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I . Executive Summary of the Fourth cycle of Niger

On 4 May 2026, the Human Rights Council convened a meeting under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process to examine the human rights record of Niger as part of the fourth cycle of this mechanism. In preparation for this review, the State submitted its national report on 27 March 2026, while the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other stakeholders compiled additional reports based on United Nations sources and civil society contributions. The delegation of Niger, led by Alio Daouda, Minister of Justice and Human Rights, presented the State's position and engaged with recommendations from Member States. The review took place in a context marked by significant political transformation following the military takeover of 26 July 2023, which led to the suspension of the Constitution and the establishment of a transitional framework under the Conseil National pour la Sauvegarde de la Patrie (CNSP). During the interactive dialogue, delegations addressed key concerns, notably calling for the criminalisation of child marriage and the establishment of 18 years as the legal minimum age of marriage, alongside broader efforts to strengthen the rights of the child. Recommendations also focused on combating discrimination against vulnerable groups, advancing gender equality, and addressing violence against women and girls, particularly in rural areas. States further urged Niger to intensify efforts to eradicate slavery and human trafficking, strengthen institutional frameworks, cooperate with international human rights mechanisms, and promote economic and social development, including food security and healthcare. Civil and political rights were also highlighted, with calls to ensure freedom of expression and to release individuals arbitrarily detained, including former President Mohamed Bazoum and his wife. In response, the delegation indicated that most recommendations could likely be accepted, while noting that the abolition of the death penalty would require further internal consultations. The representative also emphasised that national armed forces do not recruit children, attributing such practices to terrorist groups. He further affirmed the State's respect for the work of NGOs while expressing concern that certain organisations may contribute, directly or indirectly, to insecurity by facilitating or exacerbating terrorist activities, stressing that such actions would not be tolerated. Moreover, the delegation highlighted existing anti-trafficking measures, ongoing efforts to combat malnutrition, and confirmed that compulsory education has been extended to the age of 16. While the State emphasised progress in strengthening legal and institutional frameworks, including the adoption of new legislation and policies in areas such as justice, social protection, and gender equality, United Nations mechanisms and stakeholders continued to underline persistent structural challenges and institutional weaknesses. In particular, concerns were raised regarding the absence of a fully functioning independent national human rights institution following institutional changes introduced after the 2023 political transition. Many additional issues were discussed and addressed during the dialogue, reflecting the broad scope of the review. Niger continues to face significant human rights challenges shaped by a complex combination of security, political, and socio-economic factors. The country has been deeply affected by armed conflict and terrorism, particularly in regions such as Tillabéri, Diffa, and Maradi, as well as areas bordering Mali, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria. These conditions have contributed to widespread insecurity, civilian casualties, internal displacement, increasing humanitarian needs, and limited access to basic services,

with millions of people requiring assistance. Reports further highlight serious violations committed by both non-State armed groups and security forces, including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, raising concerns regarding accountability and compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law. These conditions have exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, especially among women and children, who remain disproportionately affected by poverty, child marriage, limited access to education, and gender-based violence. Despite legislative efforts and some progress reported by the State, including measures aimed at reducing gender-based violence and improving access to education and healthcare, practices such as early and forced marriage, slavery-like practices, and forms of modern slavery persist, often rooted in longstanding cultural norms, discriminatory systems, and insufficient enforcement of the law. Structural challenges, including weak institutional capacity, limited resources, corruption, governance constraints, climate change, economic instability, and recurring humanitarian crises, continue to hinder the effective implementation of human rights protections. Food insecurity and malnutrition also remain critical concerns throughout the country. Furthermore, significant concerns have been raised regarding the deterioration of fundamental freedoms, including restrictions on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and civic space. Reports indicate cases of arbitrary detention, harassment of journalists and human rights defenders, and increasing pressure on opposition actors, particularly following the 2023 political transition. Concerns regarding the use of torture and the weakening of institutional oversight mechanisms have also been highlighted by stakeholders and international observers. Overall, the fourth UPR cycle of Niger highlights a persistent gap between the State's formal commitments and their effective implementation. While Niger continues to engage with international human rights mechanisms and has expressed openness to many recommendations, the current political transition, ongoing insecurity, and institutional instability raise serious concerns regarding the sustainability of reforms and the State's capacity to address deeply rooted human rights challenges.

II . Background on Niger’s current social and political situation

Niger is a landlocked country located in West Africa, bordered by Algeria, Libya, Chad, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, and Mali. It is characterised by vast desert landscapes, with much of its territory covered by the Sahara Desert, and a predominantly rural population dependent on agriculture and livestock. Despite its rich cultural heritage and strategic position in the Sahel region, Niger continues to face major developmental challenges, including widespread poverty, rapid population growth, food insecurity, and vulnerability to climate change, all of which continue to shape its social and political landscape. It remains among the poorest countries in the world, with a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.419, placing it among the lowest globally.[1] The country has a population exceeding 27 million people and one of the world's highest population growth rates, estimated at approximately 3.3% annually, with nearly half of the population under the age of 15.[2] The current political situation in Niger is largely shaped by the military coup of 26 July 2023, during which members of the armed forces led by Abdourahmane Tiani overthrew former President Mohamed Bazoum and suspended the 2010 Constitution. This event ended a period of democratic governance and ushered in a transitional regime under the CNSP. The takeover triggered regional and international tensions, economic sanctions, and a reconfiguration of alliances, while internally deepening political uncertainty and weakening institutional safeguards.



