

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal concern / Fear of ill treatment

2 September 1992

NIGER:

Mohamed Moussa, Minister of Transport, trade and tourism
Akoli Daouel, founder and leader of the Union pour la
démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS), Union for
democracy and social progress

Moctar el Incha, *Préfet*, Governor, head of the local
administration of Agadez

Alhassane Dogo, *provincial sous-Préfet*, deputy head of
the local administration of Arlit

Elias el Mahadi, captain in the Armed Forces

Alhadji Kane, director of the Tourist Bureau in Agadez
and member of the UDPS

Rabdouane Mohamed, teacher

and many others including some children

The seven people named above are among at least 90 people of Tuareg origin arrested in Niger between 27 and 31 August 1992. The arrests started on 27 August 1992 in the town of Agadez, located 750 kilometres northeast of the capital Niamey, apparently after a police inspector was shot dead on 26 August 1992 by a group of armed men, whom the authorities have claimed were Tuareg rebels. The arrests then spread to other towns in northern Niger, such as Arlit and Tchirozérine and also to Niamey, with the arrest of the Minister of Transport, Mohamed Moussa, a prominent Tuareg, on 30 August 1992. Amnesty International is concerned that those arrested may be at risk of ill-treatment or torture in detention.

The arrests are reported to have been carried out by members of the armed forces without the authority of any court or judicial authority. The army demanded the release of 30 hostages including 14 members of the Republican Guard and eight Gendarmes (members of the para-military police force) who have been held captive since February 1992 by the Tuareg rebel movement, the Front de libération de l'Air et de l'Azaouagh (FLAA), the Air and Azaouagh Liberation Front. They also called for the dismissal of some members of Niger's transitional government and of the *Préfet* of Agadez, Moctar el Incha, whom they claim is "an active member of the Tuareg rebellion". However, it appears that those arrested, who include children, do not have any links with the FLAA and may well have been detained either for ethnic reasons - because they are Tuareg - or political reasons - because of their affiliation with the UDPS opposition party. Most are currently detained at the military barracks of Agadez.

The Prime Minister, Amadou Cheffou, is not so far known to have condemned these arrests carried out by the armed forces; indeed he has publicly stated that those arrested will be questioned about their links with the

FLAA; he has also called on Tuareg rebels to "lay down their arms and to release the hostages" in order to achieve a peaceful settlement.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The FLAA launched a violent campaign against the security forces and the government in late 1991. In 1990 hundreds of people belonging to the Tuareg ethnic group were arrested, tortured or extrajudicially executed; some of those held appeared to be prisoners of conscience. Others reportedly died in detention as a result of torture or ill-treatment. The FLAA rebels were frustrated that Niger's National Conference, called to discuss the country's political future, had not addressed their demands for equal treatment; nor had it satisfactorily examined human rights violations

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against Tuareg detainees in 1990. The Prime Minister of the transitional government, Amadou Cheffou, has been engaged in negotiating a settlement with Tuareg leaders, but rebel attacks have continued and Tuaregs have been subjected to short term arrests in Arlit in May and in Abalak in July 1992.

This wave of arrests is likely to threaten again the country's difficult transition to multi-party democracy; presidential elections are currently due to take place in November and December 1992. In February and March 1992 the transitional process was threatened by acts of mutiny by army units protesting at the arrest of a military captain who admitted to involvement in the killing of Tuareg detainees in 1990.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters either in French or in your own language:

- enquiring about the reasons and legal basis for the detention of the seven people named above and all others within the Tuareg community who have been arrested since 27 August 1992;
- seeking assurances that they are not being subjected to ill-treatment or torture;
- urging the authorities to allow them immediate access to officials of the Procuracy, to legal counsel, to relatives and to medical facilities if needed;
- expressing concern that all those arrested appear to be prisoners of conscience held arbitrarily and purely on account of their ethnic origin, as members of the Tuareg community;
- appealing for their unconditional and immediate release.

APPEALS TO:

1. Prime Minister:

M. Amadou Cheffou

Premier Ministre

La Primature

NIAMEY

Niger

**Telegrams: Prime Minister,
Niamey, Niger**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Premier
Ministre / Dear Prime Minister**

Niger

**Telegrams: Chief of Staff of the
Armed Forces, Niamey, Niger**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Colonel /
Dear Colonel**

2. Head of the Army:

M. le Colonel Toumba Boubacar

Chef de l'état-major des forces
armées

Forces armées nationales

NIAMEY

3. Minister of the Interior:

M. Daouda Rabiou
Ministre de l'intérieur
Ministère de l'intérieur
NIAMEY
Niger

**Telegrams: Minister of the
Interior, Niamey, Niger**

Telexes: 5214

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre /
Dear Minister**

4. Minister of Justice:

M. Abdou Tiouso
Ministère de la Justice
NIAMEY
Niger

**Telegrams: Minister of Justice,
Niamey, Niger**

Telexes: 5214

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre /
Dear Minister**

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Le Républicain (Newspaper)
Nouvelle imprimerie du Niger
Place du Petit Marché
BP 12015
Niamey
Niger

Haské (Newspaper)
BP 297
Niamey
Niger

Faxes: 227 73 41 42

and to diplomatic representatives of Niger accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 14 October 1992.