

URGENT ACTION

PROMINENT HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER DETAINED

On 3 December 2024, Moussa Tchangari, a human rights defender and secretary general of the civil society organization Citizens' Alternative Spaces, was arrested in Niamey, Niger's capital. He was at his home when at least three gunmen in plain clothes, who claimed to be policemen, arrested him. For nearly two days, Moussa Tchangari's whereabouts remained unknown. On 5 December 2024, he was located at the Central Service for Combating Terrorism and Organized Transnational Crime, in Niamey. He has been charged, amongst other things, with advocating terrorism and criminal association in connection with terrorism. Niger's authorities must drop all charges and immediately release Moussa Tchangari, who is being detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

General Abdourahamane Tiani

President of the National Council for the
Safeguard of the Homeland
Boulevard de la République, Niamey,
BP: 622, Niger
Emails: communication@presidence.ne
pneniger@gmail.com

Dear General Abdourahamane Tiani,

I am writing to bring to your attention the case of human rights defender **Moussa Tchangari**, secretary general of the civil society organization 'Citizens' Alternative Spaces' (Alternatives Espaces Citoyens, AEC) who was arrested on 3 December 2024 when at least three gunmen in plain clothes, who claimed to be policemen, broke into his home in Niamey, seized his phone, laptop and suitcase, hooded him and took him away. When asked them if they had a warrant, they replied that one was not compulsory.

For nearly two days, Moussa Tchangari's whereabouts remained unknown. On 5 December 2024, his lawyers finally located him at the Central Service for Combating Terrorism and Organized Transnational Crime in Niamey, where he had been transferred. He has been charged, amongst other things, with "advocacy of terrorism, undermining state security and criminal association in connection with terrorism". If found guilty, he could be jailed between five and 10 years and stripped of his Nigerien citizenship.

Just over three weeks before his arrest, on 12 November 2024, Moussa Tchangari criticized the decision by Niger's interior minister to withdraw the licenses of two humanitarian nongovernmental organizations, as well as the establishment by the authorities on 27 August 2024 of a terrorism database. On 28 November 2024, less than a week before his arrest, his organisation (the AEC) convened a meeting to discuss the 10th of October 2024 presidential decree provisionally removing Nigerien nationality from nine people linked to former President Bazoum. The arrest and detention of Moussa Tchangari appears to be linked to a pervasive crackdown on the political opposition, media, and peaceful dissent carried out by the Nigerien authorities since they took power by military coup in July 2023.

I am extremely concerned for Moussa Tchangari's life, his well-being, safety and health condition, as other human rights defenders who have been arrested and detained since the July 2023 coup have been denied of access to their lawyers and kept in inhumane prison conditions.

I urge you, as President of the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland, to ensure all charges against Moussa Tchangari, who is being arbitrarily detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights, are dropped and that he is released immediately.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 26 July 2023, President Mohamed Bazoum was removed from power following a palace coup engineered by his Presidential Guard. Military officers behind the coup announced the establishment of the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP) on 26 July 2023 through a declaration on national TV which justified the takeover on the “continued worsening of the security situation and to the poor economic and social governance” of the deposed regime. On 28 July 2023, the head of the presidential guard, Abdourahamane Tiani, declared himself president of the country.

Since the 2023 military coup, instead of a path toward respecting human rights and the rule of law, the military authorities are tightening their grip on opposition, civil society, and independent media. Freedoms, including the right to freedom of expression, has been severely restricted in Niger. The authorities have threatened, harassed, and arbitrarily arrested human rights defenders and journalists; many of whom – like Moussa Tchangari - say they are self-censoring amid fear of reprisals.

Since the 1990s, Moussa Tchangari has been known as an activist and human rights defender, working to advance human rights and the rule of law in Niger. He had been detained for his human rights work in the past, on different occasions, such as in May 2015 and in 2018. Days before his arbitrary arrest on 3 December 2024, he had told a colleague that he was worried, carefully weighing their words and actions to be able to continue defending human rights, despite the constant risk of arrest. He also expressed concerns about the risk of arbitrary arrest and detention looming over many Nigeriens, especially those publicly criticizing the military authorities, including himself.

The charges against Moussa Tchangari, including advocating terrorism and criminal association in connection with terrorism, fall into the broad list of offenses that could lead to citizens being deprived of their citizenship even prior to conviction, according to the August 2024 order establishing the terrorism database.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: French, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 16 June 2025

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Moussa Tchangari (he/him/his)