

# Chadian journalist imprisoned after report on airline's alleged weapons smuggling

Chadian authorities should immediately release from detention and drop all charges against Juda Allahondoum, publisher of the weekly *Le Visionnaire*, newspaper, the Committee to Protect Journalists has said.



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Judicial police in the capital N'djamena on October 17 arrested Allahondoum after he published an article in the October 11-17 edition of *Le Visionnaire* that accused Air Inter 1, a privately owned Chadian airline, of being involved in the illegal transportation of weapons to Syria, according to Francis Lokouldé, Allahondoum's lawyer, and [media reports](#).

CPJ's repeated calls to Air Inter 1 went unanswered. The company's chief executive was [arrested](#), according to the African Press Agency. A week later, on October 23, Chadian authorities charged Allahondoum with "usurping the title and function" of a journalist, and transferred him to Amsinéne prison in N'Djamena where he is awaiting trial, Lokouldé told CPJ.

According to the journalist's lawyer, the trial is scheduled to begin on November 2.

"We call on Chadian authorities to release Juda Allahondoum immediately, drop all charges against him, and let journalists do their work freely," said Angela Quintal, CPJ Africa program coordinator. "Arresting journalists, then inventing professional standards, is an unacceptable abuse of power, and a blatant effort to intimidate the press."

Mahamat Saleh Youssouf, the N'Djamena prosecutor who brought the charges, told CPJ that Allahondoum "is not a professional journalist" because he did not have "proper training."

Lokouldé told CPJ in French: "Juda's problem is not that he is not a journalist. The real problem is that his article has bothered a lot of people."

## Threats

Lokouldé told CPJ that Allahondoum had informed him about receiving threatening messages from unknown numbers the day he published the October 11-17 edition of *Le Visionnaire*, and that the journalist subsequently decided to go into hiding from October 12 until October 17.

When Allahondoum emerged from hiding on October 17, police summoned the journalist and interrogated him, Lokouldé told CPJ. During the interrogation, Chadian police accused Allahondoum of obstructing judicial investigation, usurping of the title and function of a journalist, and use of a falsehood, Lokouldé said. The charges were all in relation to the article on Air Inter 1, according to the lawyer.

Article five of the Chadian media law, which defines the requirements a journalist must meet for the law to consider him or her a professional, does not include reference to training or educational standards, according to Lokouldé and legal documents seen by CPJ.

Allahondoum was also in possession of a valid press card issued by the Chadian communication council, according to Lokouldé. CPJ has seen a copy of the press card.

Allahondoum was the editor-in-chief and then director of the weekly Chadian newspaper *L'Union* before founding *Le Visionnaire*, and is also the current president of a media association called Patronat de la Presse Privée, Lokouldé and Djunan Oscar, a *Le Visionnaire* reporter, told CPJ.

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