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NIGER

The past year was a very difficult one for Nigerien journalists, who were beset a dismal economic situation and a reappearance of government repression spurred by the resurgence of a rebellion in the north of the country. Although the establishment of new media outlets and professional organizations gave media advocates some cause for hope, violations of press freedom also multiplied as the rebellion increased in scale.

The media were placed under enormous pressure, particularly from the nominally independent Higher Communications Council (HCC), over their coverage of events in the north. Several media outlets received harsh sanctions, ranging from formal notices to suspensions, for reporting the rebellion in ways that did not conform to the government's point of view. Examples of arbitrary measures taken against the media included the suspension of Radio France International, the banning of the newspaper *Air Info*, restrictions on journalists' movements in the north, and the suppression of broadcast debates on the armed conflict.

Niger's social and economic conditions also bode ill for the media. The country has one of the world's lowest literacy rates, rendering the print media almost irrelevant outside large urban areas. And a struggling economy means that the average cost of a weekly newspaper, XOF 300 (\$.67), is more than half the daily income of an ordinary Nigerien.

On a positive note, the HCC passed a highly anticipated measure, Resolution 02-2007, on August 27, 2007, setting new conditions for creation, installation and operation of private broadcast media. The measure lifted restrictions that prevented community and associative radio stations from broadcasting news bulletins.

NIGER AT A GLANCE

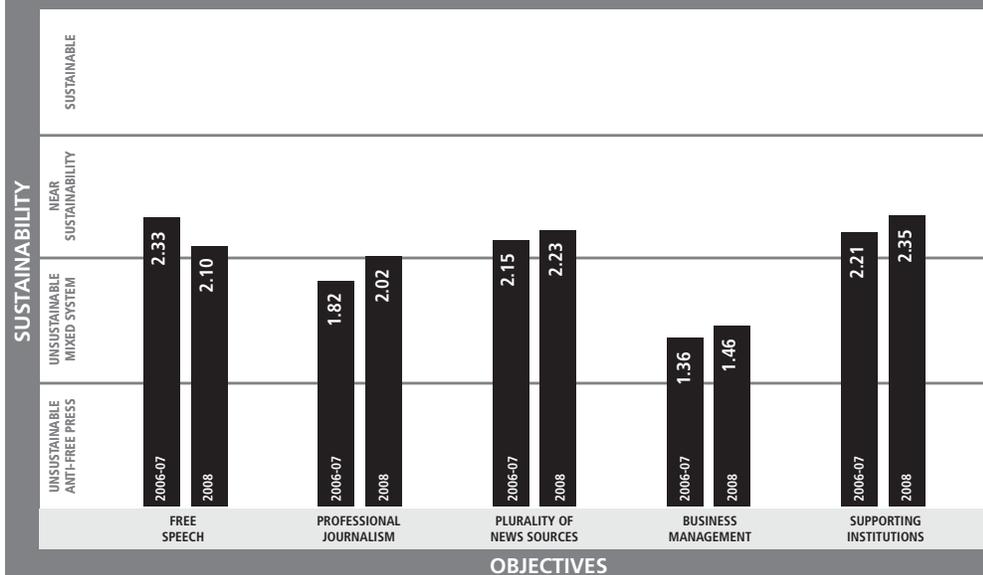
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 15,306,252 (July 2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Niamey
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Haoussa 55.4%, Djerma Sonrai 21%, Tuareg 9.3%, Peuhl 8.5%, Kanouri Manga 4.7%, other 1.2% (2001 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 80%, other (includes indigenous beliefs and Christian) 20% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** French (official), Hausa, Djerma (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2007-Atlas):** \$6.992 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2009)
- > **GNI per capita (2007-PPP):** \$630 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2009)
- > **Literacy rate:** 28.7% (male 42.9%, female 15.1%) (2005 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Mamadou Tandja (since December 22, 1999)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print 2 public newspapers and 65 other publications (source: RJDH, 2007 Report); Radio: 37 stations—8 public stations and 29 private stations (source: RJDH, 2007 Report); Television stations: 2 public stations and 5 private channels (Source: RJDH, 2007 Report).
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Niger Press Agency (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 40,000 (2006 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: NIGER



