

## **The Protest of Guédiawaye's Imams: Symbolic and Historical Context**

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In Senegal, in the context of social unrest related to food and energy crisis of 2008, a social movement attracts the most attention: a group of imams, which initiate a protest against the free fall of their purchasing power, as well as, calling for a boycott of the payment of electricity bills.

We are talking about the "protest of Guédiawaye's imams", in Dakar suburbs, dormitory that was built with a majority of the poor from the rural exodus and the forcibly displaced from downtown.

The initiative plunged the country into some form of sociopolitical fever. At the state level, an inter-ministerial council on energy was quickly summoned and the police headquarters were ordered to contain and prevent the movement to redeploy again into the public space. Meanwhile, the public debate surrounding the matter is geared toward a specific question, which is: whether these "imams" are "fundamentalists who try to take advantage of popular discontent" or "regular consumers frustrated by the shortages".

Our paper aims to demonstrate that beyond the characters known as "religiously dangerous" or "essentially consumerist," the march of the imams is part of an overall historical context of rapid transformation of the Senegalese society, in a move to redefine its traditional references and political benchmarks. This movement embodies the will of spaces and groups, long overlooked to position themselves in the public space as determinant players.