

12 October 2007

UA 259/07 Fear of torture or ill-treatment/incommunicado detention/ prisoner of conscience

NIGER Ibrahim Manzo Diallo (m), journalist

Newspaper editor Ibrahim Manzo Diallo is reportedly held incommunicado by the military at an unknown location, and is at risk of torture and ill-treatment. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his peaceful and legitimate activities as a journalist.

Ibrahim Manzo Diallo was arrested at 11pm on 9 October at the airport in the capital, Niamey, as he was about to board a flight for France. He was first held by the General Directorate for External Security (DGSE, *Direction générale de la sécurité extérieure*) (the Nigerien foreign intelligence agency) and then interrogated by police officers, who accused him of being a correspondent of French broadcaster *Radio France Internationale* (RFI) though it is not a criminal offence to work for this international media organization. RFI was temporarily banned from broadcasting in Niger in July 2007.

According to sources in Niger, army officials asked for Ibrahim Manzo Diallo to be transferred to military custody in the Agadez region of northern Niger. The whereabouts of Ibrahim Manzo is currently unknown and no one has seen him since his transfer from Niamey. The Agadez region is currently ruled under special legislation, after the President of Niger, Mamadou Tandja, declared a three-month state of emergency (*mise en garde*) on 24 August in response to attacks by the armed opposition movement, the *Mouvement des Nigériens pour la justice* (MNJ), Niger People's Movement for Justice, formed of members of the Tuareg ethnic community. As well as curbing freedom of expression, the emergency legislation gives the army and the police apparently unlimited powers, thus heightening fears for those in their custody.

Until June 2007, Ibrahim Manzo Diallo was the editor of the privately-owned twice-monthly newspaper *Aïr Info*, based in Agadez. The authorities banned *Aïr Info* for alleged "incitement to violence" following the attacks by the MNJ. In July 2007, Ibrahim Manzo Diallo was briefly arrested by the Agadez gendarmerie in relation to his setting up of a new monthly publication, *Info Aïr*. After his release, he moved to Niamey, outside the area where the emergency legislation is in force.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In February 2007, the MNJ, an armed group formed by members of the Tuareg ethnic community, launched attacks against the army, killing about 40 soldiers and taking about another 70 soldiers hostage, many of whom were later released.

As a result, the authorities arrested a number of civilians suspected of supporting the MNJ, some of whom are still in custody. They may be prisoners of conscience, arrested solely for exercising their right to peaceful freedom of expression. The government also targeted some journalists and media, including by suspending broadcasts by RFI, in an attempt to prevent any independent information concerning the conflict in the northern part of the region.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in French, Arabic or your own language:

- calling for the Nigerien authorities immediately to reveal the whereabouts of Ibrahim Manzo Diallo;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- asking the authorities to ensure that Ibrahim Manzo Diallo is not tortured or ill-treated and is given immediate access to his family, lawyer and any medical attention he may require;
- expressing concern about the pattern of intimidation and arrest of journalists in Niger and urging the authorities to respect the freedom of the press as set out in international standards including the International Covenant on civil and political rights and the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights;
- expressing concern about the powers given to the military and the police in Agadez under the emergency legislation in the region.

APPEALS TO:

Mamadou Tandja
Président de la République du Niger
La Présidence
Niamey
NIGER

Fax: + 227 20 72 27 07

Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President

Djida Hamadou

Ministre de la Défense
Ministère de la Défense
Niamey
NIGER

Fax: + 227 20 72 40 78

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Albade Aboufa
Ministre de l'Intérieur
Ministère de l'Intérieur
Niamey
NIGER

Fax: + 227 20 72 21 76

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Niger accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 November 2007.
