

NIGER | Important step towards the recognition and legal protection of human rights defenders

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After starting the process in 2016, civil society in Niger, with the support of ISHR, presented a draft law for the promotion and protection of human rights defenders for debate and adoption to the government. This draft law was substantially inspired from [the model national law on the recognition and protection of human rights defenders](#) developed by ISHR in 2016.



The activity, co-hosted by the Collectif des Organisations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme et de la Démocratie (Coddhd) and ISHR, took place over two days, 11 and 12 July. Among the participants were the Interministerial Committee responsible for drafting reports to treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review, the representative of the Minister of Justice, members of parliament, lawyers, magistrates, and civil society members.

During the opening ceremony Mr Sani Maman Ousseini Djibage, representative of the Minister of Justice in Niger, welcomed the initiative and recalled that 'Niger has ratified several human rights protection instruments which protect human rights defenders. A specific law on the protection of human rights defenders in Niger would be a significant step to implement the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders of 1998. The Government of Niger stands ready to carry this process through to the end'.

'The adoption of such a law is crucial in improving the promotion and protection of HRDs in Niger. It is important that the Council of Ministers as well as the Parliament take into consideration civil society concerns in their discussions' said Mr Abdoulaye Kanni, Coordinator of Coddhd.

Mrs Adelaide Etong Kame, ISHR's Africa Advocacy Consultant reminded the participants that the guarantee of an effective protection of human rights defenders cannot be achieved without the support of all relevant actors, including the defenders themselves.

During those two days, participants reviewed the draft and provided amendments. The text ensures the protection of human rights defenders during exercise of their human rights work, against reprisals and unlawful restrictions. The draft also takes into consideration the specific threats and risks faced by women defenders by including a provision to protect them.

Finally, the draft suggests the establishment of a Committee for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (CPDDH) to ensure the effective implementation of the law and the recognition and protection of the rights of human rights defenders.

ISHR and the Coddhd encourage the Niger authorities to continue their work to guarantee the best possible protection to human rights defenders through the process of enacting the law and ensuring that it is in line with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and other relevant instruments. To this end, they reiterate their willingness and availability to accompany the authorities through this process.

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