General Abdourahmane Tiani

In March 2025, a new constitutional framework known as the Charter of the Refoundation was adopted, extending the transition period and consolidating executive power under the

current authorities. [3] Although the Charter presents itself as a framework for political reorganisation and national stability, critics and human rights actors have expressed concern that it does not provide sufficient safeguards against the concentration of power, restrictions on civic space, arbitrary detention, limitations on freedom of expression, and the weakening of judicial independence. As a result, concerns regarding restrictions on civic space, arbitrary detention, limitations on freedom of expression, and weakened judicial independence have significantly increased. The country continues to face severe security challenges linked to the activities of armed and terrorist groups operating throughout the Sahel region, particularly in the regions of Tillabéri, Diffa, and Tahoua. Since 2015, attacks by non-State armed groups have intensified, resulting in civilian casualties, widespread insecurity, displacement, and growing humanitarian needs. According to humanitarian estimates, more than 2.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, with women and children disproportionately affected.[4] Reports have also highlighted allegations of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and excessive use of force, raising concerns regarding accountability and compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law. Ongoing insecurity has further limited access to education, healthcare, and other essential services, particularly in remote and conflict-affected areas. Socio-economic conditions continue to exacerbate the country's fragility. Approximately 40 -45% of the population lives below the national poverty line, while the economy remains heavily dependent on subsistence agriculture, making it highly vulnerable to climate change, desertification, and environmental shocks.[5] Access to basic services remains limited, especially in rural areas where disparities in infrastructure, healthcare, and education remain significant. Food insecurity and malnutrition continue to affect large parts of the population, particularly children and displaced communities. High youth unemployment and limited economic opportunities also contribute to social frustration and increase the risk of instability in a context of weak institutional capacity and limited public resources. Child marriage remains one of the most serious human rights concerns in Niger. The country records one of the highest child marriage rates globally, with approximately 65% of women aged 20 to 24 married before the age of 18.[6] This social issue is closely linked to poverty, limited access to education, deeply rooted traditional practices, gender inequality, and weak enforcement of legislation protecting children's rights. Early and forced marriage often results in school dropout, domestic violence, early pregnancy, and long-term economic dependence, perpetuating cycles of discrimination and vulnerability among women and girls. Women in Niger continue to face widespread discrimination in both law and practice. Gender inequality affects access to education, employment, healthcare, and participation in public life, particularly in rural communities where patriarchal social norms remain deeply entrenched. Violence against women and girls, including domestic violence and gender-based violence, remains a significant concern despite certain legislative and policy efforts introduced by the authorities. However, implementation remains limited due to insufficient resources, weak institutional structures, and persistent social barriers. In addition, slavery-like practices and human trafficking continue to affect vulnerable populations despite existing legal prohibitions. Persons of slave descent and marginalised groups frequently face discrimination, social exclusion, and limited access to justice and economic opportunities. Weak law enforcement, insufficient institutional oversight, lack of awareness, and longstanding cultural practices contribute to the persistence

of these violations. Concerns also remain regarding the use of the death penalty and broader shortcomings within the criminal justice system. Although executions have not been systematically carried out in recent years, the death penalty remains part of the legal framework, raising concerns among international human rights organisations. Challenges such as overcrowded detention facilities, prolonged pretrial detention, limited judicial resources, allegations of torture and ill-treatment, and arbitrary detention continue to undermine fair trial guarantees and the protection of detainees rights. Overall, Niger's current social and political situation is shaped by the intersection of political instability, insecurity, demographic pressure, structural poverty, weak governance, and entrenched social inequalities. These interconnected factors continue to hinder sustainable development and significantly limit the State's ability to effectively protect and promote human rights in accordance with its international obligations.

III. Background and Critical Perspective on the subsisting issues across the Second, Third and Fourth UPR cycles

During the second cycle of the UPR of Niger, Member States raised extensive concerns regarding the country's human rights situation and issued numerous recommendations addressing legislative reform, institutional weaknesses, civil and political rights, gender equality, child protection, slavery, human trafficking, access to justice, and socio-economic development.

Member states highlighted persistent structural challenges affecting the effective protection of human rights in Niger, including poverty, insecurity, weak governance, discrimination against vulnerable groups, and weak implementation of international obligations. States called on Niger to ratify important international and regional human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Kampala Amendments to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, the ILO Domestic Workers Convention No. 189, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa.



States also urged Niger to withdraw its reservations to CEDAW and harmonise national legislation with international human rights standards. The abolition of the death penalty emerged as one of the most repeated concerns, with recommendations calling on Niger to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, revise its Penal Code, formally abolish capital punishment, maintain the existing moratorium, and promote public debate and awareness on the issue. Recommendations further focused on legislative and institutional reform, including the adoption of pending laws such as the Children's Code, legislation protecting girls in schools, laws protecting human rights defenders, and legislation criminalising torture. States also called for the regulation of customary law, the strengthening of statutory law, and the alignment of cybercrime, terrorism, migration, disability, mining, and anti-discrimination laws with international standards. Several recommendations stressed the need to strengthen the National Human Rights Commission in accordance with the Paris Principles by ensuring adequate financial, human, and material resources.

