

## 226/99 : Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes du Sénégal (UNSAS) / Senegal

### Summary of Facts

1. The Complainant is a trade union congress *Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes du Sénégal* (National Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Senegal), known by its acronym UNSAS. It claims that on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1998, at 6:20 am, the Senegalese government caused the arrest of Mr. Mademba Sock, Secretary General of UNSAS and of the *Syndicat Unique des Travailleurs de l'Electricité* (SUTELEC), as well as 25 delegates and members of SUTELEC's executive. According to the Complainant, these arrests were made in flagrant violation of labour freedoms. The detainees were kept for four days without the opportunity of communicating with their counsel or their relations. This, according to UNSAS, constitutes violation of the provisions of [Article 10 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), which is incorporated into Senegal's constitution.

2. UNSAS and other unions, joined by broad sectors of the labour world, mobilised themselves to push for the release of the detainees and their return to their posts, as well as for the opening of negotiations with the government with a strong concern for preserving social peace. Since then, the peaceful demonstrations that have been regularly declared have been subjected to unwarranted prohibitions on the part of the public authorities and "fierce" repression, which has spared neither the head office of the union (regardless of the principle of inviolability of trade union premises, as recognised in ILO conventions), nor private residences.

3. The Complainant also states that the legal action brought against the detainees has yet to show any sign of respect for the right of access to defence counsel. In support of this view, the Complainant states that the court had upheld its demands when it ordered the results of the preliminary investigation to be set aside and for the case to be withdrawn. According to the Complainant, the presentation of the case before the criminal court for a judgement expected to be handed down by 15<sup>th</sup> October 1998 did not permit the exhaustion of all local remedies.

4. Without citing any specific provision of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Complainant expresses the view that, in this case, the Commission should see to it that the socio-economic rights of the detainees and their families are respected.

### Procedure

5. The communication is dated 13<sup>th</sup> October 1998 and was received by the Secretariat at the 24<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session.

6. On 11<sup>th</sup> January 1999, the Secretariat wrote to the Complainant to request information regarding the progress of the internal procedure. As of the date of the 25<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Commission, no feedback had been received.

7. On 16 April 1999, the Secretariat received registered mail from the Complainant dated 14 March 1999, to which was attached a copy of the Judgement of 8 December 1998, rendered by the Special Regional Court of Dakar acting as a Court of Summary Jurisdiction. This letter reported on the progress of local remedies. It was unfortunately only received by the Secretariat after the filing of the relevant documents to be submitted to the 25<sup>th</sup> Session and could not therefore be taken into account.

8. A reading of the judgement and correspondence mentioned above highlights the following:

1. The Special Regional Court decided to discharge the accused with regard to the charges of damaging and conniving to damage public utility electrical installations belonging to the *Société Nationale d'Electricité* (SENELEC) as well as the charge of hindering the free exercise of industry or labour.
2. The same Court convicted Mr Sock for "acts or manoeuvres likely to compromise public security" and sentenced him to a prison term of six (6) months.
3. Mr Sock submitted his appeal against the judgement.

4. After having served his sentence including four and half months of pre-trial detention, Mr. Sock was released on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1999.

9. The Complainant asserts that the judgement of the Special Regional Court is founded on a description of the facts on the basis of the wide provision of Section 80 of the old Senegalese Penal Code. According to the Complainant, Mr Sock is a victim of a “conspiracy” geared towards destabilising and weakening SUTELEC.

10. At its 26<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session, the Commission deferred the communication to the 27<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session.

11. At its 27<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session held in Algeria, the Commission deferred consideration of the case to the 28<sup>th</sup> Session.

12. On 20<sup>th</sup> July 2000, the parties were informed of the Commission's decision accordingly.

## Law

### Admissibility

13. [Article 56 \(5\)](#) of the Charter provides: “Communications...shall be considered if they: ... are sent after exhausting local remedies, if any, unless, it is obvious that this procedure is unduly prolonged”.

14. Although the communication presents a *prima facie* case of a series of violations of the African Charter, a close look at the file indicates that the Complainant is yet to exhaust all domestic remedies

## Holding

**For the above reasons, the Commission**

**Declares** the communication inadmissible.

Cotonou, Benin, 23<sup>rd</sup> October to 6<sup>th</sup> November 2000.