

URGENT ACTION

NEW CHARGES AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

On 3 January 2025, two additional charges were brought against human rights defender and secretary general of the civil society organization Citizens' Alternative Spaces, Moussa Tchangari. He was charged with "infringing on national defence" and "intelligence with enemy countries" and transferred to Filingué prison, 180 km from Niger's capital Niamey. On 3 December 2024, Moussa Tchangari was arrested with his fate and whereabouts subsequently unknown for two days. On 5 December 2024, he was located at the Central Service for Combating Terrorism and Organized Transnational Crime, in Niamey. He was charged, amongst other things, with advocating terrorism and criminal association in connection with terrorism. If found guilty of the charges, he could face between five and 10 years of imprisonment. Niger authorities must immediately release Moussa Tchangari and drop all charges against him.

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 express concern about the arbitrary detention of human rights defender **Moussa Tchangari**.

On 3 January 2025, two additional charges of "infringing on national defence" and "intelligence with enemy countries" were brought against Moussa Tchangari, secretary general of the civil society organization, 'Citizens' Alternative Spaces' (Alternatives Espaces Citoyens (AEC)). Following the new charges, he was transferred to Filingué prison, 180 km from Niger's capital, Niamey.

Moussa Tchangari 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 Moussa Tchangari asked them if they had a warrant, they replied that one was not compulsory. For nearly two days, Moussa Tchangari's whereabouts remained unknown before he was located at Central Service for Combating Terrorism and Organized Transnational Crime in Niamey, where he met for the first time his lawyers. He has been charged, amongst other things, with "advocacy of terrorism, undermining state security and criminal association in connection with terrorism". If found guilty of the charges, he could be jailed between five and 10 years and stripped of his Nigerien citizenship.

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, his organisation (the AEC) convened a meeting to discuss the 10 October 2024 presidential decree provisionally removing Nigerien nationality from nine people linked to former President Bazoum.

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

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. Human rights including the right to freedom of expression, has been severely restricted in Niger. The authorities have threatened, harassed, and arbitrarily arrested human rights defenders, activists and journalists; many of whom – like Moussa Tchangari - say they are self-censoring amid fear of reprisals.

Since the 1990s, Moussa Tchangari has been 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 his 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.

Following his detention and charges against him, Moussa Tchangari fears that other activists from the Nigerien civil society might face the same situation that he is facing. He is also concerned that civil society organization ‘Citizens’ Alternative Spaces’ (Alternatives Espaces Citoyens, AEC), for which he is the secretary general of, might be shut down by the Niger authorities to prevent them doing their human rights work.

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: 15 July 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)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr43/8836/2024/en/>