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Niger Objective Score: 2.10

All of the panelists recognized that freedom of speech is very well protected in legal documents. It is explicitly established in Article 23 of Niger's 1999 constitution and is also contained in international and regional charters ratified by Niger, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. In Nigerien law, freedom of speech is specifically laid out in Order No. 99-67, issued on December 20, 1999, which clearly states that "everyone has the right to the freedom of thought, opinion, speech, conscience, religion, and faith." Freedom of speech in the media is regulated by three main legal texts: Order No. 99-67, concerning the regime of the freedom of the press; Order No. 93-031, concerning broadcast communication; and Organic Law No. 2006-24, concerning the constitution, organization, funding allocation, and functioning of the HCC.

The HCC is an independent administrative authority whose mission is to guarantee and protect the freedom and independence of the media. Independent of the government's executive branch, it issues licenses for radio stations and television channels, monitors editorial content, and ensures that the media respect their ethical obligations and that all persons have access to the media.

But while freedom of speech is legally protected, there are still many problems in this area. The panelists pointed out that the most important pieces of legislation are often not respected, even by the HCC, the institution that is supposed to ensure that they are observed. In any event, this legislation still contains serious loopholes in terms of the sanctions that journalists risk for crimes and offenses they may commit through any form of communication. Libel, for instance, can be punished by imprisonment of up to two years and fines as high as XOF 1 million (\$2,200). Nigerien law also requires that journalists produce evidence of the truthfulness of any allegedly slanderous allegations. According to many panelists, this situation is a serious hindrance to the journalism profession in Niger.

The Nigerien government had promised in March 2007 to submit to the National Assembly a proposed amendment to the law that would decriminalize press offenses. However, this promise was quickly forgotten and the freedom of the press considerably decreased when the northern rebellion erupted. According to a list based on a report by the Journalists Network for Human Rights, in 2007 there were two serious

Albert Chaibou, editor in chief of the newspaper Alternative, stressed the hindrances in the exercise of the freedom of the press caused by the armed conflict in the north. He recounted that domestic and international journalists were banned from going to the combat zone in the Agadez region, and the ban on private radio stations organizing live debates about the rebellion.

cases of threats against journalists, not to mention the warnings, words of caution, publication bans and suspensions ordered by the HCC.

Albert Chaibou, editor in chief of the newspaper *Alternative*, stressed the hindrances in the exercise of the freedom of the press caused by the armed conflict in the north. He recounted that domestic and international journalists were banned from going to the combat zone in the Agadez region, and the ban on private radio stations organizing live debates about the rebellion. This situation reveals the limits of the HCC's independence, which had become an ally of the government in restricting the freedom of the press.

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

Fatchima Karimou also criticized media owners for paying journalists ridiculously low salaries. "The insignificant earnings of journalists has generated a sort of professional prostitution," she said.

According to Ibrahim Manzo Diallo, publication manager of the provincial newspapers *Air Info* and *Damagaram Info*, the HCC also has not shown respect for the law when it allocates licenses for radio services. License issuing is obviously selective and does not necessarily conform to legislation. "Many applications for frequency licenses are in limbo, somewhere between the offices of the Higher Communications Council and those of the ministry in charge of the media," Diallo said. This was confirmed by Chatou Mahamadou, manager of Alternative Radio, who complained about the "restrictions applied to truly independent outlets."

Some panelists said they believe that such infringements of the fairness principle are also manifest in the way the government limits access to official information. "Media access to information is extremely selective, particularly for the private press, which is not allowed in Cabinet meetings," said Moussa Saley, head of academic affairs at the Information and Communications Techniques Training Institute. According to Fatchima Karimou, an independent journalist and member of the Journalists' Network for Human Rights, public officials "are reluctant to give interviews and release even the smallest piece of information to journalists from the private media, with the excuse that they will use it in a biased fashion." Instead, said Diaffra Fadimou Moumouni, a journalist with national television and member of the Association of African Communications Professionals, "the public press has absolute priority with government-issued information." Babakar N'diaye Ameth, manager of the communication agency MultiCom, expressed regret that there is "no law guaranteeing access to public information, which remains the exclusive reserve of the state administration."