Women's rights and gender equality remained central themes throughout the second cycle. States recommended eliminating discrimination against women in law and practice, especially in customary inheritance rules, improving women's participation in political and public life, increasing female representation in decision-making positions, and guaranteeing equal rights in inheritance, divorce, and the protection of children born out of wedlock. Stakeholders also focused heavily on combating violence against women and girls, including female genital mutilation, domestic violence, rape, and sexual assault, through stronger enforcement of laws, prosecution of perpetrators, support for victims, awareness campaigns, and broader social and cultural reform. Child marriage was repeatedly highlighted, with States urging Niger to establish 18 as the minimum legal age of marriage for girls, amend article 144 of the Civil Code, criminalise child marriage under statutory and customary law, and impose sanctions for violations. Member states additionally stressed the importance of keeping girls in school, preventing early pregnancy, and improving opportunities for women and girls through education and employment.

Children's rights were also addressed more broadly, with recommendations calling for stronger protection against violence, exploitation, trafficking, child labour, forced marriage, and the recruitment of children in armed conflict. States further urged Niger to improve birth registration, reduce maternal and infant mortality, strengthen health and education systems, and ensure continuity of education in rural and conflict-affected areas. Slavery, descent-based discrimination, human trafficking, and migrant smuggling also emerged as major concerns. States recommended the strict enforcement of anti-slavery legislation, the criminalisation of *Wahaya*, prosecution of perpetrators, rehabilitation and reintegration support for victims, better training for judges, and stronger institutional mechanisms to combat trafficking and slavery-like practices.

Civil and political rights were strongly emphasised during the second cycle. States recommended that Niger guarantee freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, media freedom, and civic space both online and offline. They also called for the protection of journalists, human rights defenders, civil society actors, and political critics from intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrest, and undue detention. Several recommendations

focused on revising restrictive laws, particularly cybercrime and public assembly legislation, while ensuring access to information and a safe environment for civil society organisations.

Counter-terrorism and security-related issues also received considerable attention. While States recognised Niger's efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism, they stressed that all counter-terrorism measures must comply with international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Recommendations called for the protection of civilians, humanitarian access, accountability for abuses committed by security forces and armed groups, and investigations into allegations of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, excessive use of force, sexual violence, unlawful killings, drone-related deaths, and attacks on schools.

States also addressed justice and detention conditions by recommending reforms to the judicial and penitentiary systems, stronger judicial independence, improved prison conditions, reduced pretrial detention, better training for judges and prosecutors, and proper funding for the national torture prevention mechanism. Niger was further urged to criminalise torture in line with the Convention against Torture.

Economic, social, and cultural rights formed another important part of the recommendations. States encouraged Niger to reduce poverty, improve living standards, strengthen healthcare systems, expand access to water, sanitation, housing, food security, and social services, and improve access to reproductive healthcare and family planning. Education was also prioritised, with recommendations aimed at improving school enrolment, literacy, access to education for girls and vulnerable groups, protection of schools from attacks, and the promotion of human rights education.

Climate change, environmental protection, and business-related human rights issues were also increasingly raised. States encouraged Niger to address the human rights impact of climate change, integrate disaster risk reduction into development planning, regulate mining activities, particularly uranium extraction, and ensure corporate alignment with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Stakeholders further addressed the rights of persons with disabilities, older persons, migrant workers, minorities, women human rights defenders, nomadic populations, and persons affected by leprosy, calling for stronger anti-discrimination protections and equal access to public services.

Overall, the second cycle reflected the broad range of structural challenges facing Niger, including insecurity, weak institutions, poverty, gender inequality, harmful traditional practices, restrictions on civic space, limited access to justice, weak judicial independence, and inadequate implementation of human rights obligations.



During Niger's third UPR cycle, many of the concerns raised during the second cycle remained unresolved, demonstrating limited progress in implementation. States again called for the abolition of the death penalty, ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, withdrawal of reservations to CEDAW, stronger gender equality protections, and the elimination of harmful practices affecting women and girls. Child marriage continued to be one of the most repeated concerns, with renewed recommendations to raise the minimum legal age of marriage for girls to 18, amend discriminatory provisions in the Civil Code, prohibit forced and early marriage under both statutory and customary law, and ensure sanctions for violations.

Similarly, slavery, descent-based discrimination, human trafficking, and *Wahaya* remained recurring concerns. States once again recommended stronger enforcement of anti-slavery laws, prosecution of perpetrators, protection and rehabilitation of victims, and the adoption of a national strategy to eliminate slavery-related practices. This demonstrated that although legislative measures had been adopted, implementation remained limited due to weak enforcement, deeply rooted customary practices, social stigma, poverty, and insufficient institutional capacity, allowing slavery-related practices and exploitation to persist in vulnerable communities.

Counter-terrorism and security-related concerns also persisted during the third cycle. States continued to recognise Niger's efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism but stressed that counter-terrorism measures must respect international human rights and humanitarian law. Compared with the second cycle, the third cycle placed greater emphasis on

accountability for abuses committed by security forces, including allegations of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, unlawful killings, excessive use of force, sexual abuse, and attacks on schools.

