

Publish What You Pay Press Release

PWYP gravely concerned at increased repression of transparency activists in Niger

London, 26 August 2009: Publish What You Pay (PWYP)* is gravely concerned by the increased repression of civil society activists in Niger after ROTAB**/PWYP Niger member Wada Maman was arrested in Niamey on Saturday 22 August.

Wada Maman is Secretary General of Transparency International's chapter in Niger, the *Association Nigérienne de Lutte contre la Corruption* (ANLC). He is one of six civil society members of the EITI*** multistakeholder group in Niger who recently announced their decision to **suspend** participation in the national EITI process in protest at increasingly serious incidents of harassment and intimidation against Nigerien activists campaigning for good governance and transparency.

Mr. Maman is accused of allegedly participating in an unauthorized demonstration organised on 22 August by civil society and political parties to protest at the recent constitutional reform initiated by Niger's President Mamadou Tandja. He was in a taxi when members of the Republican Guard apprehended him and took him into custody. He was later transferred to a police camp in Niamey. At the time of his arrest Maman was heading in the opposite direction to the protest and denies intending to participate in it.

This incident is the latest in a continuing series of arrests of civil society activists, including those campaigning for transparency and accountability in the natural resource sector, following protests over the contested constitutional reform.

On 10 August 2009, Marou Amadou, president of the United Front for the Safeguard of Democratic Assets (FUSAD), and member of the ROTAB/PWYP Niger was arrested for "undermining state authority" following the publication of a declaration by FUSAD denouncing President Tandja's regime. Amadou is currently being held in the Koutoukalé high security prison and is awaiting trial.

Freedom of expression, association and assembly are essential for a free and open debate on the management of the country's natural resource wealth. The continued harassment and intimidation of civil society representatives, including those sitting on the EITI multistakeholder group, is in violation of Niger's obligations to ensure free and independent participation of civil society in the EITI, an initiative which Niger joined in 2005 as an implementing country and which champions dialogue between the government, civil society and companies. The government of Niger is also a member of the international Board of the EITI, along with representatives of other governments, the private sector and civil society.

PWYP calls for the immediate and unconditional release of PWYP Niger members Marou Amadou and Wada Maman and all those arrested simply for engaging in legitimate and peaceful activities promoting good governance and democratic principles.

PWYP calls on the Nigerien authorities to end all forms of harassment and intimidation of civil society activists and to allow an open debate on transparency and governance in the country.

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Notes:

* Publish What You Pay (PWYP) is a global civil society coalition with over 300 member groups who work together for greater transparency in the oil, gas and mining industries.

** The PWYP Niger national coalition is called *Réseau des Organisations pour la Transparence et l'Analyse Budgétaire* (ROTAB).

*** The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) is a global multi-stakeholder initiative for disclosure of company payments and government revenues from oil, gas and mining. The participation of independent civil society is a fundamental component of the multistakeholder nature of the EITI. Niger joined EITI in 2005 and has a deadline of 9 March 2010 to become fully compliant with the initiative.

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