

August 25, 2023

We, journalists, directors of media outlets and press freedom advocacy organisations, established and working in Africa, have received reports of numerous attacks on press freedom since the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP) seized power in Niger on 26 July 2023.

1. Two days after the coup, unidentified individuals attacked crews from Nigerien radio-TV broadcaster *Anfani* and damaged a camera from private TV channel *Bonferey*. They were covering a press conference by women from the political party of deposed president Mohamed Bazoum.
2. Journalist Soufiane Maman Hassan, publisher of the newspaper *Le Témoin de l'Histoire*, reported being stopped in the street by masked men. They threatened to come to his house "very soon," to take him away. They told him to watch out for what he published in his newspaper and on his social media.
3. On 29 July, a member of the CNSP support committee called publicly for the indefinite suspension of western media. On 3 August, the TV channel *France 24* and radio broadcaster *RFI* were shut down until further notice.
4. While covering demonstrations, international media correspondents have been threatened on multiple occasions by people hostile to their presence. On 19 August three of them were attacked physically, with two of them injured. They had been covering a recruitment ceremony for Volunteers of the Homeland (VDP).
5. On 4 August, journalist and blogger Samira Sabou received an intimidating phone call by a member of the military close to the junta after she had shared on social media, as a news item, a post by deposed president Bazoum. She condemns a "*denial of the right to practice the profession ethically.*"

Amid multiple calls to the CNSP to respect press freedom by the *Maison de la presse* of Niger, by those who stand in solidarity with Nigerien journalists and international correspondents, we reiterate the need, in this moment of crisis, for diverse and reliable coverage of events, based on respect for the ethical standards of the profession. We demand that the junta respect the right to information, and to media pluralism and independence.

Specifically, we call on the CNSP to:

1. Safeguard the safety of local and international journalists:

- End verbal attacks and threats against journalists, including by CNSP members, and to publicly condemn such attacks when they occur.
- Remove all obstacles, of whatever kind, to criminal investigation of threats and attacks on journalists, which must be undertaken in order to identify and prosecute those responsible, whoever they may be.

2. Respect media-protection legal provisions:

- The 2010 ruling on press freedom ends prison sentences for press crimes.
- Since 2022, the cyber-crime law no longer includes imprisonment for crimes committed by electronic media outlets, including slander or defamation by journalists.

However, provisions of this law against crimes of treason, terrorism and threat to state security pose the risk of unwarranted repression of journalists.

We call on the CNSP to commit publicly to not invoke against journalists, because of their journalistic work, laws on treason, terrorism and state security.

3. Respect citizens' right to be informed:

- Preserve and respect citizens' right to be informed.
- Lift the suspension of media outlets such as *RFI* and *France 24*.
- Maintain internet platforms and social media open, protected, inclusive and accessible.

4. Respect media pluralism, diversity and independence

- The CNSP must treat information as a public good and respect the pluralism and independence of independent media.
- Media access to adequate and stable financing must not encounter obstacles.

Our appeal is also directed to other States in the Sahel controlled by the military. We remind them of their duty to respect the rights of journalists, especially the right of access to information, in the interest of inhabitants of the Sahel.