Some progress was acknowledged between the second and third cycles, particularly regarding engagement with international mechanisms, anti-trafficking efforts, gender-based violence initiatives, and attempts to improve education, healthcare, food security, and social protection. Niger also presented measures aimed at strengthening institutions, combating terrorism, improving women's participation, and protecting children. Nevertheless, the repetition of many recommendations demonstrated that progress remained limited and uneven. Child marriage, gender discrimination, slavery-like practices, poor detention conditions, restrictions on civic space, weak judicial protection, and the continued existence of the death penalty all remained unresolved concerns.

Compared with the second cycle, the third UPR cycle showed both continuity and expansion of the efforts to implement the recommendations. Structural issues such as poverty, insecurity, discrimination, weak institutions, and limited access to justice persisted, while greater attention was given to climate change, environmental protection, mining regulation, business and human rights, civic space, media freedom, and the protection of human rights defenders. The third cycle therefore highlighted the continuing gap between Niger's formal commitments and the effective implementation of human rights protections on the ground.

During the fourth cycle of the UPR, many recommendations and concerns from the previous cycles remained unresolved, although some areas showed partial progress. Niger continued to engage with international human rights mechanisms and accepted numerous recommendations, particularly concerning education, anti-trafficking measures, social protection, healthcare, and women's participation. The delegation highlighted efforts to combat malnutrition, strengthen anti-trafficking mechanisms, improve access to healthcare and education, and extend compulsory education to the age of 16. Some progress was therefore acknowledged in social policy, institutional cooperation, and awareness of gender-related issues.

Despite these developments, many of the core concerns repeatedly raised during the second and third cycles persisted during the fourth cycle. Child marriage remained one of the most significant unresolved issues, with States again calling on Niger to criminalise the practice and establish 18 as the minimum legal age of marriage for girls. Harmful traditional practices, gender discrimination, and violence against women and girls also remained major concerns despite previous legislative initiatives and recommendations.

Similarly, slavery-like practices, descent-based discrimination, human trafficking, and *Wahaya* continued to be raised. Although Niger had adopted anti-slavery and anti-trafficking measures, repeated recommendations calling for stronger enforcement, accountability, victim protection, and institutional strengthening indicated that implementation remained insufficient and that these practices continued to affect vulnerable communities.

The death penalty also remained unresolved across all UPR cycles. During the fourth cycle, the Nigerien delegation stated that abolition would require further internal consultations,

demonstrating that despite years of recommendations encouraging ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR and formal abolition, Niger had still not removed the death penalty from its legal framework; the continued retention of the death penalty within Niger's legal framework also raises broader questions regarding the consistency between the State's international human rights commitments and domestic legislation. While Niger has ratified key international instruments prohibiting torture and promoting the protection of human dignity, including the Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol, the absence of formal abolition demonstrates continuing political and legal hesitation regarding full alignment with evolving international human rights standards on the right to life and humane treatment.

The fourth cycle also reflected a deterioration in certain civil and political rights following the military takeover of July 2023 and the political transition under the CNSP. Concerns regarding restrictions on freedom of expression, civic space, peaceful assembly, arbitrary detention, and pressure on journalists, political opponents, and human rights defenders became more prominent than in earlier cycles. Calls for the release of former President Mohamed Bazoum and his wife further reflected international concern regarding arbitrary detention and the weakening of democratic safeguards.

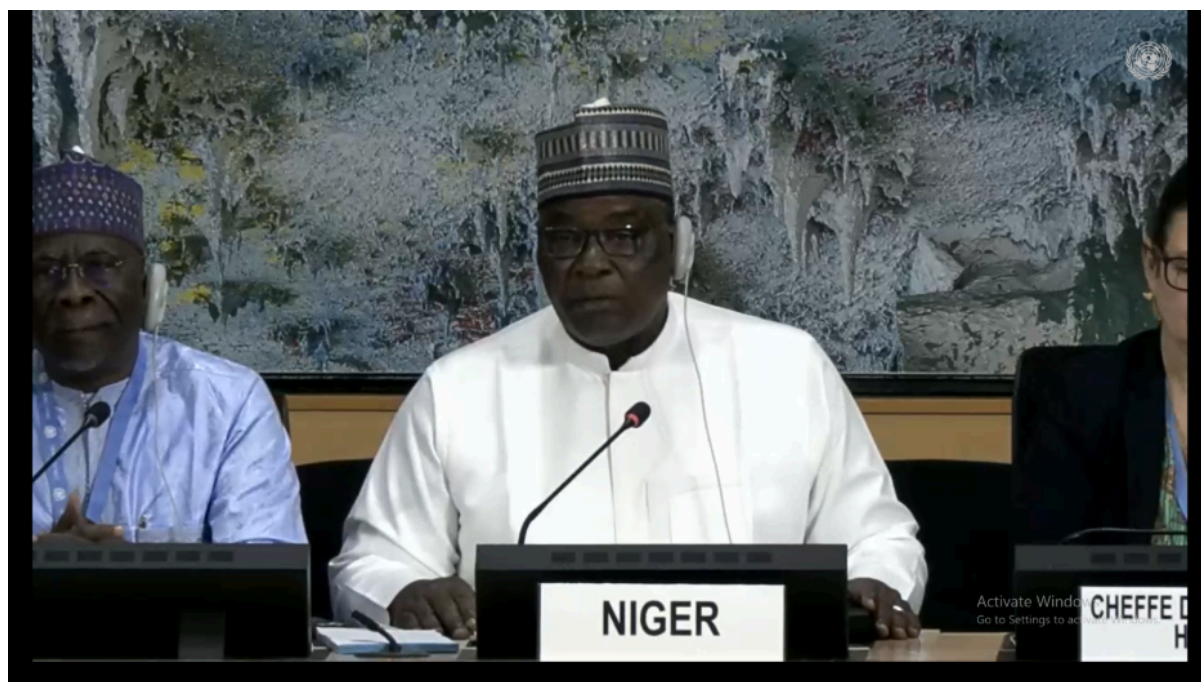
Counter-terrorism and insecurity also remained central concerns throughout the fourth cycle. Niger continued to face attacks by armed groups and serious humanitarian challenges, particularly in Tillabéri, Diffa, and Maradi. While authorities reaffirmed their commitment to combating terrorism and protecting civilians, concerns persisted regarding allegations of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, abuses by security forces, and the lack of accountability for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Overall, the fourth UPR cycle demonstrated a combination of limited progress and persistent structural challenges. While some recommendations related to education, social services, anti-trafficking efforts, and institutional cooperation appeared to have been partially considered, many core issues repeatedly identified since the second cycle — including child marriage, gender inequality, slavery-like practices, the death penalty, arbitrary detention, restrictions on civic space, weak institutional protection, and insufficient accountability for human rights violations — remained unresolved. The fourth cycle therefore continued to highlight the significant gap between Niger's formal commitments and the effective implementation of human rights protections in practice.



