

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS ARRESTED AND DETAINED

Four human rights defenders (HRDs), Moussa Tchangari, Ali Idrissa, Nouhou Arzika and Lirwana Abdourahmane were among a group of people arrested and detained on 25 March by security forces in Niamey, Niger. They have been charged with ‘organisation and participation in a prohibited demonstration’, ‘complicity in violence’, ‘assault’ and ‘destruction’ in connection with a peaceful protest organised by their organisations, but which they did not attend.

Moussa Tchangari, Secretary General of the Alternative Citizen Spaces (Alternatives Espaces Citoyens, AEC), a human rights organisation working on economic and social rights and fighting against impunity, was arrested early on 25 March. A few hours later, **Ali Idrissa**, Coordinator of the Network of Organizations for Budgetary Transparency and Analysis (ROTAB), and **Nouhou Arzika**, President of the Movement for the Promotion of Responsible Citizenship (Mouvement Pour la Promotion de la Citoyenneté Responsable, MPCR) were also arrested. Lawyer and activist, **Lirwana Abdourahmane** was arrested on the same day while leaving the "Labari" TV station where he had been invited as a guest to discuss a protest organised by civil society organisations.

The four HRDs were arrested by security forces in connection with the peaceful protest. Ali Idrissa, Nouhou Arzika and Moussa Tchangari, through their organisations, planned and organised the protest to demand the repeal of the 2018 Finance Law. The four HRDs were charged with ‘organisation and participation in a prohibited demonstration’, ‘complicity in violence’, ‘assault’ and ‘destruction’ on 27 March even though they did not attend the protest. The four were transferred to different prisons far away (about 60 to 180 kilometres) from their families.

The protest was banned by the chairman of the municipality of Niamey on 23 March for, according to him, “obvious security reasons... and in view of the security context in Niger and in the sub-region, and, on the other hand, in view of recent terrorist attacks”. However, earlier in March 2018, a public gathering in support of the Law was not banned. Early in the morning on 25 March, protestors still showed up for the demonstration. They were met by security forces who had surrounded the protest assembly point in an effort to bar the protesters from gathering. The security officers used tear gas grenades to disperse protesters and there was chaos as protesters and police clashed even as the civil society repeatedly called for calm. Nineteen protesters were arrested and charged.

Please write immediately in French or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the four HRDs detained solely in relation to their peaceful human rights work as well as any protestor detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly;
- Asking them to ensure that, while in detention, they are granted access to their lawyers, regular family visits, provided with any medical care they need, and protected from torture and other ill-treatment;
- Urging them to guarantee that activists and HRDs in Niger are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and unlawful restrictions.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 MAY 2018 TO:

President of the Republic of Niger

M. Issoufou Mahamadou
Palais Présidentiel
Boulevard de la République,
Niamey, Niger
Fax: + 227 20 73 34 30
Email: pneniger@gmail.com

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice, Human Rights and

Attorney General
M. Marou Amadou
Boulevard du Djermaganda BP 466
Niamey, Niger
Fax: +227 20 72 37 77

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of State for the Interior Public

Security, Decentralization, and
Customary and Religious Affairs
M. Mohamed Bazoum
BP 893
Niamey, Niger
Fax: +227 20 72 21 76

Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS ARRESTED AND DETAINED

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the 2018 Finance Bill -which provides for new taxes on housing, power, etc.- was tabled in Parliament in November 2017, civil society organizations have campaigned against this law terming it as "anti-social" and calling for it to be repealed. Protests have been organized since November 2017.

The Bill was adopted into Law in January 2018. Civil society organisations have continued to protest against the 2018 Finance Law and calling for it to be amended arguing that it would drastically increase the cost of living and violate the right to an adequate standard of living for many already living in poverty. Five peaceful demonstrations have been organized against the Bill and Law since November 2017 and the sixth demonstration was banned. A public gathering in support of the Law in March 2018 was not banned.

In March, civil society organisations held a peaceful march organized to protest against the finance law, despite the ban against it. The police lobbed tear gas to break up the protest. Twenty three people were arrested in connection with the protest, some at the offices of civil society organizations and others during the protests.

Labari TV station is owned by Ali Idrissa. On 25 March, security forces sought a copy of the recording of the news broadcast during which lawyer and activist, Lirwana Abdourahamane was interviewed on Labari TV. The television station's management refused to comply with this demand. Amnesty International watched the recording to confirm that the lawyer had neither called for nor advocated in favour of hatred or violence. The station was later shut down during four days by security forces who stormed it, but neither provided a written notice from the High Council for Communication nor a warrant from the police.

Name: Moussa Tchangari, Ali Idrissa, Nouhou Arzika and Lirwana Abdourahamane
Gender m/f: male

UA: 30/18 Index: AFR 43/8193/2018 Issue Date: 9 April 2018