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### **Niger: Judicial harassment against woman human rights defender Samira Sabou**

On 9 September 2021, woman human rights defender and journalist **Samira Sabou** appeared before the Tribunal de Grande Instance Hors Classe in Niamey. The woman human rights defender is being prosecuted for “defamation” and “diffusing information to disrupt public order” under the cyber crime law of 2019. Samira Sabou’s next hearing is scheduled for 4 October 2021.

[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 organises awareness-raising campaigns, alongside other organisations, to promote the role of women in the public arena and guarantee their right to 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 9 September 2021, Samira Sabou appeared before the *Tribunal de Grande Instance Hors Classe de Niamey* facing charges of “defamation” and “diffusing information to disrupt public order” as defined by the cyber crime law of 2019. On 26 May 2021, the woman human rights defender shared an article on her Facebook page which led to the accusations. The article was published by the Global Initiative regarding the Office Central de Répression du Trafic Illicite des Stupéfiants (OCRTIS) alleged reselling of drugs it had seized from illegal trafficking. Samira Sabou was charged alongside journalist Moussa Aksar, who also shared the same article. The hearing comes after months of harassment against the woman human rights defender, during which she was summoned to appear in court and other judicial bodies on several occasions.

On 27 May 2021, Samira Sabou received a call from an anonymous individual who demanded that she present herself to l'Office Central de Répression du Trafic Illicite des Stupéfiants (OCRTIS). Later that day, about 20 police officers arrived at her home and attempted to arrest the woman human rights defender without a warrant. The police officers suddenly left after forcefully entering her home and officers of OCRTIS arrived to arrest her. She was interrogated by OCRTIS officers, without the presence of her lawyer and released later the same day.

On 10 June 2020, Samira Sabou was arrested in Niamey and charged with defamation, following a complaint by the son of the former President of the Republic of Niger, Sani Mahamadou Issoufou. Her arrest was linked to a post she published 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. 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 Sani Mahamadou Issoufou, and she was arrested and detained for over a month at Niamey's civil prison, despite a request for provisional release on the 16th June which was denied. On 28 July 2020, the woman human rights defender was discharged by the High Court of Niamey on the grounds of ‘unconstituted offences’, and released the same day.

Front Line Defenders condemns the continued judicial harassment of the woman human rights defender and journalist Samira Sabou and believes that she is being targeted solely due to her peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Niger to:**

1. Immediately drop all charges against Samira Sabou as it is believed that they are solely motivated by her legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. 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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