

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 240/06 (AFR 43/001/2006, 05 September 2006) - Prisoners of conscience

NIGER **Mamane Abou (m)] journalists**
 Oumarou Keita (m)]

Journalists Mamane Abou and Oumarou Keita, sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment on 1 September 2006 for spreading false news and defaming the state, have lost their appeal against their sentence. On 25 September, the Court of Appeal of Niamey, capital of Niger, threw out the objections submitted by lawyers for Mamane Abou and Oumarou Keita. The court also denied their request for bail.

Mamane Abou and Oumarou Keita were arrested on 4 August, after the weekly newspaper for which they work published an article, accusing Prime Minister Hama Amadou of "wooing the Iranians" to the extent of being prepared to close down Western embassies. The newspaper had recently published a series of articles alleging government corruption involving donor funds. President Mamadou Tandja subsequently sacked two cabinet ministers over the allegations of corruption.

Amnesty International considers Oumarou Keita and Mamane Abou to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression. The organization will continue to call for their release through longer-term actions.

No further action is requested from the UA network at present. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.