

PRESS RELEASE

February 6, 2024

WADEMOS STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH SENEGALESE CIVIL SOCIETY ON THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE FEBRUARY 25 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

We, the West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network (WADEMOS), a network of over 45 pro-democracy national and transnational civil society organizations working in the West Africa region, having monitored and followed with keen interest and concern the recent political developments in Senegal, stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters and the civil society community in Senegal in their just opposition to President Macky Sall's decision to postpone the country's Presidential election originally scheduled for February 25, 2024.

The unilateral action of President Macky Sall, which has thrust his country into a needless political and constitutional crisis, represents a disappointing setback for Senegal, a blot on the image of a country that has made steady and exemplary progress in building a stable democratic society underpinned by respect for the rule of law and an unbroken tradition of regular, free, fair and inclusive elections.

While we take note of the reasons offered by President Sall for his unprecedented action, we underscore the concerns and objections raised by Senegalese civil society and a broad spectrum of Senegalese political society, including, notably, that the President's action affronts the Constitution of the Republic of Senegal in multiple ways. The President's unilateral action, announced when scheduled elections were less than a month away, also contravenes the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, Section 2, Article 2(1) which expressly frowns upon any reform or change in the electoral laws or processes "six months preceding elections, without the consent of a large majority of political players."

We strongly oppose the decision by the Senegalese parliament to postpone the elections until December 15, and condemn the questionable circumstances under which the decision was reached. The date, which extends the term of President Sall, sets a dangerous and unlawful precedent for Senegal and the region. We support Senegalese civil society, and pro-democracy actors call for a new date to be set, through an inclusive process, that doesn't extend President Sall's tenure beyond the constitutionally mandated term limit. We wish to remind President Sall of the pledge he made to the people of Senegal, in his address to the nation on July 3, 2023, that he has no desire or intention to stay in power beyond the end of his constitutionally mandated term.

We endorse the urgent calls to cease the ongoing arrests or detention of opposition candidates, attacks on MPs who oppose the extension of elections beyond President Sall's term, the shutdown of media and crackdown on free expression, and threats to the independence of the Constitutional Council.

We urge the people of Senegal to keep their protests peaceful and non-violent, and entreat the state authorities to exercise maximum restraint, consistent with respect for the sanctity of

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human life, in the manner of their response to citizens who are merely exercising their democratic and constitutional right to express their justified displeasure and anger at these disturbing developments. We implore all segments of Senegalese society to work together to find a peaceful and quick resolution to the crisis provoked by the President's action.

Conscious of accusations of double standards levelled against ECOWAS regarding its different responses to antidemocratic or unconstitutional acts depending on the identity or nature of the perpetrator, we strongly urge ECOWAS to seize this opportunity to send an unequivocal message that it stands resolute in its commitment to defend democracy and the rule of law in the region and enforce its Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will toward any regime or political leader. ECOWAS must not let the people of Senegal and the region down.

Long live democracy!

-End-

Signatories:

1. West Africa Civil Society Initiative (WACSI)
2. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)
3. Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA)
4. The Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (RADDHO-Senegal)
5. AfricTivistes (Senegal)
6. AfrikaJom Center (Senegal)
7. WATHI Think tank (Senegal)
8. Goree Institute (Senegal)
9. Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana)
10. Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG-Ghana)
11. Council on Foreign Relations Ghana (Ghana)
12. Africa Center for International Law and Accountability (Ghana)
13. Gender Centre for Empowering Development (GenCED-Ghana)
14. CDD-West Africa (Nigeria)
15. Transition Monitoring Group (Nigeria)
16. Women in Politics Forum (Nigeria)
17. Yiaga Africa (Nigeria)
18. Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC)
19. The Centre for the Democratic Governance (Burkina Faso)
20. Le Balai Citoyen (Burkina Faso)
21. Centre d'Information et de Documentation Citoyennes
22. AFLED (Mali)
23. Réseau ONG d'Appui au Processus Electoral au Mali - Réseau APEM (Mali)
24. Education for a culture of Peace and Citizenship, Human Rights Defense (Mali)
25. Youth Association for Active Citizenship and Democracy (AJCAD) (Mali)
26. Coalition for Citizen Observation of Elections (Mali)

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27. Sahelian.com (Mali)
28. Institute Sahelien pour la Gouvernance
29. Statview International (Guinea)
30. ABLOGUE
31. Citoyen pour la Paix et la Justice (Guinea)
32. Femmes Actions et Developpement (Niger)
33. Alternative Espace Citoyen (Niger)
34. Coalition des Organisations Nigériennes des Droits de l'Enfant (Niger)
35. Network of Women Leader for Development (Benin)
36. Social Watch (Benin)
37. Forum Cabo-Verdiano da Sociedade Civil (Cabo Verde)
38. Instituto Pedro Pires (Cabo Verde)
39. Institute for Research and Democratic Development (Liberia)
40. Center for Democratic Governance (Liberia)
41. Clinique d'Expertise Juridique et social (Togo)
42. National Civil Society Consultation (Togo)
43. Pan African Lawyers Union
44. National Election Watch (Sierra Leone)
45. Campaign for Good Governance (Sierra Leone)
46. Sindicato de Jornalistas e Tecnicos de Comunicacao (Guinea Bissau)
47. Center for Research and Policy Development (CRPD) (Cote d'Ivoire)

About WADEMOS

WADEMOS is an independent and a non-partisan network of diverse national and transnational civil society organizations and civic groups working to promote and defend democracy, good governance and inclusive development in the West Africa region. WADEMOS mobilizes, coordinates, and leverages the collective voice and power of civil society and other pro-democracy actors, resources, and opportunities within the West Africa region to advance its mission. The current membership of WADEMOS stands at 47 spread across West Africa. The WADEMOS Secretariat is based in Accra, Ghana.

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