

URGENT ACTION

NIGER JOURNALIST SAMIRA SABOU HAS BEEN FREED

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 on.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

Samira Sabou was arrested on 10 June after a defamation complaint against her was filed by Sani Mahamadou Issoufou, the son and deputy chief of staff of the Nigerien President, Mahamadou Issoufou. On 26 May, Samira Sabou commented on her Facebook profile, about the embezzlement and overcharging of defense contracts revealed in an audit of the Ministry of Defense. Although she never referred to an individual in her post, she was charged with "defamation by a means of electronic communication" for both her post, and for a comment made on the post by another Facebook user, who singled Sani Mahamadou Issoufou as one of the culprits. She was subsequently remanded in pre-trial detention and her request for bail was denied. Her trial began on 14 July and the Prosecutor requested a sentence of one month and one week and a 1,000,000 XOF fee against her. Two weeks later, the court ordered her release, dismissing all charges against her. The complainant has appealed against this verdict.

Samira Sabou's detention generated important media focus on the situation of human rights defenders and journalists in Niger, and on the abusive use of the Cybercrime Law to stifle dissenting voices. There was a lot of engagement on her case. In the span of two weeks, more than 5000 people signed a petition and over 2000 e-mails were sent to the President of Niger, calling for her release.

Following her release, Samira Sabou thanked all the organizations that have contributed to her release, including Amnesty International and its members who took action: "I don't forget about Amnesty International, especially the team in Dakar who since the first moment they have highlighted the incoherence related to my arrest.(..) I have been particularly touched by the solidarity and the support that I have received from all corners in the globe". She also highlighted the abusive use of the Cybercriminality Law to harass civil society members and human rights defenders; "I will continue the fight for justice in Niger [by] challenging before the courts, the constitutionality of the Cybercriminality Law, with all free and just men and women".

NAME AND PRONOUN: Samira Sabou (She/her)

THIS IS THE SECOND AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 117/20

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr43/2668/2020/en/>