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Africa - Senegal

Outrageous decision

Newspaper closed, jail terms for editor, reporter and intern

30 August 2013

Reporters Without Borders is appalled by a Dakar criminal court's decision yesterday to close the privately-owned newspaper *Le Quotidien* for three months and sentence its editor, **Madiambal Diagne**, to a month in prison and a damages of 10 million CFA francs (15,000 euros) for an article criticizing a former foreign minister.

The court also imposed one-month jail terms on one of the newspaper's reporters, **Mamadou Biaye**, and a French intern who is no longer in Senegal. The case was brought by former foreign minister Alioune Badara Cissé – usually referred to as "ABC" in the Senegalese media – over an article published on 20 June.

"The court's decision is highly regrettable because it means the authorities are refusing to defend media freedom," Reporters Without Borders said. "Despite repeated calls by journalists and the international community, the decriminalization of press offences is still not on the agenda in Senegal."

Reporters Without Borders added: "We urge the courts to immediately overturn the sentences passed on *Le Quotidien* and its personnel."

The article that elicited a libel suit from the former minister was headlined: "Fired by the government, challenged and shunned by his own party... the ABC of solitude." Cissé originally demanded 5 billion CFA francs (7.6 million euros) in damages.

The suit led to Biaye's dismissal and the French intern's return to France.

Le Quotidien, which was not represented at the trial, intends to appeal.

Madiambal Diagne has already been incarcerated in July 2004 for "spreading news liable to provoke serious political turmoil and discredit government institutions." [Read Reporters Without Borders' press release in French.](#)

Senegal is ranked 59th out of 179 countries in the [2013 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

Photo: Madiambal Diagne reads his newspaper (AFP).

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