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PRESS RELEASE

ARBITRARY ARRESTS IN NIGER

Free the 4 TLP Niamey activists and the Advocacy and Protection Officer of Agir ensemble pour les droits humains!

On December 10, International Human Rights Day, four TLP-Niger activists and Mathieu Pouchier - an advocacy and protection officer employed by Agir ensemble pour les droits humains, seconded to the international secretariat of Tournons La Page - were arrested and spent the night in police custody.

As it has done since 2017, on the occasion of the celebration of International Human Rights Day, TLP-Niger organised a citizens' caravan for democracy. This peaceful activity aims to raise awareness about the respect of fundamental rights and the benefits of a democratic system amongst the people of Niamey.

After the caravan left the TLP-Niger headquarters in Niamey, the police arrested 15 pro-democracy activists. Of these, four were questioned and taken into custody at the central police station in Niamey where they spent the night for unauthorised assembly. They are Armadan Moussa, Biliyaminou Idi, Moubarak Habou and Hima Hamani, all members of TLP-Niger, Niamey section.

Mathieu Pouchier, an advocacy and protection officer for TLP's international secretariat, was arrested in town by four plainclothes police officers while riding his motorcycle. Without formally identifying themselves, the police officers abruptly escorted him to the central police station, questioned him all afternoon and then, at the end of the day, took him into custody for unauthorised assembly. He was not, however, one of the caravaners; only a photo of him in front of the TLP-Niger headquarters, where he works on a daily basis and from where the caravan left, was used as justification for his arrest by the police during his interrogation.

Carrying out this arrest of peaceful human rights defenders on international human rights day makes this action all the more egregious and unacceptable. An employee of an international human rights NGO, who has been working in Niger for more than two years, and who is responsible for the protection of TLP activists, was also arrested. This arrest is in addition to

the numerous arrests of other TLP-Niger activists, who have been regularly targeted and harassed for their civic engagement for four years.

These events take place in a context of high tension between Tournons La Page Niger, supported by many civil society organizations in Niger, and the Nigerien government. Since November 29 and the clashes in Téra (three dead and 18 wounded during a confrontation between citizens and a convoy of the French army supported by the Nigerien gendarmerie), TLP has been demanding justice and that its right to demonstrate be upheld so it can continue to denounce the insecurity and the stagnation of the Barkhane force in the country. Given the consequences for TLP, it seems clear that the Nigerien state considers this issue to be a red line. Through these actions, it is hindering the right to demonstrate, including on this highly symbolic day of December 10, but also the freedom of opinion and expression.

Tournons la Page, Agir ensemble pour les droits humains, Avocats Sans Frontières France, Avocat Sans Frontières Belgique, Action Aid France - Peuples Solidaires, CRID, RITIMO, Survie, Secours Catholique - Caritas France, FIDH and the OMCT, within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders demand the release of the four members of TLP-Niger and the advocacy and protection officer of Agir ensemble pour les droits humains.

The signatory organizations call on the Nigerien authorities to

- Immediately release Armadan Moussa, Biliyaminou Idi, Moubarak Habou and Hima Hamani, all members of TLP-Niger, Niamey section, and Mathieu Pourchier, the advocacy and protection officer of Agir ensemble pour les droits humains and seconded to the international secretariat of Tournons La Page;
- Put an end to all acts of harassment of members of civil society;
- Guarantee the rights of detainees, including adequate hygiene and food, access to health care, and access to the outside world through communication with their lawyers, families and loved ones;
- Guarantee in all circumstances the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association.

The signatory organizations call on the following organizations:

- The Embassy of France, the Delegation of the European Union (EU) and all EU member states to do everything in their power for the immediate release of one of its nationals, arrested in the context of his human rights work;
- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to urge the authorities of Niger to implement the above-mentioned demands.

SIGNATORY ORGANIZATIONS

- Agir ensemble pour les droits humains
- Tournons La Page

- Avocats sans frontières Belgique
- Avocats sans frontières France
- Action Aid France – Peuples Solidaires
- CRID
- FIDH, within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
- RITIMO
- Secours Catholique - Caritas France
- Survie

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