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### **Installation of the new Senegalese deputies: the gendarmes invade the National Assembly!**

What is happening in Senegal that during the installation of new Members of Parliament, the national gendarmerie intervenes to prevent opposition members from voting the new president of the national assembly?



Rarely has Senegalese democracy been so endangered by what happened on September 12. Indeed, this day was the day when the new members elected during the legislative elections of July 31, 2022 took office. As a reminder, for the first time in Senegal, the President's party and its allies does not have an absolute majority in the new national assembly after these elections.

#### ***What explains the presence of the national gendarmerie in the Chamber?***

Due to deep disagreements between the presidential majority and the opposition, the vote to elect the new president of the National Assembly was short-lived. Indeed, the opposition denounced incompatibilities through the presence of government ministers who were also elected from the

presidential camp for the new legislature. According to the opposition, under the principle of separation of powers between the executive and the legislature, these ministers should have first resigned from their positions in the government before being able to sit in the national assembly and thus participate in the vote. The presidential majority and the ministers concerned argued the opposite, saying that Senegalese law and the rules of procedure of the National Assembly gave them eight days to choose between remaining in government or sitting in the National Assembly. Neither side would give in!

The situation quickly degenerated with, on the one hand, the forcing of the presidential camp wanting, at any cost, to override and thus proceed to the vote for the election of the president of the national assembly; on the other hand, the categorical refusal of the opposition, which demanded the departure of the three ministers concerned before voting and the verification of the ballots suspicious in its eyes<sup>ii</sup>! This was the starting point of an indescribable cacophony, made of fights and fistfights between members of the presidential camp and those of the opposition. It was at this moment that the presidential camp decided to call in the national gendarmerie to allow its members to vote. By force, some would say! In any case, never before has such a situation occurred in Senegal. We can therefore speak of a scandal for democracy with the interference of the national gendarmerie in the hemicycle! Alioune Tine<sup>iii</sup>, president of the NGO Afrika Jom Center, states the following: « *Unprecedented image in the annals, we elect a president of the National Assembly with the presence of the gendarmerie inside the hemicycle. This is the image of a serious political crisis that shows the excessive polarization and the excessive political mistrust. The country is sick* ».

Unfortunately, this tense situation is likely to continue, as the opposition has warned that it will never again allow this to happen. Moreover, during the setting up of the various committees of the National Assembly, there was again unrest this time when a member from the presidential camp wanted to vote by proxy in place of another member from the presidential camp, who expressly said that she did not want to give her vote to the presidential camp.

In the end, the qualitative change so hoped for and promised by the opposition in the functioning of the Senegalese National Assembly is still likely to take time, because the main political actors, particularly the MPs, do not yet seem sufficiently mature to overcome their divisions and differences in order to guarantee the proper functioning of democracy. Indeed, in the past, the Senegalese parliament has often been criticized for its passivity and inertia, or even its refusal to control government action. Similarly, the opposition, which has entered the new parliament in force, had promised an assembly of change and

quality. However, the first public debates and the many tensions do not augur well and could lead to a deadlock in parliament. The road to democracy still seems long!

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<sup>i</sup> <https://laviesenegalaise.com/installation-des-deputes-les-gendarmes-font-irruption-dans-lassemblee-nationale/>

<sup>ii</sup> [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2022/09/13/bagarres-insultes-et-micro-arrache-au-senegal-une-rentree-parlementaire-mouvementee\\_6141415\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2022/09/13/bagarres-insultes-et-micro-arrache-au-senegal-une-rentree-parlementaire-mouvementee_6141415_3212.html)

<sup>iii</sup> [https://www.jotaay.net/Le-coup-de-gueule-de-Alioune-Tine\\_a27639.html](https://www.jotaay.net/Le-coup-de-gueule-de-Alioune-Tine_a27639.html)