



May 9, 2024

Senegal: New administration should prioritize media freedom and safety of journalists

For the attention of His Excellency, President Bassirou Diomaye Faye

Cc. Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko; Minister of Communication, Telecommunications and Digital Economy, Mr Alioune Sall and the Minister of Justice Mr. Ousmane Diagne

Your Excellency,

We, a group of international and regional organizations dedicated to the protection of press freedom, are writing to urge you to prioritize the protection of media freedom, access to information, and journalist safety under your presidency.

Over decades, Senegal has stood out in Africa for its strong commitment to press freedom. However, we are concerned about the rise in attacks on independent journalism and free expression in Senegal, particularly over the past three years. As you assume your office as president, we urge you to use this opportunity to protect and defend media freedom and restore the country's standing as a beacon of press freedom and democracy in the region.

A free and independent press is essential for a healthy democracy as it allows citizens to access information, hold their leaders accountable, and participate meaningfully in public discourse.

Senegal has obligations at regional and international levels to uphold these fundamental freedoms in terms of various treaties, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention Against Torture, and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

We urge your government to take concrete actions to uphold media freedom and freedom of expression and improve the operating environment for journalists in Senegal. This includes publicly condemning all threats and attacks against journalists; conducting thorough investigations into all attacks on journalists and ensuring that those responsible are held accountable. Additionally, Senegal should reform laws that restrict press freedom and freedom of expression, for example, the Press Code and the Criminal Law Code, in line with regional and international standards. It is also critical to ensure that journalists have access to information during events of public interest including protests and electoral processes; and maintain access to the internet and social media platforms at all times, more so, during times of conflict, or civil and political unrest.

Adopting an access to information law that aligns with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights Model Law on Access To Information in Africa will further enable an environment where media and civic movements can request and access information of public interest. It is also important to undertake rapid reforms to transform the state media to be accountable to the public and provide information that is in the public interest. It is also critical to strengthen the independence of the broadcast media regulatory body while launching an inclusive and participatory dialogue for social media regulation.

By taking these steps, your government can send a strong message that Senegal is committed to protecting media freedom and ensuring the safety of journalists. This will not only benefit journalists but also strengthen Senegal's democracy and promote a more informed and engaged citizenry.

We stand ready to work with your administration to advance media freedom and journalist safety in Senegal. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss your priorities for defending media freedom and how we can support them.

Sincerely,

ARTICLE 19 Senegal and West Africa

International Press Institute

Media Foundation for West Africa

Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

Paradigm Initiative (PIN)

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

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