

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVISTS CLEARED OF CHARGES, TWO AWAITING TRIAL
Three activists, Ibrahim Diori, Maïkoul Zodi, and Karim Tanko were released on 5 October after they were cleared of all charges. They had been detained for almost 6 months charged with organizing and participating in a prohibited protest" and "damaging of public property". Abdourahamane Idé Hassane was cleared of all charges on 19 April. He had earlier been released on bail. Two other activists are still awaiting trial in Zinder.

Ibrahim Diori of Alternative Espaces Citoyens (Alternative Citizens' space), **Maïkoul Zodi** coordinator for Niger of *Tournons la Page (Let's turn the page)* and **Karim Tanko** president of *Union des Jeunes pour la Protection de la Démocratie et les Droits de l'Homme* (Youth Union for the Protection of Democracy and Human Rights) were released on 5 October after being cleared of all charges by a court. **Abdourahamane Idé Hassane**, who had been released on bail after his arrest, was cleared of all charges against him on 19 April. The three had been charged with "organizing and participating in a prohibited protest" and "damaging of public property".

Maïkoul Zodi and Abdourahamane Idé Hassane, through their organizations, planned and organised a protest against a Finance Law that would see among other things an increase in taxes. The protest was banned by the chairman of the municipality of Niamey on 23 March for what he termed as security concerns. Ibrahim Diori read out a statement by civil society organizations calling for the peaceful protest. Maïkoul, Abdourahamane and Ibrahim were arrested on 15 April. Karim Tanko, who co-signed the declaration of protest, was arrested on 2 July.

In the city of Zinder, 500 miles east of the capital Niamey, two activists are still awaiting trial. **Sadat Illiya Dan Malam**, Regional Coordinator of Mouvement Patriotique pour une Citoyenneté (the Patriotic Movement for Responsible Citizenship), was arrested on 18 April and charged with "participation in an insurrectional movement" and "conspiracy against state security". **Yahaya Badamassi**, Regional Coordinator of Alternative Espaces Citoyens, was arrested on 25 April. He was initially charged with "organizing and participating in a banned demonstration" and "causing damage to public property" then, in June, he was also charged with "participation in an insurrectional movement" and "conspiracy against state security". The two activists were charged in relation to other protests against the Finance Law that had been organized in different parts of the country.

Please write immediately in French or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the two activists detained solely in relation to their peaceful human rights work and other protesters detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and drop all charges against them;
- Urging them to guarantee that human rights defenders and activists in Niger are able to carry out their human rights activities without unlawful restrictions and fear of reprisals

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 NOVEMBER 2018 TO:

President of the Republic of Niger

M. Issoufou Mahamadou
 Palais Présidentiel
 Boulevard de la République,
 Niamey, Niger
 Fax: + 227 20 73 34 30
 Email: pneniger@gmail.com
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice, Human Rights and

Attorney General
 M. Marou Amadou
 Boulevard du Djermaganda BP 466
 Niamey, Niger
 Fax: +227 20 72 37 77
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of State for the Interior Public
 Security, Decentralization, and
 Customary and Religious Affairs
 M. Mohamed Bazoum
 BP 893
 Niamey, Niger
 Fax: +227 20 72 21 76

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR ABDERAHMANE ASSANE MAYAKI
 Embassy of the Republic of Niger, 154 Rue de Longchamp 75116 Paris France, (00) 331 45 04 80 60, Fax (00) 331 45 04 79 73

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 93/18. Further information:
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr43/8388/2018/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the 2018 Finance Bill, which provides for new taxes on housing, power and other items, was tabled in Parliament in November 2017, civil society organizations have campaigned for it to be repealed for what they denounce as its “anti-social” character. Protests have been organized since November 2017.

The Bill was passed into Law in January 2018. Civil society organizations have continued to protest against the 2018 Finance Law and calling for it to be amended arguing that it would drastically increase the cost of living and violate the right to an adequate standard of living for many already living in poverty. Five peaceful demonstrations have been organized since November 2017 and the sixth demonstration was banned.

In March 2018, civil society organizations held a peaceful rally organized to protest against the finance law, despite the ban against it. The police lobbed tear gas to break up the protest. Twenty-three people were arrested in connection with the protest, some at the offices of civil society organizations and others during the protests. A public gathering in support of the Law in the same month was not banned.

A third trial against human rights defenders took place in Niger in less than a year. All the trials are linked to the mobilization over the last ten months against the 2018 Finance Law.

With the 2019 Finance Law currently being reviewed by parliamentarians, Amnesty International is concerned that any further anti-austerity protests will also be suppressed by the authorities. As in 2018, the 2019 budget proposed by the government contains austerity measures and new taxes on small business owners and low-income households

Name: Ibrahim Diori, Maïkoul Zodi, Abdourahamane Idé Hassane, Karim Tanko, Sadat Illiya Dan Malam and Yahaya Badamassi
Gender m/f: male

Further information on UA: 93/18 Index: AFR 43/9235/2018 Issue Date: 11 October 2018