

James Johnson

From: James Johnson
Sent: Wednesday, April 19, 2023 7:19 AM
To: j.pecquet@theafricareport.com
Subject: statement
Attachments: stmt.FARA.4-19-23.pdf

Julian- please see attached. Please forward to Hermann promptly as we discussed.

Thanks,

Jim

*Statement provided to Julian Pecquet, M.S. Reporter for
Jeune Afrique, 19 April, 2023*

Statement by James M. Johnson on Foreign Agent Registration Act
(FARA) Registration as Agent for Idrissa Seck

I am a lawyer. I am now 73 years old. My career has been as a civil rights lawyer. I worked to protect the rights of people in the U.S. to be free of race, gender and disability discrimination at work and in commerce. I enforced the rule of law incorporated in U.S. civil rights laws.

In 1989, I met Idrissa Seck when he and I had fellowships at the Princeton School of Public Affairs and International Relations. Both of us had worked in politics at the time. I was active in the campaign of a U.S. Congressman and later served as Chief of Staff for the Congressman. Of course, Idrissa had managed a Senegalese presidential campaign and later became Prime Minister in the government of President Wade. I also recall Idrissa informing me that U.S. Secretary of the Treasury and later U.S. Secretary of State James Baker had been instrumental in Idrissa's ability to attend Princeton at what was then a time of turmoil and repression in Senegal following Idrissa's management of the first losing presidential campaign of later President Wade.

During our times in Princeton, my wife and I became close friends of Idrissa and his wife Penda. We each had four children and the families have remained friends to this day.

In 2005 Idrissa contacted me because he was in prison. The government at that time brought charges against him after he had announced his opposition to the government and intention to run for President. He asked for my help. I agreed because he was my friend and in my experience he was an honorable and courageous man who wanted the best for the people of Senegal.

I have never been a professional lobbyist. As required under U.S. laws, I registered under FARA for the first time in order to help Idrissa. I immediately visited Idrissa in prison. I contacted U.S. government officials and gave them the facts about his opposition to the government and resulting imprisonment. The government released Idrissa after about seven months.

I believe and continue to believe that in representing Idrissa I was also helping the cause of the people of Senegal in protecting their own rights to rule of law, freedom in choosing their leaders, and basic human rights.

Now, eighteen years later, Idrissa has asked me to help him again. He is deeply concerned about the 2024 elections cycle. The twin issues of a third term for the President and the pending accusations by prosecutors against one of the President's main rivals, M. Sonko, present a crisis of governance that could result in the same types of repression, but even worse, that plagued Idrissa in 2005.

FARA is a law of the U.S. designed to promote transparency in foreign influences on U.S. government officials. As such it is an anti-corruption law. I made the FARA filings in 2005 and 2023 in order to comply with U.S. law and with Idrissa's full agreement and support.

My FARA role in behalf of Idrissa is to present facts as I understand them to officials of the U.S. government regarding the political, economic and social status of Senegal during the 2024 elections cycle. I am just trying to make sure my government has a factual and balanced understanding of what is occurring.

I will continue to communicate that Idrissa's primary interest in the 2024 elections is that they be fair and free. He has begun presenting and will continue to present to the people changes in government for their consideration. Changes that will stop politically motivated criminal charges and outlawing of candidacies. Changes that he will strive to implement with input from the people of Senegal, if elected.

With regard to M. Sonko, I understand Idrissa's position to be that a person who has been proven to commit crimes violating the human rights of a woman should not be President of the Republic. However, M. Sonko has the right to be free of the presumption of guilt unless and until he has a fair trial proving the crime and exhausting appeals. And the highest priority is to eliminate the incentive for political leaders to prosecute their rivals for crimes in order to eliminate their opponents' rights to free political expression. Therefore, at this time M. Sonko should be allowed to run for President.

I am not involved in Idrissa's campaign in Senegal. He has Senegalese people for that. As a U.S. citizen, I am only trying to increase awareness by my government of what is occurring in Senegal.