



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

## **Niger - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Tuesday 29 April 2014**

### **General information including: Population; Capital city; Landmarks; Famous people**

A report published by the *CIA* in April 2014 lists ethnic groups as follows:

“Haoussa 55.4%, Djerma Sonrai 21%, Tuareg 9.3%, Peuhl 8.5%, Kanouri Manga 4.7%, other 1.2% (2001 census)” (*CIA* (14 April 2014) *The World Factbook, Niger*).

This report also notes:

“NIAMEY (capital) 1.004 million (2009)”(ibid).

This document lists the following political parties:

“Democratic and Social Convention-Rahama or CDS-Rahama [Mahamane OUSMANE]  
National Movement for a Society of Development-Nassara or MNSD-Nassara [Seini OUMAROU]  
National Union of Independents or UNI [Amadou DJIBO ALI]  
Nigerien Alliance for Democracy and Progress-Zaman Lahiya or ANDP-Zaman Lahiya [Moussa Moumouni DJERMAKOYE]  
Nigerien Democratic Movement for an African Federation or MODEN/FA Lumana [Hama AMADOU]  
Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism or PNDS-Tarrayya [Mohamed BAZOUM]  
Rally for Democracy and Progress-Jama'a or RDP-Jama'a [Hamid ALGABID]  
Social and Democratic Rally or RSD-Gaskiyya [Cheiffou AMADOU]  
Union for Democracy and the Republic-Tabbat or UDR-Tabbat [Amadou Boubacar CISSE]  
note: the SPLM and SPLM-DC are banned political parties” (ibid).

The report states that that national anthem is:

“...”La Nigerienne” (The Nigerien)” (ibid).

The main agricultural products are listed in the report as:

“cowpeas, cotton, peanuts, millet, sorghum, cassava (manioc), rice; cattle, sheep, goats, camels, donkeys, horses, poultry” (ibid).

A *BBC News* profile issued in May 2103 states:

“Full name: The Republic of Niger  
Population: 16.6 million (UN, 2012)  
Capital: Niamey  
Area: 1.27 million sq km (489,000 sq miles)  
Major languages: French (official), Arabic, Hausa, Songhai

Major religions: Islam, indigenous beliefs  
Life expectancy: 55 years (men), 56 years (women) (UN)" (BBC News (21 May 2013)  
*Niger profile*).

Considering "Peoples" a profile issued in July 2008 by the *Minority Rights Group International* states:

