



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIR's](#) | [Help](#)

23 December 2003

SEN42246.FE

Senegal: The situation of homosexuals in Senegal, in particular the attitudes of the authorities and society toward homosexuals; legal implications; state protection available to homosexuals
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

According to *Behind the Mask*, a Website for gays and lesbians in Africa, 92 per cent of Senegalese are Muslim, and Islam prohibits believers from practising homosexuality (n.d.). In addition, society frowns upon this practice (AFP 3 Nov. 2003; *Behind the Mask* n.d.; Niang et al. Nov. 2001; *Wal Fadjri* 4 Dec. 2003).

Moreover, the life of homosexual men is apparently characterized by violence and rejection (*Behind the Mask* n.d.; Niang et al. Nov. 2001; *Wal Fadjri* 4 Dec. 2003).

A 2001 study of 250 homosexuals from Dakar conducted by researchers with the Senegal National AIDS Program (Programme national de lutte contre le SIDA, PNLS) in cooperation with researchers from Cheikh Anta Diop university and the Horizons program found that there were two categories of homosexuals in Senegalese society, the first of which is made up of the *Ibbis*:

[Population Council English version]

[The] *Ibbis* are more likely to adopt feminine mannerisms and be less dominant in sexual interactions. While society may formally reject homosexuality, this does not prevent *Ibbis* from occupying positions of high regard in certain circles. For example, *Ibbis* often have close relationships with women who have political or economic power for whom they carry out important social ceremonies and functions. In several neighborhoods, *Ibbis* enjoy the protection of the entire community (Niang et al. Nov. 2001).

The second category of homosexuals includes the *Yoos*, or [Population Council English version] "generally the insertive partner[s] during sex [who] do not consider themselves to be homosexuals" (ibid.). The authors of the study also indicated that [Population Council English version] "there are additional subcategories based on age, status, and type of relationship" (ibid.).

This source also observed that, in a sample of 250 homosexual men,

[Population Council English version]

Forty-three percent . . . had been raped at least once outside the family home and 37 percent said they had been forced to have sex in the last 12 months. Thirteen percent reported being raped by a policeman. Nearly half of the 250 men surveyed had experienced verbal abuse (including insults and threats) by their family. . . . Many also reported physical abuse (e.g., blows, stone throwing) by family and community members and the police. . . . Numerous [respondents] emphasized the importance of keeping one's sexual inclinations and relationships a secret because exposure leads to ostracism, stigmatization, and physical or verbal abuse (ibid.).

Two sources noted that, to hide their homosexuality, most homosexuals were also bisexual (ibid.; *Wal Fadjri* 4 Dec. 2003).

Behind the Mask found that homosexuals are considered to bring shame upon their families (n.d.). This is why families refuse to bury their homosexual relations in the same burial plots (*Behind the Mask* n.d.). Moreover, people occasionally refuse to attend the funeral of their homosexual relatives (ibid.).

On 14 July 2001, the Interior Ministry reportedly moved to head off a mass meeting of gays and lesbians and

warned hotel keepers and managers of other establishments not to facilitate such a meeting, stating that "it cuts across our morals" (ibid. 14 July 2001).

Also according to Behind the Mask, article 319(3) of the Senegalese Penal Code, as amended by Law No. 66-16 of 12 February 1966, provides that:

[Behind the Mask English version]

Without prejudice to the more serious penalties provided for in the preceding paragraphs or by articles 320 and 321 of this Code, whoever will have committed an improper or unnatural act with a person of the same sex will be punished by imprisonment of between one and five years and by a fine of 100,000 to 1,500,000 francs. If the act was committed with a person below the age of 21, the maximum penalty will always be applied (n.d.).

Another source indicated that, [translation] "since 2000, homosexuals have been identified as one of the groups at risk in anti-AIDS programs in Senegal" (*Wal Fadji* 4 Dec. 2003). Stigmatization of homosexuals is nevertheless apparently so severe that homosexual persons with AIDS are afraid to go for treatment at health facilities (ibid.). However, there is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that takes care of them (ibid.). This NGO [translation] "created a network which operates in five regions of the country," and now persons with AIDS can be treated at the clinic for infectious diseases in Fann, which coordinates anti-AIDS activities (ibid.). However, *Wal Fadji* did not indicate the name of the NGO.

According to Behind the Mask, there is a gay rights organization called Groupe Andligeey whose President is Serigne M'Bodji (Jan. 2001). Mohamed Tiam is said to be the organization's treasurer (Behind the Mask Jan. 2001). In January 2001, this group apparently received assistance from the PNL and the National Alliance Against AIDS (ibid.).

For more information on the situation of homosexuals in Senegal, please consult the attached report.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Agence France-Presse (AFP). 3 November 2003. "En Afrique, condamnation quasi-unanime de l'homosexualité." (Dialog)

Behind the Mask. 14 July 2001. "Senegal: Meeting 'Cuts Across our Morals.'" <http://www.mask.org.za/SECTIONS/AfricaPerCountry/ABC/senegal/senegal_3.htm> [Accessed 16 Dec. 2003]

_____. January 2001. "Senegal: Gays Organize." <http://www.mask.org.za/SECTIONS/AfricaPerCountry/ABC/senegal/senegal_2.htm> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2003]

_____. n.d. "About Senegal." <http://www.mask.org.za/SECTIONS/AfricaPerCountry/ABC/senegal/senegal_index.html> [Accessed 15 Dec. 2003]

Niang, Cheikh Ibrahima, et al. November 2001. *Satisfaire les besoins de santé des hommes qui ont des rapports sexuels avec d'autres hommes au Sénégal*. Research summary. <<http://www.popcouncil.org/horizons/ressum/msmsenegal/msmsenegalfr.html>> [Accessed 16 Dec. 2003]

Wal Fadji [Dakar]. 4 December 2003. Assané Saada. "Lutte contre le sida : les homosexuels, des malades comme les autres." <<http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/printable/200312040510.html>> [Accessed 16 Dec. 2003]

Additional Sources Consulted

Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Cultural and Social Series

Afrique/Asie

Amnesty International. Annual reports

L'Autre Afrique

Resource Centre country file. Senegal

Internet sites:

All Africa.com

Population Council

Search engine:

Google

Attachment

Niang, Cheikh Ibrahima, et al. September 2002. *Satisfaire les besoins de santé des hommes qui ont des rapports sexuels avec d'autres hommes au Sénégal*. <<http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/horizons/msmsenegalfr.pdf>> [Accessed 22 Dec. 2003], 23 pp.

The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.