

Senegal

A constitutionally secular state, Senegal gained independence from France in 1960. French remains the official language. The population of around 13 million is predominantly Sufi Muslim.

Constitution and government	Education and children's rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
<u>State-funding of religious institutions or salaries, or discriminatory tax exemptions</u>	<u>There is state funding of at least some religious schools</u>		
	<u>State-funded schools offer religious or ideological instruction with no secular or humanist alternative, but it is optional</u>	<u>Religious courts or tribunals rule directly on some family or 'moral' matters; it is legally an opt-in system, but the possibility of social coercion is very clear</u>	<u>Some concerns about political or media freedoms, not specific to the non-religious</u>

Legend

Constitution and government

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly and association. The right to freedom of belief is generally respected in practice.

The constitution defines the country as a secular state and provides for the free practice of religious beliefs, provided that public order is maintained. Whether this qualification might prevent vocal expression of atheistic views remains to be seen.

Despite the secular promise of the constitution, the government financially assists religious groups to maintain places of worship, to fund and facilitate participation in the Hajj.

Education and children's rights

The government funds schools operated by religious groups.

Up to four hours per week of voluntary single-religious instruction (Christian or Islamic) are permitted in both public and private elementary schools. Parents were able to choose between the Christian or Islamic curriculum. Theoretically at least, students may also opt out. The Ministry of Education reported slightly more than a million students again participated in religious education through the public elementary school system in 2017.

<state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2017/af/280780.htm>

Family, community and society

Muslims may choose either the civil Family Code or Islamic law to adjudicate family conflicts, such as marriage and inheritance disputes. Civil court judges preside over civil and customary law cases, however religious leaders informally settle many disputes among Muslims, particularly in rural areas.

Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values

Freedom of expression is generally respected. Access to the internet is not restricted. There is a diverse and lively independent media that is often highly critical of the government despite the risk of criminal defamation charges. However, in recent years, several journalists have been targeted for expressing opposition to the government. In the run-up to the 2012 presidential election, at least a dozen incidents of security or other government officials harassing, threatening, or physically harming journalists were documented. In an August 2013 libel case, a Dakar criminal court closed the newspaper *Le Quotidien* for three months and sentence its editor, Madiambal Diagne, to a month in prison and a damages of 10 million CFA francs (c.US\$20,000) for an article criticizing a former foreign minister.