"Main religions: Islam, traditional religions.  
Main languages: French (official), Hausa, Arabic, Tamashek (Tuareg Berber) Djerma (Songhai), Fulani.  
Main minority groups: Songhai 2.3 million (21%), Tuareg 1 million (9.3%), Peulh (Fulani) 940,000 (8.5%), Kanuri (including Manga) 513,000 (4%), Toubou 42,000 (0.3%). [Note: Demographic data on ethnic groups comes from the 2001 census, Institut National de la Statistique. Percentages are converted to numbers and vice-versa using the CIA's 2007 estimate for total population of 12.9 million.] Just over 55 per cent of the population is Hausa, settled agriculturists who live in the south. Second to them, comprising a fifth of the population, are Songhai cultivators whose homeland is located west of the Hausa territory. Songhai are a broad constellation of ethnic clans including the Dendi, Djerma, Gube, Kurtey, Sorko and Woga. Dendi who live on the Niger-Benin border are essentially descendants of the Songhai who resisted the Moroccan conquest of central Songhai and Gao. Djerma are found east of the River Niger between Niamey and the Hausa belt, and along the River Niger. They are believed to be descended from Malinké and the Sarakolé and to have migrated southward from Mali before the rise of the Songhai empire and to have adopted Islam in the tenth century. Dosso, their loose confederacy of small clans and village states, developed a feeling of deeper affinity only after wars with the Fulani and pressure from the Tuareg and became powerful in the nineteenth century, especially under colonial rule. The arid north and centre are home to Tuareg camel and goat herders, who speak Tamashek, a language related to Berber (see page on Tuareg). The second-largest traditionally pastoralist group is the Peulh (also known as Fulani, Fula and Toucouleur), nomadic cattle herders who are found all over the West African Sahel from Senegal and Guinea to Cameroon. Today, most are sedentary. In Niger they are dispersed throughout much of the country, with concentrations in the south-central and west. Their ancestors were known as Bororo, who form a subgroup today which is less Islamicised than sedentary Peulh. The origin of the Peulh is uncertain; it has been postulated that they may be of Ethiopian origin. Toubou are inhabitants of Tu, the local name for the Tibesti Mountains that are centred in the Sahara of northern Chad and reach into Libya and north-eastern Niger. They are nomadic, traditionally extracting a levy on all caravans and tribute from sedentary villages. There are at least three distinct castes in Toubou society, and intermarriage is rare. In Niger, Toubou control the salt pans, acting as intermediaries between the Kanuri population of the oases and the Tuareg overlords. Toubou are comprised of Teda (Braouia) and Daza (Gorane). Teda are a branch of the Toubou found mostly in northern Chad and in small numbers in eastern Niger. They call themselves Tedagada (those who speak Tegada) and are related to Kanuri. In Niger they are found in the Kaouar and Djado areas. There are very small numbers of Daza in north-eastern Niger, around Lake Chad. They call themselves Dazagada. Toubou are Muslim, but Islam was not widely followed until well into the 20th century. Related by language but not livelihood are Kanuri agriculturists of the south-east, near Lake Chad, but many are now urban dwellers. Kanuri are known in Niger by their Hausa name, 'Beri Beri' which Kanuri consider derogatory. With Toubou nomads, some Kanuri continue to exploit remote salt pans and desert oases of Kaouar. Manga, who speak Kanuri and are sometimes regarded as a sub-group of the Kanuri, live east of Zindar in Agadiz department on the Niger-Chad border"

(Minority Rights Group International (July 2008) *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Niger : Overview*).

In March 2014 the *World Bank* notes:

“Niger is a large landlocked country of 1.27 million square kilometers and a population (around 16 million) that is growing at one of the fastest rates in the world (3.4 % per year). Niger is prone to political instability and natural crises - notably droughts, floods and locust infestation - all contributing to chronic food insecurity. The poverty rate, at 56% of the population, makes Niger one of the world's poorest countries...” (World Bank (27 March 2014) *Niger Overview*).

An undated document issued by the *Niger Honorary Consulate UK* points out that:

“The sprawling Musée National du Niger is one of West Africa’s standout attractions. Numerous themed pavilions, each tipping their hat to Hausa architecture, give visitors a peek into Niger’s present and past. The Pablo Toucet pavilion displays the dress of Niger’s different ethnic groups – a quick way to train the eye for differentiating these groups as you travel around Niger.

While common sense and science dictate that there are no 2m-tall, 15m-long crocodiles wandering the earth today, one jaw-dropping glimpse of the Boubou Hana pavilion’s 100 million-year-old *Sarcosuchus imperator*, or ‘Super Croc’, and you’ll be second guessing everything – chilling indeed! Oddly, similarly aged dinosaur skeletons (with comparably sized teeth) in the Palaeontology/Prehistory pavilion don’t elicit any similar irrational fears, only thoughts of these past creatures’ majesty.

Nearby, anchored in concrete, is the infamous *Arbre de Ténéré*.

*Ténéré Desert*

The *Ténéré Desert* fulfils the classic image of endless empty desert – towering sand dunes scattered here and there with cave paintings, dinosaur fossils and car wrecks. It’s illegal to explore here unless you’re in the company of a licensed guide from a licensed Nigerien travel agency...

*Parc National Du W Du Niger*

What this excellent national park lacks in animal numbers, it makes up for in spades with the diversity of its wildlife. Antelopes, buffalos, elephants, hippos, lions, leopards, cheetahs, baboons, Nile crocodiles, hyenas, jackals, warthogs and over 300 species of migratory bird call this unique environment home.

