

Senegalese authorities arrest critical journalist Adama Gaye

Authorities in Senegal should immediately release and drop all charges against journalist Adama Gaye, the Committee to Protect Journalists said.



A man looks at new paper front pages in Dakar, on February 25, 2019, one day after Senegal's presidential elections. Senegalese authorities arrested critical journalist Adama Gaye on July 29. Credit: CPJ/AFP/Seylou.

Gaye, an independent journalist and commentator who has contributed to Senegalese and international news agencies including [Kapital Afrik](#), [Jeune Afrique](#), [France24](#), [TV5Monde](#), and [Al-Jazeera](#), was arrested on July 29 at his home in Dakar, Senegal's capital, by the police's Criminal Investigation Division, and on July 31 was charged with acting to compromise public security and offending the president before being taken to Dakar's Rebeuss prison, according to Christian Faye and Koureichi Ba, two of Gaye's lawyers, who spoke to CPJ over the phone and by messaging app, and [news reports](#).

According to Faye and Ba, Gaye was charged under Article 80, relating to compromising public security, and Article 254, relating to offending the president, of [Senegal's penal code](#), which carry maximum punishments of five and two years' imprisonment, respectively, and fines of 1.5 million Central African Francs (US\$2,560) each.

Faye said that Gaye was arrested and charged for [Facebook posts](#) critical of Senegalese President Macky Sall, in which he alleged Sall was having an extramarital affair; Gaye has about 8,300 followers for his [public Facebook page](#). Gaye is also an outspoken critic of the Senegalese government, according to Faye, Cheikh Ndiaye, another of Gaye's lawyers, and [broadcasts](#) reviewed by CPJ.

In recent years, Gaye has repeatedly criticized, in [local TV appearances](#) and in writing in [online publications](#) and on [social media](#), the government for its management of oil and gas, including a deal with the Petro-Tim corporation, according to Faye and Ndiaye. That deal was the focus of a June 2019 [BBC documentary](#), "The \$10 Billion Energy Scandal," which [alleged](#) that Sall's brother had profited from the deal, an allegation his brother denied. Gaye told the French news agency [Agence France-Presse](#) in a phone interview July 30 that he was "a political detainee held for his writing about exact facts, questions that are vital for the national sovereignty of Senegal, particularly the management of hydro-carbon resources."

"Adama Gaye's criticism of the Senegalese government is no reason for him to be arrested or charged, and Senegalese

authorities should drop the charges and release him immediately,” said CPJ Africa program coordinator Angela Quintal. “Furthermore, the government should refrain from abusing security laws and should get rid of the colonial-era insult law altogether.”

Faye told CPJ that Gaye’s next court date had not been set and that Gaye would remain in detention until he was able to appear before a judge and apply for provisional release.

On July 30, Senegalese Justice Minister Malick Sall—who is not related to the president—said he assumed “total responsibility” for Gaye’s case, according to a video published by the local news site [Dakaractu](#). “I cannot, personally, as a Minister of Justice, see an individual, by his writings, his statements, spend his time insulting the one who embodies the most serious institution, the most prominent of our State: the President of the Republic,” Sall said in French.

When contacted by phone, Tabara Ndiaye, a spokesperson for the Senegalese police, told CPJ that Gaye was first arrested for disseminating writing that was morally contrary. Ndiaye said the prosecutor had since changed the reasons for the arrest and that it was only the job of the police to arrest individuals, not decide if or why charges should be brought.

CPJ’s calls to Senegal’s government spokesperson, Abdou Latif Couibaly, went unanswered.

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