



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Niger women campaign for inclusion in National Assembly, 1991

- African Democracy Campaigns (early 1990s)

Time period notes: Because the goals of the campaign were not very clearly met, the endpoint of the campaign is not entirely clear.

13 May

1991

to: July

1991

Country: Niger

Location City/State/Province: Niamey

Goals:

To gain more representation for women by having more female delegates in the National Conference and the Preparatory Committee to the National Conference.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support › Houa Alio presented the Prime Minister with a nine-point letter demanding to have female representation in all of the delegations taking place during the Preparatory Committee.
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention › Women urged the people of Niger to become more involved in the political process as a whole. Organized a general assembly with the explicit intention of using it to compromise with other Preparatory Committee members for greater representation.
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications › Women protesters carried signs reading "Stop Injustice!" "Equal Rights!" and "Down with the National Conference without Women!"
- 038. Marches
- 048. Protest meetings
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance › Houa Alio, the only female delegate in the Preparatory Committee to the National Conference, resigned in solidarity with the women of Niger.
- 125. Boycott of government employment and positions

Methods in 2nd segment:

Methods in 3rd segment:

Methods in 4th segment:

Methods in 5th segment:

- 038. Marches › Women marched again after the postponement of the National Conference to show their frustration with the lack of equal representation in the Preparatory Committee.

Methods in 6th segment:

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 013. Deputations

Notes on Methods:

Technically, after the 3rd segment, in which the women organized to compromise with Preparatory Committee officials and representatives for further representation, they attained their goal. Nevertheless, their decision to march again after further representation was attained as a result of these compromises suggests a discontent with the resulting amount of female representation.

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Democracy

Group characterization:

- women's groups

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Houa Alio, others not known.

Partners:

Not known

External allies:

Not known

Involvement of social elites:

Not known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Additional notes on joining/exiting order:

It's not clear that there is a specific leader to this movement; although Houa Alio certainly emerges as a figurehead, it is not clear that she is the primary organizer of the events.

Segment Length: Approximately 2 weeks

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Niger Prime Minister Aliou Mahamidou, Niger President Ali Saibou, Governmental structure of representation in Niger, non-compliant delegates of the Preparatory Committee and National Conference.

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

None known

Campaigner violence:

None known

Repressive Violence:

None known

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

3 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Notes on outcomes:

The goals were unclear, and although the women did succeed in getting some amount of representation, they were clearly not satisfied with the resulting 5 delegates. Therefore, a total achievement of the goals was not attained.

The women's organization, the General Assembly of Niger Women, survived despite governmental repression.

Since the total number of participants in the campaign is unknown (only that thousands marched in the first march in May of 1991) no growth score is given.

The 1990s in Africa was a period of broad political movement towards the greater involvement of women in positions of power—this campaign is a part of that change.

In November of 1990 in Niger, President Ali Saibou announced that a Preparatory Committee to organize a National Conference would take place before May 27 of the following year, on which date the National Conference would begin. The agenda of this National Conference, to be held at the National Assembly building in Niger's capital city of Niamey, was to transition the country from 17 years of military-led rule to a multi-party democracy. Out of 68 delegates for the Preparatory Committee, one, Houa Alio, was a woman.

On May 11, 1991, the Prime Minister Aliou Mahamidou met with a number of interest groups that were involved with the Preparatory Committee. The meeting participants agreed on a structure of representation in which the Union of Niger Women would have seven representatives at the Preparatory Committee.

However, many Niger women did not accept this low level of representation and wanted a greater input in the future direction of the nation. The first, and most well known protest showing disapproval of the scarce representation of women in the Preparatory Committee took place on May 13, 1991, two weeks before the scheduled National Conference date. Several thousand women marched from the national assembly to the Prime Minister's office in the center of the capital, and occupied the Ministry of External Affairs, where the Preliminary Committee was meant to meet. The women carried signs that read, "Down with the

National Conference without women!", "Stop Injustice!", and "Equal Rights!" They also shouted, "Away with the National Conference without Women!"

Alio resigned from the Preparatory Committee in solidarity. Acting as the spokesperson of the movement, she had earlier given the Prime Minister a nine-point letter demanding to have female representation in all of the delegations taking place during the Preparatory Committee.

Despite the May 13th protest, the Prime Minister began the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee at noon of the same day.

Six days later, on May 19, the General Assembly of Niger Women urged the people of Niger to become more involved in the political process by joining unions, associations, and political parties with the end goal of contributing to the National Conference's nation building process. The women organized a general assembly in order to begin compromising with members of the Preparatory Committee for greater representation in the soon-to-be-held National Conference.

As of May 21, the General Assembly of Niger Women agreed to allow four more women to join the representation. A political party also said it would replace one of its own representatives on the commission with a woman.

The date of the conference was postponed allegedly due to a lack of funds, although several political parties in opposition to the Prime Minister at the time saw this postponement as an attempt on his part to keep himself in power, and to slow transitional movements towards a multi-party democracy. The National Conference was rescheduled to take place on July 15, and then postponed again to July 29. Upon this second postponement, women marched again in opposition to their lack of equal representation in the Preparatory Committee and scheduled National Conference.

By the spring of 1991 the women of Niger were able to increase their numbers in the formal reform efforts, going from one to five women representatives. Still, that was vastly lower than participation by men

On November 25, 1992, May 13th was designated as "National Women's Day" to commemorate the march held on that date the previous year.

Research Notes

Influences:

The campaign for further representation in the National Conference was prompted by the transition from militaristic rule over to democracy: there was already a national political change taking place. (1)

Sources:

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Additional Notes:

This campaign is characterized by a lack of definite, commanding leadership on the part of the campaigners.

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

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