The panelists acknowledged, however, that the general public's access to the news remains a recognized right in Niger, even in the absence of specific legislation, and that the government does not restrict access to international news through traditional media or the Internet. "Access to international news is not supervised in Niger," said Djenaba Hima Souley, manager of the first channel of Ténéré, a private radio and television network. If they have the means, citizens can freely go on-line and access satellite media. But given Niger's narrow bandwidth and shaky Internet

connections, it is still difficult for the media to download or upload their productions.

Hima also pointed out that access to the journalism profession "is subject to no particular restriction." However, in 2007 the HCC implemented a Press Board in charge of issuing mandatory professional journalist cards.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Niger Objective Score: 2.02

Although Nigerien journalists make considerable efforts to provide the public with quality content, much remains to be done before an acceptable degree of professionalism is reached. In the opinion of many panelists, the crucial problem is journalists' failure to observe the ethical rules and responsibilities of journalism. "The great principles of journalistic ethics are greatly ignored," said Sophie Gazéré, a journalist and sales manager with the publicly-owned National Office for Editing and Publishing. Most of those who practice the profession seem to know nothing about the principles stated in the Nigerien professional journalists' charter, and efforts made by professional organizations and other supporting institutions do not seem to have changed anything.

Most of the panelists also noted that many journalists try hard to improve their performance. This nuance is particularly important because the HCC has brandished the lack of respect of ethical and deontological rules as a sufficient reason for a number of arbitrary restrictions, such as the ban on live debates on topics related to the rebellion in the north.

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

Hima said she believes that journalists do not respect the principle of balanced news, which she said explains the avalanche of libel trials and detentions of journalists. Boubacar Diallo, chairman of the Independent Press Publishers Association, said he agreed, but suggested that the problem arises from “the practitioners’ lack of training, their awful working conditions and the submissiveness of the public media, which have become nothing more than a propaganda and personality cult machine.”

Self-censorship is the rule in the government media, whereas in the private media subjectivity prevails with respect to the coverage of political affairs, Chaibou noted. This can be explained, he said, by “the fact that journalists in the public sector are afraid of being punished by their superiors and [by] the partisanship of those in the private sector who cut deals with politicians.” Fatchima Karimou said that in private media, “press owners are involved in politics, and their political activism makes them use censorship for the profit of their political sidekicks.”

Fatchima Karimou also criticized media owners for paying journalists ridiculously low salaries. “The insignificant earnings of journalists has generated a sort of professional prostitution,” she said. Mahamadou said that “life is not always easy for most fellow journalists working for private radios since they do not even receive the minimum wage.” Just like the volunteers in the public media, journalists and other employees in the private sector are badly paid and have no social benefits due to the lack of a collective contract. Hima agreed, and said the situation leaves journalists vulnerable to corruption: “The practice of keeping salaries low is widespread in media companies and explains why journalists are tempted to find other means to get by.” Nadia Karimou, a journalist with Ténére Television, argued that breaches of ethical rules can only be eliminated if the living and working conditions of journalists are improved.

“We have a long way to go until we reach the goal of professional quality,” said N’diaye Babacar Ameth, despite the efforts made to raise the level of professionalism among journalists. “The need to recycle is especially strong for our fellow journalists in the broadcast field,” Fatchima Karimou said; her colleague, Diaffra Fadimou Moumouni, a journalist with the public television channel and member of the Association of Nigerien Communication Professionals, pointed out that journalists are also hindered by a lack of high-performance or state-of-the-art equipment in newsrooms. But the panelists agreed that neither the lack of qualifications nor the absence of decent salaries and efficient equipment are enough to explain the low degree of professionalism in the media—particularly the government media, where journalists are well qualified, paid, and

equipped, but the public service notion is lost behind a plethora of reports and programs that only sing the praises of the country’s leaders.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Niger Objective Score: 2.23

The liberalization of Niger’s media sector has made available multiple news sources that offer information on various subjects. There are 60 private newspapers that appear more or less regularly, two government newspapers, 20 local commercial radio stations, one nationwide government radio station, six regional radio stations, two government television channels, four private television channels, and 102 community and associative radio stations. Unlike other countries in the region, Niger has no Internet-produced and published media, but most newspapers are available on-line through www.tamtaminfo.com, a news aggregation site operated from the United States.

