

**U.S. Statement at the Universal Periodic Review of Niger
24th Session, January 18, 2016**

The United States welcomes the Government of Niger to the UPR Working Group.

The United States commends Niger's efforts to work with its neighbors to counter terrorist groups, including Boko Haram and al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

We also commend Niger's recent audit of its electoral list as a commitment to transparency in advance of the upcoming February elections.

We are concerned by reports that political space is narrowing in Niger and that opposition candidates are not able to exercise their rights to freedoms of expression and association, notably through reports of arrests, detentions, and the blocking of social media platforms late last year.

We remain deeply concerned about the continued existence of slavery in Niger and reports that the government is not effectively enforcing its anti-slavery laws, although it is making significant effort to do so.

We note that prison conditions, particularly overcrowding in prisons, continue to be a challenge despite efforts by the government to address this issue.

Bearing in mind these concerns, we recommend that Niger:

1. Respect freedoms of expression and association, both online and offline, particularly leading up to this year's elections, and release political detainees.

2. Build law enforcement and labor inspection capacity to combat slavery practices, including sexual servitude, and forced child begging, and rehabilitate and integrate victims.
3. Conduct a review of prison conditions in the country's various detention facilities and implement a plan for addressing overcrowding.

ERIC RICHARDSON