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## **Chadian students to face trial over protest pamphlets**

Chadian authorities must immediately release two students who have been held for four months for allegedly trying to organize pro-reform protests, Amnesty International said today ahead of a fresh court hearing this week.

Bebkika Passoua Alexis and Nedoumbayel Nekaou were arrested in May at a bus station in the capital N'Djamena for allegedly carrying documents calling for Chadians to organize demonstrations inspired by protests earlier this year in Tunisia and Egypt.

“If these students are being held merely on suspicion of supporting peaceful protests, we would consider them to be prisoners of conscience and they must be released immediately and unconditionally,” said Erwin Van Der Borgh, Africa Programme Director at Amnesty International.

“Chadian authorities must carry out a full investigation into allegations they were tortured in custody, and bring those responsible to justice.”

The students were first arrested and detained incommunicado by the Chadian security service before being transferred to the N'Djamena central prison, where they are reportedly suffering from a contagious eye disease and a serious skin disease.

The trial proceedings on the students' case have been postponed three times after National Security Agency officials failed to appear in court to testify, and a new trial date has been scheduled for 15 September.

Chadian security services allegedly found two documents – A letter to the youth and Enough is Enough – in their possession, which called for young people to organize demonstrations against President Idriss Deby Itno's rule. The documents made references to the pro-reform protests that resulted in leaders stepping down in Tunisia and Egypt earlier this year.

According to the N'Djamena Prosecutor's Office, the two students have been charged with a “provocation directly linked to an unarmed demonstration.” Although no demonstration took place, if a court finds them guilty they could still face up to six months in jail under Chadian law.

“We have seen copies of the documents in question and we consider that the content would fall under what is permissible under the right to freedom of expression. This is a blatant attempt by the authorities to prolong the students' detention using what appear to be politically motivated charges,” said Erwin van der Borgh.

“Chadian authorities must uphold its citizens' freedom to express opinions, even if they differ from those of the government.”