The park rests on the west bank of the Niger River and is an area of dry savannah woodland, a transition zone between the Sahel and the moister savannahs to the south. The ‘W’ (pronounced du-blav-vay) in the name comes from the double bend in the Niger River at the park’s northern border. The park is a massive 9120 sq km (56667 sq mi) and straddles Niger, Benin and Burkina Faso. Niger’s portion is 2200 sq km (1367 sq mi)...

*Festivals*

There are several cultural festivals to attend in Niger with a large number being held in April, September, October and November. These traditional festivals are vibrant and colourful and all branches of society participate. There are many religious festivals in Niger too and, as the majority of the population follow Islam, the Muslim festivals like *Mouloud*, *Id al-Fitr*, *Id al-Adha*, and the Islamic New Year are widely celebrated with the same true spirit as the traditional festivals.

The traditional Festivals in Niger are unique and if you are here when one is taking place do find the time to join in as they really will make a mark of their own. The biggest of these festivals is *Guerewol* or the *Bororos’ festival*. This festival is in September at the end of the rainy season and continues for seven days. It is in celebration of the two groups of descendants of *Wodaabe*. During this colourful

festival, the most handsome men are selected by the three loveliest ladies. The dances are the highlight of the festival and a few of the dances include:  
Guerewol (the festival takes its name from this dance form)  
Ruume (a dance in the circular format where the dancers sing and clap in a rhythm)  
Yaake (where the facial expressions of the dancers are a delight to watch)  
The other traditional festivals in Niger include:  
Cure Salee – A festival of cattle breeders held in September.  
Hotungo – This is the annual celebration of the nomads held in October.  
Wassankara – This is a political comedy festival held in April.  
Hawan Kaho – Bullfighting is the main attraction in this festival organized in November” (Niger Honorary Consulate UK (undated) *Tourism*).

An undated document from *Lonely Planet* states:

“With the desert boasting some of the Sahara’s most beautiful dunes, the stark splendour of the Aïr Mountains & Ténéré Desert being one of West Africa’s most spectacular sights, and the intriguing, ancient trans-Saharan trade-route towns of Agadez and Zinder playing home to magnificent mazes of mudbrick architecture and fascinating locals, the international appeal of Niger as a destination is undeniable” (Lonely Planet (Undated) *Niger*).

Commenting on a place in the capital Niamey, an undated report issued by *Lonely Planet* points out that:

“The sprawling Musée National du Niger is one of West Africa's standouts. Numerous themed pavilions, each tipping their hat to Hausa architecture, give visitors a peek into Niger's present and past” (Lonely Planet (Undated) *Musée National du Niger*).

This report also notes:

“Nearby, anchored in concrete, is the infamous Arbre de Ténéré” (ibid).

An undated publication released by *Lonely Planet* commenting on Niamey states:

“The Petit Marché is smack-dab in the centre of town and merits a visit” (Lonely Planet (Undated) *Petit Marché*).

An A-Z list of famous people in Niger published by *WorldAtlas.com* includes:

“Aboubacar Ibrahim Abani diplomat  
Mohamed Abdoulahi politician  
Souley Abdoulaye politician, former prime minister  
Albade Abouba politician, former acting prime minister  
Nafissatou Moussa Adamou swimmer  
Boukary Adji politician, former prime minister  
Mounkaila Aissata politician  
Ismael Eragae Alassane footballer  
Moustapha Alassane filmmaker  
Hamid Algabid politician, former prime minister  
Mohamed Alhousseini Alhassan swimmer  
Yacouba Ali footballer  
Alphadi fashion designer  
Hama Amadou politician, former prime minister

Kader Amadou footballer  
Kalla Ankourao politician  
Issoufou Assoumane politician” (WorldAtlas.com (Undated) *Niger, Famous natives*).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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