



# **Elections in Senegal**

## *March 25 Run-off Presidential Election*

### Frequently Asked Questions

Africa

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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*Disclosure:*

*These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Senegalese elections authorities as of March 23, 2012, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.*

## **What were the results of the first round of the presidential election on February 26?**

On Tuesday, March 6, two days before the official deadline, the Constitutional Council of Senegal announced the final results of the first round of the presidential election. The candidates who obtained the most votes were as follows:

- Abdoulaye Wade (incumbent): 34.81%
- Macky Sall: 26.58%
- Moustapha Niasse: 13.20%
- Ousmane Tanor Dieng: 11.30%
- Idrissa Seck: 7.86%

## **What was the voter turnout rate?**

Voter turnout for the first round was 51.58 percent. This is significantly lower than it has been in recent years, with turnout rates of 70.62 percent and 62.23 percent for the 2007 and 2000 presidential elections, respectively.

## **Which political parties will be represented in the second round?**

Abdoulaye Wade represents the political party in power, *Parti Démocratique Sénégalais* (PDS), and is competing as the candidate of the Coalition of Allied Forces for Victory (FAL 2012), while Macky Sall leads the *Alliance pour la République* (APR).

All 12 losing candidates from the first round election and other prominent opinion leaders, including the *Movement Y'en a Marre* and popular singer Youssou N'Dour, have come together to support Macky Sall under the banner of the coalition *Benno Bokk Yaakaar*.

## **When will the results be announced?**

The provisional results of the election will be announced, at the latest, on Friday, March 30. If there are no complaints filed by either party, the final results should be announced 72 hours after the provisional results are made public. That means final results would be announced, at the latest, on April 2.

However, if there is a call for recount of votes or other complaints are filed, the final results will be announced on April 7, at the latest. During the first round election, provisional and final results were announced a couple of days early. It is possible results will be announced early again for the second round.

## **Who is eligible to vote?**

There is universal suffrage in Senegal. This means that all Senegalese nationals 18 and above have the right to vote in the run-off elections.

## **How are elections structured for the first round?**

The president is elected by an absolute majority vote through a two-round system.

In the first round of voting, all candidates compete against one another. If no one candidate is able to get more than 50 percent of total votes cast, a second round of voting will take place. In the second round, the two candidates with the highest percentages of votes obtained in the first round will face each other. These two candidates, formally announced by the Constitutional Council, will compete against each other and the one with the most votes will be come into office for a seven-year term.

## **How are elections structured for the second round?**

Since none of the candidates obtained an absolute majority in the first round, a second round of voting will need to take place in order to elect the next president of Senegal. In this second round, only a plurality of votes (a relative majority) is required in order for a candidate to win the election.

The Senegalese Constitution stipulates that the second round must take place on the third Sunday following the publication of final election results by the Constitutional Council. Therefore, the second round of the election will happen on March 25, 2012. Incumbent President Abdoulaye Wade, who has been in power for 12 years and seeks a controversial third term in office, will compete in the run-off against former Prime Minister Macky Sall.

## **What is the opposition against incumbent President Wade's candidacy?**

The leading opposition movement, the M23 – comprised of main opposition parties and civil society organizations – strongly opposes the Constitutional Council's decision to allow President Wade to run for another term.

Since the decision was announced, there have been an increasing number of protests organized by the opposition movement with the hope that mass mobilization will persuade President Wade to withdraw from the race. Because the Senegalese Constitution establishes a two-term limit for the president of the Republic, the opposition believes that the Court's decision to allow a third term in office is a constitutional coup d'état.

However, according to President Wade and his political party, his intention to run for a third term does not violate the Senegalese Constitution. When Wade originally came into office in 2000, the constitution did not establish term limits for the presidency. A year later, in 2001, the constitution was amended to include a two-term limit on presidents.

Although Wade approved this change at the time, he is now asserting that his first term in power should not be counted toward the maximum of two terms, as he came into office before the new regulations.

## **What is the role of the Senegalese judiciary in the electoral process?**

Senegal has a history of electoral democracy that has been cited as an example for the rest of West Africa. Past elections have been viewed as fair and free of intervention from institutions such as courts or councils.

The Senegalese Constitution calls for a judiciary branch that is independent from executive and legislative branches of government. However, the opposition movement and other analysts have voiced concern that the Constitutional Council's decision to allow President Wade to run demonstrates a lack of independence on the part of the judiciary.

Further, President Wade awarded significant pay raises to members of the Constitutional Council a few weeks before their ruling on the final candidates for the election. Unfortunately, few trusted that the Constitutional Council would be able to act impartially during the presidential elections. The Constitutional Council is responsible for announcing final results and adjudicating electoral disputes.

## **How long is the campaign period?**

All presidential candidates are allowed to start campaigning 21 days before the first round of voting takes place, which means campaigning started on February 6.

For the second round, candidates may start their follow-up campaign as soon as the announcement with the finalized list of candidates is made. On the day of the election, any activity that could be considered electoral propaganda is disallowed.

## **What other elections are coming up?**

Legislative elections are planned for June 17, 2012, where the Senegalese will elect new members for the General Assembly. Senatorial elections are scheduled for September, where 35 senators will be elected by an electoral college consisting of locally elected officials – the other 65 are appointed by the president.

Local government elections are scheduled to take place in 2014.