IV. Exhaustive Summary of Niger’s 4th UPR cycle

Interactive Dialogue



The Representative of Niger: Minister of Justice and Human Rights Alio Daouda

The representative of the Republic of Niger presented the country’s national report during the fourth cycle of the UPR, reaffirming Niger’s commitment to human rights, transparency, and constructive dialogue. He conveyed greetings from the President of Niger, General Abdourahamane Tiani, emphasizing that the government remains committed to respecting international human rights obligations and strengthening cooperation with the United Nations human rights system. He explained that Niger views the UPR mechanism as an important platform for evaluating progress, sharing experiences, and reinforcing multilateral cooperation. The representative highlighted that the national report was prepared through an inclusive process involving government institutions, civil society organizations, development partners, media representatives, and other stakeholders before being adopted by the Council of Ministers in March 2026. According to the representative, Niger accepted 248 recommendations from the previous UPR cycle and adopted a national implementation plan in 2022 to ensure their execution. He stated that by 2025, approximately 90% of the recommendations had been fully implemented, 7% partially implemented, and 3% remained pending. The representative described several legal and institutional reforms adopted between 2021 and 2026. These included the ratification of international conventions and the adoption of more than 40 legislative and regulatory texts aimed at strengthening human rights protection, judicial independence, and accountability. He also referred to the adoption of new

criminal procedure codes in February 2026, which he described as major reforms intended to modernize the justice system, accelerate judicial procedures, combat impunity, and improve transparency. He further explained that Niger established several new institutions under the Charter of the Refoundation, including the Court of State, the Court of Accounts, the National Observatory for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and anti-corruption bodies. According to him, these institutions are designed to improve governance, protect rights, and strengthen oversight mechanisms. Regarding social and economic rights, the representative emphasized progress in education, healthcare, women's rights, and child protection. He highlighted the establishment of scientific schools, girls boarding schools, and the recruitment of more than 11,000 teachers. In the health sector, he referred to the recruitment of over 6,000 health workers, the expansion of hospitals and health centers, and reductions in maternal and infant mortality rates. He also mentioned measures providing free childbirth services and reduced healthcare costs. On women's rights, the representative stressed that Niger had strengthened protections against sexual violence, domestic violence, and female genital mutilation. He noted that the prevalence of female genital mutilation had significantly decreased over the years. He also referred to economic empowerment initiatives for rural women and awareness campaigns promoting women's rights and participation in public life. Concerning children's rights, the representative explained that Niger introduced digital systems for child protection case management and adopted legal reforms prohibiting child marriage under the age of 18 for both boys and girls. However, he acknowledged that challenges remain, particularly regarding the limited number of child protection services across municipalities. The representative also discussed the rights of persons with disabilities and older persons, noting that Niger ratified relevant regional human rights instruments and implemented social assistance and healthcare programs for vulnerable groups. A significant portion of the statement focused on the security situation and the impact of terrorism in the Sahel region. The representative argued that terrorist attacks continue to constitute the main obstacle to the enjoyment of human rights in Niger, causing civilian deaths, displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and restrictions on access to essential services. He explained that the government adopts restrictive security measures, including temporary limitations on freedoms such as movement, demonstration, communication, and expression, in order to protect national security and preserve social stability. The representative defended these measures by stating that security is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of fundamental rights. He argued that without stability and territorial integrity, human rights cannot effectively be guaranteed. He also emphasized that Niger seeks international partnerships that respect its sovereignty and strategic choices. Finally, The representative concluded his statement by recognizing that important challenges remain despite the progress achieved. He reaffirmed Niger's willingness to continue cooperating with the Human Rights Council, Member States, and international partners, while stressing that future UPR recommendations would help guide ongoing reforms aimed at improving the human rights situation in the country.