Given Niger’s high rate of illiteracy, the written press is essentially limited to the capital, Niamey. In recent years, however, a few titles have appeared elsewhere in the country, including *Air info*, *Air Actualités*, and *Racines* in Agadez, *Le Damagaram* and *Les Échos du Damagaram* in Zinder, and *Transparence* in Maradi. *Le Sahel*, run by the government, is still the only daily newspaper in the country. The bulk of the Nigerien written press is made up of weekly opinion newspapers.

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens’ access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

Radio is the most popular and accessible medium among ordinary citizens. While most commercial private radio stations are based in urban centers for economic reasons, there are more than 100 community and associative radios spread throughout the country. Often created with the support of international institutions and NGOs, these radio stations often cover several villages within a 70-kilometer radius.

Newspaper distribution continues to be a real headache for Nigerian publishers; there is no professional distribution system, so street selling is the main means of distribution. The development of long-haul transportation companies in recent years has made it much easier for newspapers to reach remote areas within and outside of Niger. "The biggest problem continues to be the lack of a reliable and efficient system to collect and deposit the sales receipts for the benefit of the newspapers," Diallo said.

Radio is the most popular and accessible medium among ordinary citizens. While most commercial private radio stations are based in urban centers for economic reasons, there are more than 100 community and associative radios spread throughout the country. Often created with the support of international institutions and NGOs, these radio stations often cover several villages within a 70-kilometer radius. Community stations are generally ill-equipped, their volunteer personnel are not qualified, and their programs can be appallingly bad. Despite the HCC's move to allow community and associative radio stations to air news bulletins, these stations obviously lack the financial and human resources to accomplish this mission.

Panelists noted that these stations have to survive in a precarious and unstable environment, as their financing seems to depend on the good will of their sponsors. Essentially derived from notices, communiqués, and selling listener cards, their income is insignificant and cannot cover all operational expenses, such as hosts' bonuses, office and equipment maintenance, and buying fungibles. Nigerian legislation forbids these stations from selling advertising as a means of financing, but they are also excluded from the legally stipulated subsidy for the media.

There is only one national news service, the state-run Nigerien Press Agency (NPA), which has been in a state of stagnation for years due to financial and logistic difficulties. Its dispatches are essentially used to feed the government media. The NPA owes money to its partner agencies and is merely a shadow of what it once was. Several foreign news services are available, including the Pan-African News Agency, Agence France-Presse, the African Press Agency, Inter Press Service, Reuters, and the Associated Press. Several international broadcasters (including RFI, BBC, VOA, Deutsche Welle, Radio Canada and Radio Tehran) have local correspondents and are often allowed to broadcast shows dedicated to the Nigerien public in FM.

The main issue for broadcast media is improving their capability to produce their own programs. Nigerian law requires that the majority of media content be produced locally and in the national languages, but most media outlets, particularly television stations, cannot produce their own news programs. The state-run media are also unable to observe the quotas set by the law, in addition to not correctly reflecting the diversity of opinions and interests within Nigerian society. The panelists agreed that the public media cannot carry out their public service mission for, as Chaibou put it, "they are in the exclusive service of whoever is in power." The content of the public media focuses essentially on governmental activities, Ameth said. At the same time, partisan reporting also occurs with the private media.

