

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. _____

Reinforcing the United States-Senegal relationship and urging the Government of Senegal to conduct free, fair, transparent, and inclusive elections on February 25, 2024.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. CARDIN (for himself and Mr. RISCH) submitted the following resolution;
which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Reinforcing the United States-Senegal relationship and urging the Government of Senegal to conduct free, fair, transparent, and inclusive elections on February 25, 2024.

Whereas Senegal has been one of the most stable democracies in Africa, having peaceful, democratic transfers of power in 2000 and 2012, and never suffering a military coup d'état;

Whereas Senegal is as a regional leader and advocate for democracy in West Africa, having made important contributions to a democratic transition in The Gambia and pressing military juntas in Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger to restore democracy and yield power to civilian elected authorities;

Whereas Senegal is one of the United States' closest partners in Africa;

Whereas the United States allocated \$144,000,000 in bilateral assistance to Senegal in fiscal year 2022 focused primarily on health, agriculture, basic education, and good governance;

Whereas Senegal completed a \$540,000,000 United States Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact in 2015 focused on increasing agricultural productivity and is now implementing a second, five-year \$550,000,000 MCC compact focused on increasing access to electricity and has pledged \$50,000,000 of its own resources toward this project;

Whereas Senegalese security forces have long benefitted from United States security assistance and cooperation designed to increase professionalism, support United Nations peacekeeping deployments, and enhance Senegal's ability to conduct maritime security, counter violent extremism, and combat narcotics trafficking;

Whereas President Macky Sall was elected to a second and final term in office in 2019 in elections that were generally regarded as free and fair, despite the disqualification of two prominent opposition party leaders due to prior corruption convictions;

Whereas, in July 2023, President Sall announced that he would retire in 2024, after insinuating that he would pursue a third term, in accordance with the Senegalese constitution which limits presidents to two terms in office, thereby becoming the first president in Senegalese history to respect constitutionally mandated term limits and set-

ting in important precedent for future presidents of Senegal;

Whereas the February 2024 election will be the first presidential election in Senegalese history without an incumbent president on the ballot;

Whereas, according to Afrobarometer public opinion polling, the Senegalese people prefer democracy to any alternative (84 percent), believe the president should be limited to two terms in office (79 percent), and reject the concept of military rule (71 percent);

Whereas, according to the same polling, the Senegalese people say their country is either not a democracy or a democracy with major problems (53 percent, an 8 percent increase since 2021), and are not satisfied with the way democracy is working in Senegal (51 percent);

Whereas Freedom House lowered Senegal's rating from "Free" to "Partly Free" in 2020 due to the "politically motivated prosecutions of opposition leaders" and electoral law changes that "reduced the competitiveness of the opposition";

Whereas Reporters Without Borders warned of an increasingly threatening press environment in advance of the 2022 legislative elections and the government arrested and jailed journalists under a new 2021 law for allegedly disseminating "fake news" to "discredit public institutions" or "prejudice public decency";

Whereas state security forces in Senegal responded with excessive force and took steps to restrict freedom of assembly in 2021, 2022 and 2023 in response to public protests;

Whereas three people were killed and as many as 200 arrested, including opposition party leaders, during protests in advance of the 2022 legislative elections after the government disqualified several opposition party candidates;

Whereas the Government of Senegal blocked access to several social media networks for two days and mobile internet for four days in June 2023 seemingly in an effort to disrupt opposition party protests;

Whereas as many as 16 people were killed and hundreds arrested following opposition party protests in 2023; and

Whereas the Government of Senegal continues to impose restrictions on public protests and the exercise of freedom of assembly that are inconsistent with democratic norms:
Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) reiterates the commitment of the United
3 States to democracy and democratic governance in
4 Senegal and the conduct of free, fair, inclusive, and
5 peaceful elections, and calls on—

6 (A) the Secretary of State to make clear
7 that those who perpetrate or incite violence or
8 otherwise undermine the democratic process
9 and the 2024 elections in Senegal will face consequences, including visa restrictions and other
10 accountability measures; and

11 (B) the Administrator of the United States
12 Agency for International Development to continue to support domestic election observation,
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1 electoral dispute resolution mechanisms, partici-
2 pation of women and youth in the electoral
3 process, respect for freedom of assembly, ex-
4 pression, and association, government trans-
5 parency, conflict resolution, and civil society or-
6 ganizations focused on good governance, anti-
7 corruption, and accountability for government
8 institutions;

9 (2) applauds the work of Senegalese civil soci-
10 ety organizations dedicated to electoral reform, voter
11 education, election observation, accountability for se-
12 curity force abuses, and respect for freedom of as-
13 sembly, expression, and association;

14 (3) encourages all people of Senegal to exercise
15 their right to vote and to refrain from acts of vio-
16 lence, voter malfeasance, inflammatory speech and
17 disinformation, or any other actions that violate
18 democratic norms or otherwise undermine the elec-
19 toral process in Senegal;

20 (4) calls on the Government of Senegal to—

21 (A) release all those arbitrarily arrested or
22 detained for exercising their right to freedom of
23 assembly or freedom of expression;

24 (B) respect the non-partisan nature of the
25 Autonomous National Electoral Commission

1 (CENA) and its efforts to ensure a transparent
2 and accessible electoral process;

3 (C) lift restrictions on the right to peaceful
4 protest and commit to respect the freedom of
5 expression, including for the press, and freedom
6 of assembly;

7 (D) ensure that Senegalese citizens can
8 vote freely and safely in elections without fear
9 of intimidation or use of excessive force by gov-
10 ernment security forces; and

11 (E) refrain from using restrictions on ac-
12 cess to the internet or social media as a method
13 for disrupting citizens' ability to assemble, exer-
14 cise their freedom of expression, communicate
15 freely, or obtain information; and

16 (5) urges political parties and political leaders
17 in Senegal to—

18 (A) publicly commit to abide by electoral
19 norms and reject violence;

20 (B) refrain from any statements, inflam-
21 matory rhetoric, or actions that incite violence
22 or otherwise undermine the electoral process;
23 and

1 (C) commit to channel any and all electoral
2 related disputes through appropriate legal chan-
3 nels.