V. Recommendations Section

Death Penalty and Ratification of International Instruments

Several States recommended that Niger abolish the death penalty and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR. Member States also encouraged Niger to ratify additional international and regional human rights instruments, including the Genocide Convention, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and ILO Convention No. 189. Some recommendations further urged Niger to reconsider its withdrawal from the International Criminal Court and maintain a moratorium on executions.

Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Numerous recommendations focused on strengthening the protection of women and girls through the elimination of child marriages, including early and forced marriages by setting the minimum legal age of marriage at 18 without exception. States also called for the criminalization of all forms of gender-based violence, including marital rape, the expansion of women's participation in political and public life, the strengthening of women's economic empowerment, and the improvement of access to sexual and reproductive healthcare. Additional recommendations urged Niger to combat discriminatory practices against women, female genital mutilation, trafficking, sexual exploitation, and slavery-like practices such as *Wahaya*.

Children's Rights and Education

Many recommendations addressed the protection of children's rights, particularly through guaranteeing access to free, inclusive, and quality education, especially for girls and children in rural areas. States encouraged Niger to improve school infrastructure, sanitation, drinking water access, and school retention rates for girls. Additional concerns included child labour, recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, trafficking, violence against children, child marriage, and the protection of schools and hospitals during insecurity and armed conflict.

Slavery, Trafficking, and Exploitation

Several States urged Niger to intensify efforts to eliminate slavery and slavery-related practices through legislative reform, enforcement measures, awareness campaigns, and the adoption of a National Action Plan against slavery. Recommendations also focused on combating trafficking in persons, particularly women and children, prosecuting traffickers, strengthening victim protection mechanisms, operationalizing compensation funds for victims, and addressing forced begging and exploitation.

Civil and Political Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

A significant number of recommendations called on Niger to guarantee the freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association by amending restrictive legislation, particularly regarding cybercrimes and defamation laws. States also recommended ending arbitrary arrests and detention of journalists, political opponents, human rights defenders, and civil society actors, while ensuring a safe environment for civil society organizations and independent media. Some recommendations specifically called for the release of arbitrarily detained persons, including former President Mohamed Bazoum and his family.

National Human Rights Institutions and Justice Reform

Several recommendations encouraged Niger to establish or operationalize an independent national human rights institution or observatory in line with the Paris Principles. States also recommended strengthening accountability mechanisms, criminalizing torture as an independent offence, establishing mechanisms for the prevention of torture, improving detention conditions, enhancing transitional justice frameworks, and strengthening cooperation with international and regional human rights mechanisms.

Counter-Terrorism, Security, and Protection of Civilians

Recommendations emphasized that counter-terrorism measures should comply with international human rights law and international humanitarian law. States further encouraged Niger to strengthen protection for civilians, schools, hospitals, and critical infrastructure, improve security and stability, prevent radicalization and violent extremism, and provide human rights and humanitarian law training for security forces.

Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

Many States recommended that Niger continue efforts to reduce poverty and improve socio-economic development through stronger healthcare, education, housing, food security, agricultural resilience, water, sanitation, and social protection policies. Recommendations also emphasized improving maternal and child healthcare, reducing infant mortality, increasing healthcare budget allocations, combating malnutrition, and expanding universal health coverage.

Equality and Non-Discrimination

Several recommendations called for the adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, including protections based on gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity. States also encouraged Niger to combat descent-based discrimination, strengthen equality between men and women, and protect vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and marginalized communities.

VI. Remarks by the Representative of Niger

Niger's delegation responded to the recommendations raised during the fourth cycle of the UPR by emphasizing the country's legal, institutional, and social reforms while also defending several controversial government policies. Regarding the death penalty, the delegation stated that Niger has been abolitionist in practice since 1976, as no executions have been carried out since then. However, due to recent terrorist atrocities, the government reconsidered the issue while still allowing death sentences to be commuted to life imprisonment or reduced penalties. The delegation acknowledged that the matter remained sensitive and would require further national consultation. On cooperation with international mechanisms, Niger reaffirmed its commitment to human rights institutions and explained that its UPR reporting mechanism, established in 2010, includes representatives from ministries, parliament, civil society, state institutions, and the National Human Rights Institution. According to the delegation, this mechanism enabled Niger to address delays in treaty body and UPR reporting. Concerning the Rome Statute, Niger confirmed that its withdrawal from the International Criminal Court was deliberate and that rejoining the Court was not currently under consideration.

The delegation also highlighted reforms relating to civil status registration, women's rights, child protection, and vulnerable groups. Niger stated that birth registration systems had been expanded and digitized, with registration rates increasing from 62% in 2023 to 69%, while 52 out of 267 communes had already been digitized. Procedures for granting nationality to children of unknown parents born in Niger had also been simplified. On child marriage, Niger stated that the new criminal code criminalizes marriage under the age of 18 and that further amendments to the Civil Code remained possible. The delegation explained that the government was shifting from awareness-based strategies to a structural approach through the National Action Plan 2024–2028, focusing on girls' education, safe educational environments, boarding schools for girls, and awareness campaigns involving teachers, communities, customary chiefs, and religious leaders. It also emphasized that compulsory schooling had already been extended to the age of 16 and described schools as the strongest protection against child marriage. Regarding women's rights and the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women, Niger stated that attempts to ratify the protocol had repeatedly failed in parliament due to cultural and social sensitivities, although awareness campaigns would continue. The delegation also referred to recent measures protecting persons with disabilities and older persons, including social protection initiatives and the ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty.

