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AFRICA/SENEGAL-Does the future of Senegal depend on outgoing President's party?

Dakar (Agenzia Fides) - The protests in Senegal continue after the Constitutional Council published a list of 14 candidates to the presidential elections, including President Abdoulaye Wade, but has excluded the international pop star Youssou N'Dour. The protests are motivated by the fact that Wade presents himself for the third term, while a revision of the Constitution establishes only two terms for the Head of State. The Constitutional Council has therefore endorsed the view held by the same Wade: having been first elected the first time in 2000 and the second time in 2007, he received his first assignment before the constitutional amendment, passed in 2001, ruling the two-term limit.
Yesterday, during clashes in front of the University of Dakar, at least one person died. "While not underestimating the severity of injury and the sad loss of lives, we feel that with regards to the European press, there is perhaps an excessive alarmism about the situation in Senegal", qualified local sources told Fides, that for security reasons have asked to remain anonymous . "There is tension because the President's candidacy for a third term has created discontent in various sectors of public opinion. Discontent has coalesced in Movement 23, involving political parties, civil organizations and NGOs, but there seems not to be a real political alternative to the Democratic Party, the party of the President".
"The situation is calm in Dakar. One must note that a large number of people in relation to the size of the capital did not participate in the protest on January 31. We are talking about 15,000 people in a city that has 3 million inhabitants, with a campus of 40,000 students. So one cannot say that the entire population of Dakar went out to express its anger at the decision of the Constitutional Court", added the sources of Fides.
Our speakers foresee, however, that "there will be tense elections, a situation already experienced in 2000, when the Socialist Party, which had always been in power since independence, was defeated by Wade’s party. It is likely that the first round will take place regularly. The problem is that the political picture is very divided" stress the sources. "First of all it is the opposition to be split with 13 candidates being presented against the apparatus of the ruling party. The President, after all, retains some popularity, especially in rural areas, where half the population lives. But there are divisions in the presidential field. Even if Wade were to be re-elected Head of State, given his age (85 years) the struggle for his succession would open in his party. The Democratic Party has already opened a rupture when two of its leading members, apart from Wade, split, and now they have elections against him. And it is likely that in the event of Wade’s victory, Senegal's future will depend on the redefinition of relations within the Democratic Party, which means determining Wade’s successor".
Our sources note that " the stability of the institutions of an African democracy which has an exemplary history for the entire continent is at stake. This is why one works at an international level to ensure maximum electoral transparency. Even at a religious level both the Catholic Church and the two major Islamic brotherhoods have expressed to guarantee the peaceful conduct of the elections".
"Many young people who had voted for thePresident are disappointed, and they do not know if they will vote against him or if they will abstain en masse. The biggest problem is this: the disaffection of many young people towards institutions" conclude the sources of Fides. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 02/02/2012)

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