



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Niger opposition groups protest President Tandja's attempts to stay in power, 2009

Time period notes: *Some action occurred after August 4 (the date of the referendum that granted Tandja further authority) but the action certainly diminished. The referendum basically ended the nonviolent campaign.*

May

2009

to: August

2009

Country: Niger

Location City/State/Province: Niamey; Zinder

Location Description: city streets of Niger

Goals:

The opposition's main goal was to prevent President Mamadou Tandja from changing the Constitution in a way that would allow him a third term in office.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 097. Protest strike
- 117. General strike
- 125. Boycott of government employment and positions › resignation of government ministers

Methods in 4th segment:

- 038. Marches

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 097. Protest strike
- 117. General strike

Methods in 5th segment:

Methods in 6th segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Democracy

Group characterization:

- human rights groups
- opposition parties
- unions

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Front for the Defense of Democracy (FDD) [leader: Mahamadou Issoufou]; Moumouni Djermakoye Adamou (who died from natural causes during the course of the campaign); 7 main labor unions [leader: Hassoumi Dijibo]; United Front for the Protection of Democracy (FUSAD) [leader: Marou Amadou]

Partners:

Not known

External allies:

European Union; France; United States; Abdou Diouf [former president of Senegal and head of the International Francophone Organization]; RADDHO [African human rights group]; Organization of French-Speaking Countries

Involvement of social elites:

Democratic and Social Convention (CDS) [former allies of Tandja]

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Front for the Defense of Democracy (FDD)

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

- 7 main labor unions
- Democratic and Social Convention (CDS)
- Strike Participants

Groups in 4th Segment:

- Abdou Diouf
- European Union
- France
- Moumouni Djermakoye Adamou
- Organization of French-Speaking Countries
- United States

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

- RADDHO [African human rights group]

Segment Length: *Approximately 15 days*

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

President Mamadou Tandja; police

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

There were some violent conflicts between the protesters and police at some of the rallies.

Repressive Violence:

The police arrested and used teargas on the campaigners

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

1 point out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

The referendum set up by President Tandja still occurred, and he won, therefore allowing him to extend his mandate indefinitely. A military coup d'etat finally forced Tandja out of office. The campaign gets 1 point for weakening Tandja.

All infrastructure survived, as well as the group itself.

The original opposition groups gained many external allies, including powerful countries.

so as to allow him a third five-year term in office (extending past December when his mandate was supposed to expire). President Tandja ordered a referendum on the matter to take place in early August. The Front for the Defense of Democracy (FDD) led most of the protests and strikes.

Small-scale protests began in May once President Tandja dissolved parliament. On June 14, 2009, tens of thousands of protesters organized in Niger's capital Niamey. The FDD organized the protest, although many opposition parties, unions, and rights groups were involved. The demonstrators rallied as well. They marched and shouted slogans, under the leadership of Mahamadou Issoufou and a few others.

On June 24, the seven major labor unions called for a 24-hour general strike, and the next day thousands of workers went on a general strike. The strike was meant to protest President Tandja's efforts to change the constitution. Hassoumi Dijibo was one of the union leaders who organized this strike. While workers in the banks, the health service, and the state financial services greatly supported the strike, those in the transport and business sectors barely participated in the strike.

On June 25, 7 of the 8 ministers (employed under Tandja) resigned in protest of Tandja's attempts to extend his rule. The ministers were from the Democratic and Social Convention (CDS) and had supported Tandja for the past decade. Tandja also had lost support from the Economic Community of West African States. On June 27, the opposition called for mass resistance, even appealing to the army not to obey orders. In the following days, President Tandja dissolved the constitutional court.

On July 1, the opposition held a second strike in both Niamey and Zinder. While the strike was pretty slow, government workers participated in the strike. Additionally, the opposition to Tandja gained allies in the Organization of French-Speaking Countries and Abdou Diouf (head of the International Francophone Organization).

On July 5, tens of thousands of protesters demonstrated in Niamey, walking or riding motorbikes. The FDD led the protest and rally. The rally occurred in front of the former parliament building. At this point, the EU, France, and the U.S. had all condemned Tandja's decisions.

On August 4, Niger held the referendum. The vote favored amending the constitution, allowing Tandja to assume power beyond his mandate. On August 9, the United Front for the Protection of Democracy (FUSAD) rejected the referendum result in a statement and called for a "general mobilization" to overthrow Tandja. As a result, Marou Amadou (leader of FUSAD and spokesman for the FDD) was arrested for "breaching state security". On August 11, Niger police utilized teargas against a crowd of political figures and human rights activists who had come to Amadou's trial. The police freed Amadou later that day.

On August 22, police used teargas again against opponents. Several were injured, while many others were arrested. Many clashes with police between groups persisted.

While Tandja was able to stay in power because of the referendum, the U.S. still called for Tandja to step down in late December. The U.S. announced that it was suspending millions of dollars in aid and also banning his supporters from visiting the United States.

On February 18, 2010, Nigerian troops seized Tandja in a violent coup d'état, and Tandja finally gave up power.

Research Notes

Sources:

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Additional Notes:

While nonviolence weakened the opponent, a violent coup d'etat overthrew President Tandja.

Edited by Max Rennebohm (15/07/2011)

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Samantha Bennett, 08/03/2011

A project of Swarthmore College, including Peace and Conflict Studies, the Peace Collection, and the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility.

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Source URL (retrieved on 07/10/2020 - 21:41): <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/niger-opposition-groups-protest-president-tandja-s-attempts-stay-power-2009>

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