



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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Niger: This 25 May marks two months in detention of 26 activists and civil society members

- 10 organisations call on authorities to stop their prosecutions and release them in order to ease the current tense situation

Two months after 26 civil society activists were arrested in peaceful demonstrations against a new finance law in the capital, Niamey, Oxfam and Amnesty International are joining with eight NGOs to call on the authorities of Niger to ease the situation by releasing the detainees and bring an end to the prosecutions.

The civil society activists were indicted on March 25 2018 for "organizing and participating in a prohibited demonstration", "complicity in violence", "aggression" and "destruction of property and are jailed in various prisons in the country. The 26 arrested include three leaders of civil society organizations: Moussa Tchangari, *Alternative espace citoyen* (Alternative citizen spaces); Ali Idrissa, Rotab; and Nouhou Arzika, *Mouvement pour la promotion de la citoyenneté responsable* (Movement for the Promotion of Responsible Citizenship). Five other protesters including Ibrahim Diori (*Alternative espace citoyen* /Alternative citizen spaces), Maïkoul Zodi (*Tournons la Page*,) Abdourahamane Idé Hassane (*Jeunesse pour une mentalité nouvelle* /Youth for a New Mentality) were later arrested on April 15 and prosecuted for the same charges.

"This situation is of deep concern for international human rights and development organizations who believe that widening the civic space does not impinge on the government, but instead allow citizens to engage in a constructive dialogue with the authorities," said **Adama Coulibaly, Oxfam West Africa Regional Director**.

"The right of civil society organizations to engage in peaceful activities is protected by international law. These people play a vital role in the protection and realization of

human rights and democracy. They should not be seen as a threat, but rather as actors of dialogue with whom the State should engage . "

The organizations call on the authorities in Niger to release immediately these activists and to put an end on prosecutions against them. The authorities should also enter without delay into a constructive dialogue with civil society organizations about their right to protest on any matter of national interest.

"Instead of deploying strategies to attack civil society activists and human rights defenders, the authorities in Niger should recognize their legitimacy by respecting their work, providing them with the necessary space for their activities, and protecting them against threats," said **Samira Daoud, Amnesty International Deputy Regional Director for West and Central Africa.**

"In no case should Niger distinguish itself by reducing the space of civil society in West Africa. It is high time to release these detainees all arrested in connection with the 2018 finance law protests," said **Melanie Sonhaye Kombate of the West African Human Rights Defenders Network.**

Signatories:

- Oxfam
- Amnesty International
- Front Line Defenders
- Publiez Ce Que Vous Payez
- Tournons La Page
- FIDH, within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders" and World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
- West Africa Civil Society Institute
- Centre for Civil and Political rights
- CIVICUS
- West Africa Human Rights Defenders Network ROADDH/WAHRDN

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