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Niger: Journalist Samira Sabou arrested and charged

On 10 June 2020 journalist and blogger **Samira Sabou** was arrested in Niamey and charged with defamation in connection with a social media post highlighting corruption. On the same day, she was transferred to Niamey's civil prison where she is currently being detained.

[Samira Sabou](#) is a woman human rights defender, journalist and blogger from Niger. She is the president of Association des blogueurs pour une citoyenneté active (*Association of Bloggers for Active Citizenship* – ABCA), which organizes awareness-raising campaigns, alongside other organizations, to promote the role of women in the public arena and guarantee their freedom of expression in the media. She is also the administrator of the information website Magazine d'Information sur le Développement Economique et Social (*Economic and Social Development Information Magazine* - MIDES).

On 10 June 2020 Samira Sabou was arrested and charged with defamation following a complaint by the son of the President of the Republic of Niger, Sani Mahamadou Issoufou. According to fellow human rights defenders, her arrest is linked to a post on social media on 26 May 2020, in which she referred to an audit of the Ministry of Defence regarding overcharging and embezzlement during the purchase of military equipment for the army. One of the comments below the post criticised the President's son in relation to the audit, although Samira Sabou did not mention the son in her post. A defamation complaint was filed against her by President Issoufou's son and she was later arrested and detained at Niamey's civil prison.

Although Samira Sabou is a journalist, she has not been charged under the provisions of the press freedom law which is punishable by only a fine. Rather, she has been charged with defamation under article 29 of the Cyber-crime Law of 25 June 2019, and is therefore at risk of facing a prison term of six months to three years and a fine of one million to five million CFA francs (approximately 1525 to 7627 Euros). A date for her hearing is yet to be scheduled.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned by the detention of Samira Sabou and the charges brought against her, as it strongly believes that she is being targeted solely as a result of her highlighting of corruption.. It is also concerned by the detention conditions of Samira Sabou, which place her at risk in the context of COVID-19.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Niger to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Samira Sabou and drop all charges against her, as Front Line Defenders believes that she is being held and charged solely as a result of peaceful and legitimate human rights work;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Samira Sabou while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Niger are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

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