

Arrest of Coline Fay in Senegal: Democracy at risk and a silent European Union

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The Party of the European Left (EL) is deeply concerned by the arrest and detention of Coline Fay, a 26-year-old French citizen and environmental and anti-imperialist activist.

Coline Fay was arrested on Friday November 24 for taking part in a peaceful rally on November 17 with 6 other people in front of the Supreme Court. According to Senegalese media reports, a judicial investigation has been opened against the activists for “acts and maneuvers likely to compromise public security” and “plotting against the authority of the State”. In addition to these charges, Ms. Fay is being prosecuted for “illegal residence” in Senegal and has been placed in detention.

Coline Fay, a committed political activist, and her co-defendants are in prison while exercising their fundamental right to take part in a non-violent rally. This arrest, which takes place against a backdrop of undermined democracy, raises serious concerns about respect for civil and political rights in Senegal. Samira Daoud, Regional Director for West and Central Africa at Amnesty International said: “in the run-up to the 2024 presidential election, the Senegalese authorities are weakening the protection of human rights in the country by repressing press freedom and freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, banning demonstrations organized by opposition parties and failing to respect the rights to justice, transparency and truth of the victims of the use of lethal force.”

The EL strongly condemns this flagrant violation of fundamental freedoms and calls on the Senegalese authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Mrs Fay, as well as all political prisoners currently incarcerated in the country. By depriving citizens of their right to freedom of expression and repressing dissenting voices, the Senegalese regime is seriously compromising the democratic principles on which our society is founded.

The EL is particularly alarmed by the European Union’s silence in the face of these human rights violations in Senegal. And it is astonished that the authorities continue to receive the Senegalese President, Macky Sall, with all due respect, without mentioning the repression of associative and political activists in a country once known for respecting the fundamental freedoms of its citizens. More than 1,000 activists and political leaders are being held in preventive detention on charges including “calling for insurrection”, “defamation of a constituted body”, “undermining state security” and others. Since March 2021, the repression of opposition demonstrations by the forces of law and order has resulted in the deaths of several dozen people and several hundred injuries. The EL demands that the European Union take a firm and unanimous stand for the immediate release of political prisoners and respect for civil and political rights in Senegal.

The EL calls on the European Commission, France and all the countries of the European Union, as well as the entire international community, to mobilize and act quickly to put pressure on the Senegalese government, so that this unjustified repression ceases and democracy regains its place in this country.

The EL remains vigilant to developments in the situation and will continue to support all human rights defenders and democracy activists, wherever they may be in the world in general and in Senegal in particular.

The Party of the European Left (EL)



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