Ali Idrissa, deputy general manager of Dounia Radio-Television, called speculation around owners' identity absurd. Anyone, he said, can easily access ownership information, which is available and verifiable in the dossiers submitted by the owners to the Attorney General's Office or the HCC. However, many other panelists disagreed and said that since the identity of the *real* owners of these media is unknown, readers and listeners can only speculate about the objectivity of productions.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Niger Objective Score: 1.46

The panel debates around this objective were particularly stormy and passionate, ending with a clear consensus that the economic situation of the media is extremely bleak, particularly for private media. "The media activity in Niger is not at all profitable," said Diallo, despite the availability of multiple revenue sources including street sales, advertising, and various other services.

In the general opinion of the panelists, Nigerien media outlets cannot be considered well managed or profitable. In fact, Nadia Karimou said, “the media are the most ill-managed businesses in Niger.” Most outlets, particularly newspapers, have no reliable accounting departments and no business plans. Most outlets do not have the means to implement a rigorous management system and recruit qualified personnel, said Gazéré. And most owners and publishers lack even the spirit of enterprise.

Hima said that “the revenue taken in by the media is negligible,” and Diallo said revenue does not even cover operational expenses. The weekly opinion newspapers that make up the bulk of the Nigerien written press print 500 to 2,000 copies and sell them for an average of XOF 300 (\$.67), which partially explains the general drop in sales that has been recorded in recent years.

Because of the poor economy, only about 10 newspapers manage to consistently publish on schedule. In 2007, newspapers were able to significantly improve this due to advertising from cellular telephone companies.

The advertising market is weak, said Idrissa. “The main problem is the lack of appropriate regulation of the advertising market,” said Abdourahmane Ousmane, chairman of the Journalists’ Network for Human Rights.

Osmane complained that most advertisers like to think of themselves as media benefactors. He said the advertising market is dominated by amateurs who provide advertising based on completely subjective criteria, while in other countries the market is regulated by advertising agencies and departments. The current anarchy in this market is only profitable for advertisers who place their own prices on the

Because of the poor economy, only about 10 newspapers manage to consistently publish on schedule. In 2007, newspapers were able to significantly improve this due to advertising from cellular telephone companies.

media, Hima said. Idrissa condemned what he called “the misappropriation of advertising funds by local agents of some companies.”

The panel discussion made clear that media managers do not make the necessary effort to put an end to the current situation. While it is the HCC’s responsibility to regulate the advertising market, media managers can also take collective initiatives. On this point, Ameth, the manager of Multi-Com advertising agency, tried to show the panelists that the situation could change very easily if media managers should agree to negotiate with communication agencies and advertising departments. But his proposition was not considered appropriate by some of the panelists, who did not hide their distrust of go-betweens. According to Ousmane, there would not be a lack of trust between media managers and advertising agencies if a regulatory system were in place: the roles of each actor would be clearly defined and all interests would be taken into account in order to avoid conflicts and protect jobs.

That crisis of trust would also be overcome if reliable statistical data concerning the media—such as audience ratings, print runs, and sales figures—were regularly processed and made available to the public. But such data is unavailable, making it difficult even for advertisers to decide wisely which media outlets they should choose as carriers for their messages.

The panelists agreed that the authorities, through the HCC, have an important role to play in the creation of a favorable economic environment for media. The most important national documents governing the communication sector are very clear on the matter: they stress the duty of the state to support the development of the media and guarantee their independence by implementing direct and indirect public mechanisms to aid the media. A press fund was effectively created in 2007, and the government made available XOF 80 million (\$180,000), distributing part of it to 41 independent press outlets. But this amount was deemed insufficient to counter the enormous problems facing the media. Hima said she believes that the government money received by the media simply returns to state coffers in the form of taxes and other fees.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

Panelists agreed that continuous training opportunities for journalists are scarce, although a few media-support organizations and NGOs offer training sessions. Not many journalists have access to retraining or improvement workshops, and employers very rarely share the costs of those workshops.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Niger Objective Score: 2.35

There are several socio-professional media organizations in Niger, including unions, associations, and thematic networks. In 2007, three new media-related organizations were approved by the state: the National Information and Communication Workers Union, the National Joint Committee of Community Radio, and the Journalists Network on Questions of Security and Peace. In the same year, the Media House, with its 14 socio-professional organizations as members, was given a new boost.

