

10 February 2021

Chad: Human rights defender Mahamat Nour Ibedou arrested and charged

On 6 February 2021, human rights defender **Mahamat Nour Ibedou** was arrested alongside 13 other individuals who were peacefully protesting at Chagoua, in the 7th district of N'Djamena. The human rights defender was subsequently charged with assault and battery, disturbance of public order and destruction of public property by the High Court of N'Djamena. The next court hearing is scheduled to take place on 12 February 2021.

[Mahamat Nour Ibedou](#) is the Secretary General of the Convention Tchadienne pour les Droits Humains – CTDDH (Chadian Convention for the Protection of Human Rights). CTDDH is a prominent organisation in Chadian civil society championing civil and political rights. The organisation has been documenting and denouncing human rights rights violations in Chad such as impunity, corruption, the shrinking civic space and the adoption of draconian laws in the country. Mahamat Nour Ibedou has been leading CTDDH since 2011.

On 6 February, the human rights defender responded to a call to attend a peaceful protest of several civil society organisations and political leaders, to reject the candidacy of President Idris Deby Itno, who is running for his sixth term of presidency in the general election in April 2021. During the peaceful demonstration, the police intervention mobile group (GIMP) reportedly dispersed the protestors with tear gas and subsequently arrested human rights defender Mahamat Nour Ibedou and 13 other protesters at Chagoua, in the 7th district of N'Djamena. Following their arrest, the human rights defender and the 13 protestors were detained in N'Djamena central police station for two days.

On 8 February, human rights defender Mahamat Nour Ibedou and the 13 other protesters were charged with assault and battery, disturbance of public order and destruction of public property by the High Court of N'Djamena. They will remain in Amsinene prison, in N'Djamena until the next hearing which will take place on 12 February 2021.

In 2016 President Deby introduced austerity measures in an attempt to tackle the economic crisis. These austerity measures widely affected fundamental rights such as the right to health and education and provoked inflation on the cost of living, which thus marked the beginning of political unrest with protests across the country. In response, the authorities targeted human rights defenders who were leading the protests and adopted more draconian laws against freedoms of expression and assembly. Many prominent human rights defenders and activists, such as Mahamat Nour Ibedou, have been targeted since President Deby came in power in 1990. They have often been detained, tortured and subjected to incommunicado detention for peacefully protesting and denouncing human rights violations in the country. A change to the 2018 Constitution permits a president to be elected for a six-year term renewable once, which could therefore allow President Deby to stay in power until 2033.

This is the fifth time that Mahamat Nour Ibedou has been arrested for his human rights work. On 29 November 2019, the human rights defender received a notification demanding him to appear before the criminal unit at the Central Police Station in N'Djamena concerning a complaint for defamation filed against him by Bokhit Itno, a nephew of the Chadian President. The complaint was filed following a press release signed by Mahamat Nour Ibedou on behalf of CTDDH denouncing the alleged sequestration and physical abuse of three people by Bokhit Itno on his private property. On 3 December 2019, Mahamat Nour Ibedou presented himself at the designated place and was arrested. He was released on 8 January 2020 and the charges against him were dropped following a dismissal order issued by the N'Djamena examining magistrate.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned that the arrest and charges against human rights defender Mahamat Nour Ibedou are in retaliation for his legitimate and peaceful work for the protection of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Chad to:

1. Immediately release Mahamat Nour Ibedou as his arrest appears to be in retaliation for his legitimate work for the protection of human rights;
2. Guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Mahamat Nour Ibedou while in detention and ensure that his right to a defence is respected;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Chad are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including arrests, harassment and threats.

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