

President of the Republic of Niger
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Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern that journalist Mamane Kaka Touda has been detained since 5 March at Niamey Civil Prison, after he published a post on social media regarding a suspected case of COVID-19 infection in Niamey Reference Hospital. He was arrested at home on the same day and charged with “disseminating data tending to disturb public order”.

Since 9 March, prison guards have refused to take the food delivered by Mamane Kaka Touda’s aunt and give it to him because his aunt does not have a communication permit. The permit is only given to close relatives, including spouses, parents and siblings.

I am deeply concerned that Mamane Kaka Touda’s rights have been violated. The authorities must protect journalists, whistle blowers, activists and human rights defenders, in accordance with the country’s international obligations to protect human rights.

In light of the above, I urge you to ensure that:

- Charges against Mamane Kaka Touda are dropped and that he is immediately and unconditionally released;
- Pending his release, he has prompt, regular and unrestricted access to a lawyer of his choice and access to his family without delay;
- The right to freedom of expression is fully respected, protected and promoted.

Yours sincerely,