

URGENT ACTION

PROMINENT ACTIVISTS STILL LANGUISHING IN JAIL

Activists Maikoul Zodi, Halidou Mounkaila and Moudi Moussa have been languishing in jail for over five months for planning a protest on 15 March demanding an investigation into the alleged misuse of public funds. On 6 August, the three were granted release on bail of XOF 5 million each (about USD \$9021) but the prosecutor successfully appealed the decision on the same day. They continue to be held in prison. They are prisoners of conscience and must be immediately released.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

M. Marou Amadou
Minister of Justice
Boulevard du Djermaganda BP 466
Niamey, Niger
Email: marou_amadou2000@yahoo.fr
Fax: +227 20 72 37 77

Your Excellency,

I am concerned to learn that it has been five months that activists Maikoul Zodi, Halidou Mounkaila and Moudi Moussa have been held in arbitrary pre-trial detention following their arrest on 15 March during a protest that they organised in Niamey, Niger's capital, demanding an investigation into the allegations of misuse of funds by the Ministry of Defence. Their request for provisional release has been denied three times, the most recent on 6 August when the Court's decision to release them on bail of XOF 5 million each (about USD \$9021) was successfully appealed by the prosecutor's office.

Maikoul Zodi is detained in Ouallam Prison (100 km from Niamey), Halidou Mounkaila in Camp Penal of Dey Keyna (111 km from Niamey) and Moudi Moussa in Kollo Prison (35 km from Niamey).

Amnesty International believes that the charges against the activists- related to complicity in damaging public property, arson and manslaughter, have been fabricated to undermine the peaceful exercise of their human rights and demands for accountability.

In light of the above, I urge you to ensure that:

- ***Maikoul Zodi, Halidou Mounkaila and Moudi Moussa are immediately released;***
- ***Prior to their release, they have prompt, regular and unrestricted access to their family and a lawyer of their choice. If contact visits are restricted due to Covid-19 preventive measures, they must be replaced with other means of contact, for example, by phone, emails or video calls;***
- ***Put an end to harassment, intimidation and attacks against members of civil society;***
- ***Carry out an independent, impartial, thorough and effective investigation into the deaths during the demonstration on 15 March to bring the perpetrators to justice, with due regard for the right to a fair trial.***

Yours sincerely

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 13 March, the Niger authorities published a statement from the Council of Ministers concerning measures being taken to combat the spread of COVID-19, including a ban on all gatherings likely to attract more than 1,000 people. A demonstration was already planned to take place on 15 March in Niamey and other cities by civil society organisations to demand an investigation into the allegations of misuse of funds revealed by an audit of the Ministry of Defence. Despite the ban, the organisers went ahead with the demonstrations. In the early hours of 15 March, security forces blocked all the roads leading to the planned venue for the protest, the 'Place de la Concertation' in Niamey. At least three individuals died when the demonstration was violently broken up by security forces using tear gas. Significant damage was recorded as several shops were set on fire near the Tagabati market. Civil society leaders were subsequently arrested.

On 30 April, Sani Chekaraou, president of the Niamey wholesalers' association was released on bail with Moussa Tchangari and Habibou Soumaila. He was arrested on 16 March and charged with assault of market officials. Two other activists, Karim Tanko and Seyni Djibo, whose on behalf we had issued an [Urgent Action](#) on, on 25 March, while they were in detention, were released on bail on 19 March.

On 24 May, the activist Seyni Djibo died by pirogue accident (capsizing) on the Niger River.

Since the beginning of the year, Amnesty International has recorded 27 arrests of activists, unionists, journalists and dissenting voices in Niger, 17 of them are anti-corruption activists who spoke out about the allegations against the Ministry of Defense.

Samira Sabou, a journalist and President of the Niger bloggers association, was freed from Niamey prison on 28 July after the judge dismissed all charges of defamation against her. She had been arbitrarily detained for 48 days, in pre-trial detention, after a defamation complaint, filed by the son of the President, was made against her following a Facebook user's mention of the President's son's name in a comment on a post made on Samira Sabou's Facebook page. The 26 May post related to allegations of corruption in the procurement of military equipment.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: FRENCH

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 6 OCTOBER 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Moudi Moussa, Maikoul Zodi, Halidou Mounkaila, Habibou Soumaila, Moussa Tchangari, (He/his)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4322822020ENGLISH.pdf>