Generally, these organizations make great efforts to improve the skills of journalists, clean up the profession and develop a fraternal spirit. The panelists recognized that the private press groups constitute a very efficient opposition force. These associations proved their independence and capacity to pressure the government on many occasions by issuing statements, denouncing violations of freedom of the press,

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

and organizing demonstrations in support of imprisoned journalists. In their struggle, the Nigerien organizations are backed by national and global human rights associations.

Ousmane said it was important to point out that international organizations have become much more active than national ones when Nigerien journalists are arbitrary victims of government action. At the same time, the owners' associations in the broadcast sector do not make as much effort on behalf of their members as the Nigerien Independent Press Publishers' Association. This remark was seconded by Oumarou Narey, a teacher-researcher at the University of Niamey, who confessed that he was not even aware of the existence of owners' organizations in the broadcast sector, and by Idrissa, who confirmed that these organizations are inactive when compared to the independent publishers group. Based on personal experience, Idrissa added that "Nigerien non-governmental organizations often act according to their affinities against violations of the freedom of speech."

Regarding journalism education, panelists agreed that the Information and Communications Techniques Training Institute has an excellent reputation throughout Africa. But some of the panelists were critical of the training offered there. The degrees the school offers do not prepare graduates to work in the written press, said Ousmane, who recognized that "students with broadcast training are qualified to start working immediately." According to Saley, the institute's head of academic affairs, it does try to improve its programs but that the number of graduates who found jobs in the written press has never been higher than 10. Gazéré said that expecting the print-media graduates to be immediately as efficient as their broadcasting counterparts is not realistic.

Panelists agreed that continuous training opportunities for journalists are scarce, although a few media-support organizations and NGOs offer training sessions. Not many journalists have access to retraining or improvement workshops, and employers very rarely share the costs of those workshops. Noting that the choice of topics for training is in the hands of the media-support groups, Narey noted that "one may wonder if the programs proposed really correspond to the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries."

Panelists said they were pleased that there are many small, private printing plants for newspapers. The government does not supervise this sector, and printers are apolitical. In the telecommunications sector, private or semi-private companies tend to act more according to market laws than based on partisan criteria. However, Idrissa, deputy manager of Dounia Radio-Television, said that SONITEL, a semi-private company, refused to offer his outlet a service it had requested.

List of Panel Participants

Abdourahamane Ousmane, journalist and chairman,
Journalist Network for Human Rights, Niamey

Albert Chaibou, journalist and editor-in-chief, *Alternative*
newspaper; chairman, International Union of Francophone
Press-Niger, Niamey

Ali Idrissa, deputy general manager, Dounia Radio Television,
Niamey

Boubacar Diallo, journalist, manager, *Libération* newspaper;
chairman, Association of Nigerien Independent Press Editors,
Niamey

Chatou Mahamadou, manager, Alternative FM, Niamey

Diaffra Fadimou Moumouni, journalist, secretary-general,
Association of Nigerien Communication Professionals; former
secretary-general, ORTN, Niamey

Djenebou Hima Souley, manager, Ténéré Radio Television,
Niamey

Fatchima Karimou, independent journalist, member,
Journalists Network for Human Rights, Niamey

Gazéré Sophie Ledru, journalist, sales manager, National
Office for Editing and Publishing, Niamey

Manzo Diallo Ibrahim, journalist; publisher, *Air Info* (Agadez)
and *Damagaram Info* (Zinder)

Moussa Saley, head of academic affairs, Institute for Training
in Information and Communication, Niamey

Nadia Karimou, journalist, editor in chief, Ténéré private
television, Niamey

Narey Oumarou, teacher and researcher, Department of
Economic and Juridic Sciences, Abdou Moumouni University
of Niamey, Niamey

N'Diaye Babacar Ameth, manager, MultiCom (marketing and
advertising agency), Niamey

Moderator

A.T. Moussa Tchangari, director, Alternative Communication
Group, Niamey

Assistant Moderator

Hamadou Boulama, journalist, Alternative Communication
Group, Niamey