

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Niger

CAPITAL: Niamey

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Unitary Multiparty Republic

AREA: 1,267,000 Sq Km (489,191 Sq Mi)

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION: 10,284,300



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Niger is located in West Africa. It is bound by Libya to the northeast, Algeria to the northwest, Mali to the west, Burkina Faso to the southwest, Benin and Nigeria to the south and Chad to the east. Around 80% of Nigeria is arid desert while the remainder is savannah. The northern region is characterized by sandy basins, low plateaux, isolated hills, peaks and sandstone or limestone bluffs. In the northwest the Tamgak Mountains rise from the Iferouane Valley. The north central area has a volcanic Air Massif which contains deep valleys or Koris where there is dense vegetation while to the far east the Tenere, a sandy and arid desert, is located. The principal river is the Niger. Major Cities (pop. est.); Niamey 392,200, Zinder 119,800, Maradi 104,400, Tahoua 49,900, Agadez 49,400 (1988). Land Use; forested 2%, pastures 7%, agricultural-cultivated 3%, other 88% (1993).

CLIMATE: Niger has a hot and dry climate with relatively cool and dry conditions from November to February. The rainy season lasts from June to October with most rainfall occurring during August. Rainfall varies depending on the region and in the south the average annual precipitation is 500 mm (29 inches) while in the north it drops below 200 mm (8 inches) where conditions are sub desert or Sahelian. The average temperature ranges in Niamey are from 14 to 34 degrees Celsius (57 to 93 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 27 to 41 degrees Celsius (81 to 106 degrees Fahrenheit) in May.

PEOPLE: Approximately 80% of the population are comprised of various Black African tribes which include the Hausa, Songhai, Djerma, Fulani, Beriberi-Manga and Tuareg. Ethnic aliens include minorities of Europeans, mainly French descendants.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 7 persons per sq km (18 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 21.1% urban, 78.9% rural (1988). Sex Distribution; 49.3% male, 50.7% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 42.9 years male, 46.1 years female (1990). Age Breakdown; 48% under 15, 26% 15 to 29, 14% 30 to 44, 8% 45 to 59, 3% 60 to 74, 1% 75 and over (1990). Birth Rate; 51.7 per 1,000 (1990). Death Rate; 20.4 per 1,000 (1990). Increase Rate; 31.3 per 1,000 (1990). Infant Mortality Rate; 135.0 per 1,000 live births (1990).

RELIGIONS: Around 80% of the population are Sunni Muslims while around 20% follow local native tribal beliefs and .5% are Christians.

LANGUAGES: The official language is French which is only spoken by a minority, although each tribal group has its own language. The major national languages are Djerma and Hausa.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 91.1%, primary 8.4%, secondary 0.3%, higher 0.2% (1977). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 28.4% (1990).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: In Dec. 1958 Niger became an autonomous republic within the French Community and on Aug. 3, 1960 Niger declared its full independence with Hamani Diori as President. In Sept. 1960 Niger became a member of the UN and in Aug. adopted a new constitution. During the early and mid 1960's Diori's government survived attacks from the exiled Sawaba forces. In the late 1960's and early 1970's a severe drought struck Niger causing widespread food shortages and famine. In Apr. 1975 a military coup led by Lt.Col. Seyni Kountche ousted the government, suspended the constitution and dissolved the National Assembly. Lt.Col. Seyni Kountche established a Military Council to rule the country with himself as President. In 1976 and 1983 there were unsuccessful coup attempts against the Military Council. In July 1987 a referendum resulted in the approval of a charter which provided for the eventual return to civil rule. In Nov. 1987 Kountche died and the Army's chief-of-staff, Col. Ali Saibou succeeded him as President. In Feb. 1990 students held demonstrations and strikes in protest against economic austerity measures which resulted in the deaths of at least 11 demonstrators when police opened fire. In May 1990 the government forces were involved in clashes with Tuareg separatists in northern Tchintabaraden, which resulted in the deaths of at least 6 soldiers and 31 Tuaregs. In June 1990 more demonstrations took place, resulting in a constitutional amendment that legalized opposition political parties. On July 29, 1991 following months of strikes and mass demonstrations, the National Conference of Niger convened with the delegates immediately electing Andre Salifou as its President. In response and in protest, the military and government representatives withdrew, although the delegation later returned and a multiparty election schedule with elections to be held in 15 months was announced. Also in 1991 the economy continued to suffer as a result of severe drought while an influx of grasshoppers also exacerbated the problem. In Feb. 1992 some 3,000 mutinous soldiers that had not been paid for 2 months took control of a radio station and closed the capital's airport. On March 4, 1992 a planned strike in protest to the mutiny was narrowly averted and on March 23, 1992 Prime Minister Amadou Cheiffou dissolved the transitional government. In July 1992 hundreds of students demonstrated in protest to non-payment of grants. In Aug. 1992 the government retaliated for a series of attacks by the Tuareg Liberation Front of Air and Azawad (FLAA) and arrested some 168 Tuaregs. In Dec. 1992 a referendum overwhelmingly approved a new constitution. In March 1993 Mahamane

Ousmane of the Alliance of the Forces of Change won Presidential elections. In the same month the FLAA announced a 3 month truce while the new government announced it would allow free movement across the Algerian border, provide aid for the returning refugees and promised to lift the state of emergency imposed in the north. In July 1993 soldiers mutinied throughout the country in protest to cuts in the defense budget and in Aug. 1993 opposition groups led demonstrations in protest to alleged violations of the new constitution. In Nov. 1993 student demonstrations that had occurred all year erupted into riots.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the CFA Franc (Communaute Financiere Africaine-CFAF) divided into 100 Centimes.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$2,279,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$1,354,000,000 (1993). Imports; CFAF 67,500,000,000 (1993). Exports; CFAF 69,100,000,000 (1993). Tourism Receipts; USD \$16,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; CFAF -10,800,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 4,130,000 or 50.0% of total population (1992). Unemployed; 1.3% (1988).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are France, other EU countries, Nigeria and the USA.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Coal, Cotton, Ground Nuts, Iron Ore, Livestock, Millet, Phosphates, Rice, Sorghum, Tin, Uranium.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Food Processing, Mining, Textiles.

MAIN EXPORTS: Coal, Ground Nuts, Hides and Skins, Iron Ore, Livestock, Uranium.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; nil. Roads; length 39,970 km (24,836 mi) (1988). Vehicles; cars 27,254 (1988), trucks and buses 25,248 (1988). Merchant Marine; nil. Air Transport; passenger-km 208,567,000 (129,597,000 passenger-mi) (1988), cargo ton-km 35,223,000 (24,124,000 short ton-mi) (1988).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 1 with a circulation of 5,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 440,000 (1994). Television; receivers 25,000 (1994). Telephones; units 10,500 (1993).

MILITARY: 5,300 (1995) total active duty personnel with 98.1% army, 0.0% navy and 1.9% air force while military expenditure accounts for 1.5% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).