Regarding torture, slavery, trafficking, and security concerns, Niger stated that the new criminal code criminalizes torture as a separate offense carrying severe penalties. The delegation claimed that acts of torture are generally committed by armed groups rather than by defence and security forces, which it said receive training in human rights and international humanitarian law. Niger further stated that the country already possesses a legal and institutional framework criminalizing slavery, trafficking in persons, and migrant smuggling, while legislation in this field remains under review. On child recruitment, the representative firmly denied allegations that the Nigerien army recruits children, instead

blaming terrorist groups for such practices. The delegation acknowledged that civilian casualties occur as collateral damage during armed conflict but stressed Niger's respect for international child protection principles.

On civil and political rights, Niger defended restrictions imposed on political parties, NGOs, and some civil society actors by referring to the country's severe security situation. The delegation stated that temporary suspensions of political activities were intended to prevent ethnic tensions, civil conflict, and destabilization, and argued that such measures would be lifted once national conditions improved. Concerning detained human rights defenders and civil society actors, the representative claimed that only one human rights defender had been detained, allegedly for apologizing for terrorism, which the government considered a criminal offense. The delegation also alleged that certain NGOs operating in insecure areas had facilitated or indirectly supported terrorist activities by transporting supplies that later reached armed groups or by contributing to attacks on prisons and national institutions. Niger therefore justified restrictions on some NGOs and temporary limitations on prison visits as necessary security measures rather than attacks on civil society. Nevertheless, the delegation reaffirmed its commitment to universal human rights principles and stated that the Charter of the Refoundation guarantees respect for international human rights instruments ratified by Niger.

The delegation further emphasized ongoing efforts to improve social and economic rights despite the difficult political and economic circumstances following the events of July 2023. Niger referred to measures aimed at combating malnutrition, improving irrigation systems, and expanding access to potable water, particularly in conflict-affected regions where 33 communes reportedly gained access to drinking water. On healthcare, the delegation stated that ordinary health centres were being transformed into integrated health centres, with 1,541 already established nationwide. It also referred to district hospitals, mobile clinics, army medical support in conflict areas, awareness campaigns, reduced health fees, free childbirth services, and free healthcare for women and vulnerable children. On environmental rights, Niger stated that the Charter of the Refoundation guarantees the right to a healthy environment and referred to environmental legislation, assessment mechanisms, and institutions tasked with protecting ecosystems and biodiversity. Finally, the delegation reiterated that Niger's participation in the fourth UPR cycle itself demonstrated its willingness to engage constructively with international human rights mechanisms and international recommendations.

VII. Looking Forward: New priorities of the international community and commitments of Niger

Based on the information and recommendations discussed throughout Niger 's fourth UPR cycle, the international community s new priorities appear to focus on strengthening institutional protection mechanisms, combating child marriage and gender-based violence, addressing slavery-like practices and human trafficking, protecting civic space and fundamental freedoms, and improving access to social and economic rights such as healthcare, education, food security, and water. The recommendations accepted or positively addressed by Niger also suggest that the State intends to continue reforms in the fields of justice, child protection, anti-trafficking measures, and social services. Particular emphasis was placed on strengthening the legal and institutional framework through the adoption of new criminal procedure codes, the criminalisation of torture as a separate offence, and legal reforms prohibiting child marriage under the age of 18. The delegation further highlighted several institutional initiatives introduced under the Charter of the Refoundation, including the establishment of the Court of State, the Court of Accounts, the National Observatory for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and anti-corruption bodies aimed at improving governance, accountability, and oversight. Additional projects presented by the delegation included the expansion of digitised birth registration systems, the development of child protection case management systems, the recruitment of teachers and healthcare workers, the establishment of girls boarding schools and scientific schools, the expansion of integrated health centres, and programmes promoting women's economic empowerment and social protection. Niger also reaffirmed its willingness to continue cooperating with international human rights mechanisms while pursuing reforms linked to education, healthcare, anti-trafficking measures, and poverty reduction. Nevertheless, despite these commitments and initiatives, many of Niger s structural human rights challenges are likely to persist into the fifth UPR cycle. Longstanding issues such as child marriage, gender inequality, slavery-like practices, human trafficking, poverty, food insecurity, weak institutional capacity, and limited access to justice remain deeply rooted in social, economic, cultural, and security-related factors. The country s continuing political transition following the 2023 military takeover, combined with ongoing insecurity caused by armed and terrorist groups, may further complicate the implementation of reforms and weaken institutional safeguards. Concerns relating to arbitrary detention, restrictions on freedom of expression and civic space, pressure on journalists and human rights defenders, and allegations of abuses committed during counter-terrorism operations are also likely to remain central issues during the next cycle. In addition, the death penalty remains unresolved despite repeated international recommendations, while the operational independence and effectiveness of national human rights institutions continue to raise concerns. Although Niger has demonstrated engagement with the UPR process and expressed openness to many recommendations, the fifth cycle will likely continue to focus on the gap between formal commitments and effective implementation, particularly regarding accountability, protection

of vulnerable groups, judicial independence, and compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law standards.

