



Covering events from January - December 2000

## SENEGAL

### Republic of Senegal

**Head of state:** Abdoulaye Wade (replaced Abdou Diouf in March)

**Head of government:** Moustapha Niasse

**Capital:** Dakar

**Population:** 9.4 million

**Official language:** French

**Death penalty:** abolitionist in practice

**2000 treaty ratifications/signatures:**

Optional Protocol to the UN Children's Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict; Optional Protocol to the UN Women's Convention



**Despite peace moves, there was continued tension in the disputed region of Casamance between members of the government and the *Mouvement des Forces démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC)*, Democratic Forces of Casamance Movement, an armed opposition group claiming independence for Casamance. The number of human rights violations lessened in comparison with previous years, although the security forces in Casamance were responsible for several cases of extrajudicial executions, "disappearances" and torture. About 30 suspected MFDC sympathizers remained in prison without trial at the end of 2000. Most appeared to be prisoners of conscience who had been arrested because they were members of the Diola community. Members of the MFDC also continued to commit human rights abuses against civilians. In July, a Senegalese court dismissed charges of complicity in acts of torture against former Chadian leader Hissein Habré on the grounds that it could not prosecute crimes committed in Chad.**

### Background

Attempts to find a peaceful solution to the 18-year-old conflict in the Casamance region continued throughout 2000. In February, peace talks which took place in Banjul, Gambia, led to the setting up of a joint mission composed of members of the government and the MFDC to monitor a cease-fire agreement. In December a first formal meeting was held in Ziguinchor between the Senegalese authorities and the leader of the MFDC, Father Diamacoune Senghor. Among the issues on the agenda were the future of army bases, the freeing of prisoners, the return of displaced people and the implementation of development projects in Casamance. Nevertheless, tension remained high in the conflict area throughout 2000, leading

to border problems with neighbouring Guinea-Bissau, from where suspected members of the MFDC launched attacks against Senegalese soldiers and civilians in Casamance.

Presidential elections were held in March and for the first time since independence in 1960, the candidate of the ruling Socialist Party, the incumbent President Abdou Diouf, lost power. Abdoulaye Wade, head of a coalition of opposition parties, became head of state. He immediately announced a constitutional referendum to allow him to dissolve the National Assembly, where the Socialist Party had a majority, and to hold new legislative elections. This referendum was due to take place in November but was postponed until early 2001.

### **Detention without trial**

About 30 suspected MFDC sympathizers remained in prison without trial at the end of 2000 in Dakar and Kolda. Most of these detainees appeared to be prisoners of conscience, arbitrarily arrested because they were members of the Diola community. Most of them were charged with "threatening state security" but no evidence was ever produced as to their individual responsibility for acts of violence.

In Kolda, at least four nationals of Guinea-Bissau remained in detention without trial at the end of 2000. The reasons for their arrest remained unclear. There was serious concern about the conditions in which people were detained in Kolda as no human rights organization - neither the Senegalese *Rencontre africaine pour la défense des droits de l'homme* (RADDHO), African Conference for the Defence of Human Rights, nor the *Liga Guineense Dos Direitos Humanos*, Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League - was allowed access to them, despite repeated requests.

### **Extrajudicial executions and 'disappearances' in Casamance**

The number of human rights violations lessened in comparison with previous years, notably after April 2000, when a new army commander was appointed in Ziguinchor. However, the security forces in Casamance were responsible for several cases of extrajudicial executions, "disappearances" and torture.

- Momany Tendeng was reported to have been extrajudicially executed in January by soldiers near a military camp in Nyassia. Two other young people, Daniel Sambou and Denis Sambou, were shot dead in March by soldiers who forced other civilians to bury them.
- Several people "disappeared" after being arrested by the security forces, including Jean Dacougna, a 40-year-old mentally ill man arrested in February in Ziguinchor, and Ephène Diatta, arrested in Kabrousse in March. Both remained unaccounted for at the end of 2000.

### **Abuses by the MFDC**

Despite the cease-fire agreement accepted by the MFDC leader, some elements of the armed wing of the MFDC continued to commit human rights abuses against civilians. In February, armed groups shelled the area of Niaguis, apparently to deter the population from voting in the presidential election. Throughout 2000, civilians were attacked while they were in cars or in the fields and their belongings were stolen by alleged members of the MFDC. In April, for the first time, Father Diamacoune Senghor publicly condemned the armed attacks launched by one of the military leaders of the armed wing MFDC, Salif Sadio, and protested against

the fact that these armed groups refused to obey him and to respect the cease-fire agreement.

**Impunity: the Habré case**

In February, Hisssein Habré, former President of Chad, who found refuge in Senegal in 1991, was indicted on charges of complicity in acts of torture following a criminal complaint filed in January by Chadian victims and a coalition of non-governmental organizations. Hisssein Habré was placed under house arrest while investigations into the charges against him began. In July, a Senegalese court dismissed the charges on the grounds that it could not prosecute crimes committed in Chad. AI was disappointed by the court ruling that Senegal could not exercise universal jurisdiction over torture in Chad. The coalition of non-governmental organizations appealed against the decision to the Court of Cassation, which had not given its ruling by the end of 2000.

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