The data in this report has been gathered and verified by Reporters Without Borders, which has a network of correspondents in 130 countries and partner organisations in a score of countries.*

*In some countries, a journalist can be imprisoned for several years just for a word or a photo someone does not like. Reporters Without Borders, founded in 1985, works daily to support press freedom because imprisoning or killing a journalist removes a key witness and threatens the right of all of us to be kept informed of the news.*

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