VIII. Critical Analysis

A critical reading of Niger 's fourth UPR cycle shows that the National Report appears to present a reform-oriented image of the State, but does not fully confront the depth of the country's human rights crisis. The State emphasised legal reforms, new institutions, anti-trafficking measures, education policies, healthcare programmes, and its cooperation with the UPR mechanism. However, this positive framing risks minimising the gap between laws adopted on paper and the reality experienced by people on the ground. For example, although Niger referred to progress in child protection, gender equality, anti-trafficking, and social services, serious concerns remain regarding child marriage, slavery-like practices, gender-based violence, food insecurity, arbitrary detention, restrictions on civic space, and abuses linked to counter-terrorism operations. These issues are not isolated problems; they are structural and deeply connected to poverty, insecurity, weak institutions, discriminatory social norms, and limited accountability. What seems particularly lacking in the National Report is a stronger recognition of accountability. Many violations are explained through the security context, terrorism, poverty, or limited resources, but less attention is given to the State's own duties to prevent violations, investigate abuses, protect civilians, and ensure accountability. The delegation denied the recruitment of children by national armed forces and attributed this practice to terrorist groups, while also defending restrictions on NGOs and civil society by referring to security concerns. However, such explanations should not be accepted without independent verification, especially where allegations concern extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, torture, or restrictions on fundamental freedoms. Security cannot become a general justification for limiting rights or weakening oversight. The U.N. assessment and civil society reports play an essential role in balancing the State's narrative, but they also have limits. They identify many important violations, yet some issues may still remain under-documented, especially in remote or conflict-affected regions where access is limited. Violations affecting rural women, persons of slave descent, displaced persons, children associated with armed groups, detainees, journalists, and human rights defenders may be more widespread than what appears in official documents. In contexts marked by insecurity and political pressure, victims and witnesses may also fear speaking openly. As a result, the real scale of abuses may remain hidden, particularly where civil society organisations are restricted or accused of threatening national security. The UPR also has clear methodological limits. It is a peer-review mechanism, meaning that States review one another, often through diplomatic language. This can make recommendations less direct and often influenced by political alliances. The mechanism depends heavily on cooperation and good faith, but the State under review controls much of the information presented in its National Report. This creates a problem of self-reporting: governments may highlight achievements, understate failures, avoid sensitive issues, or present legal reforms as evidence of progress even when implementation remains weak. In Niger s case, the repeated appearance of the same concerns across the second, third, and fourth cycles including child marriage, slavery-like practices, death penalty, weak institutions, civic space restrictions, and

accountability failures shows that formal recommendations do not automatically lead to real change. The UPR should be treated as an important but incomplete tool. As recognised by the UN, the UPR is designed to complement, rather than replace, other human rights mechanisms and accountability processes. The UPR can create international pressure, document concerns, and encourage reforms, but it cannot substitute independent investigations, treaty body monitoring, Special Procedures visits, civil society documentation, and effective national accountability mechanisms. The main weakness of the process is that it often measures commitments rather than lived realities. For Niger, the central question is not only whether the State accepts recommendations or adopts new laws, but whether people are actually protected from violence, discrimination, arbitrary detention, poverty, and abuse. Without independent monitoring, transparent data, access for civil society, and accountability for violations, the UPR risks becoming a formal exercise rather than a mechanism capable of producing meaningful human rights change.

IX. Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ)

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) acknowledges Niger 's continued engagement with the UPR process across its second, third, and fourth cycles, as well as the State's stated willingness to cooperate with international human rights mechanisms and implement legislative and institutional reforms. GICJ further acknowledges progress made in areas such as expanding access to education and healthcare, strengthening anti-trafficking measures, increasing birth registration, promoting women s participation, adopting new criminal and criminal procedure codes, criminalising torture as a separate offence, extending compulsory education, and establishing new institutions under the Charter of the Refoundation, including the National Observatory for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. However, GICJ remains particularly concerned by the persistent gap between formal commitments and their effective implementation. GICJ is especially alarmed by the continuation of child marriage, slavery-like practices, human trafficking, gender-based violence, arbitrary detention, restrictions on freedom of expression and civic space, and allegations of abuses committed in the context of counter-terrorism operations. GICJ expresses concern over the weakening of democratic safeguards and institutional independence following the political transition of 2023, as well as the continued use of security concerns to justify restrictions on civil society actors, journalists, and political opponents. While recognising the serious security challenges faced by Niger, GICJ stresses the urgent need to ensure that all counter-terrorism measures fully comply with international human rights and humanitarian law standards. It appeals to Niger to maintain the independence and effectiveness of accountability mechanisms. GICJ urges Niger to move beyond legislative reform alone and adopt structural measures that strengthen judicial independence, guarantee civic freedoms, ensure transparent investigations into alleged violations, combat impunity, improve institutional oversight, and address the root causes of discrimination, poverty, insecurity, and gender inequality. Sustainable progress will require genuine political will, effective implementation of reforms, meaningful engagement with civil society, and stronger protection for vulnerable groups, particularly women, children, displaced persons, and persons affected by slavery-like practices. GICJ supports recommendations calling for:

- (a) the ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aiming at the abolition of the death penalty;
- (b) the strengthening of independent national human rights institutions in line with the Paris Principles;
- (c) the criminalisation and eradication of child marriage;
- (d) the elimination of slavery and trafficking practices;
- (e) the protection of journalists and human rights defenders and the release of arbitrarily detained persons;
- (f) the strengthening of accountability for violations committed by all actors; and
- (g) the expansion of access to education, healthcare, water, and social protection services.

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