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Senegal: President must rein in security forces as third person killed amid protests

Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade must rein in security forces, Amnesty International urged today after a third person was killed and dozens injured by police during two days of demonstrations across the country.

At least one man was killed yesterday when a police car ploughed into a group of anti-Wade protesters in Place de l'Obélisque in the capital, Dakar.

Eyewitnesses told Amnesty International that demonstrators came under fire from police, who also threw a tear gas canister at an ambulance.

“President Wade must send a clear order to his security forces not to resort to lethal force unless their lives are in danger,” said Salvatore Saguès, Amnesty International’s researcher on West Africa.

According to eyewitnesses interviewed by Amnesty International, a young student protester, Mamadou Diop, was run over by a police vehicle and killed at around 8pm on Tuesday.

One described: “We were talking peacefully when a police car suddenly charged into the crowd. The car hit the student five metres from me. The police officers then turned back to shoot at us. People started to run away, the car drove up onto the pavement and then I saw that police officers in uniform were shooting in all directions.”

A medic told Amnesty International an ambulance that had come to collect Mamadou Diop’s body was hit by a tear gas canister that broke its rear window.

Protests have rocked Senegal since its Constitutional Council ruled on Friday that current President Wade would be allowed to stand for a third term. Presidential elections are due to be held at the end of this month.

Last Friday, one policeman was killed during clashes between demonstrators and security forces.

“Police may be faced with hostile demonstrators but the security forces must do everything in their power to preserve life – not threaten it,” said Salvatore Saguès.

“We also call on those opposed to President Wade to prevent acts of violence that could lead to further casualties.”