

The Camel Express

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF NIGER

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NIGER GOES TO THE POLLS

Final Results Incomplete From Historic Local Elections

In an historic event, Nigeriennes went to the polls on Sunday, February 7 for the purpose of electing some 2000 local, departmental and regional councillors.

Results from the elections, Niger's first local elections since independence in 1960, are incomplete even as The Camel Express goes to print in early March.

Partial results, however, indicate a substantial overall lead for the anti-government coalition of FRDD (Front pour la Restauration et la Défense de la Démocratie) and AFDS (Alliance des Forces Démocratique et Sociales). The FRDD consists of five political parties including the CDS-Rahama (Convention Démocratique et Sociale) led by Mahamane Ousmane - Niger's only popularly elected president. The AFDS comprises an additional three parties.

The government coalition of six political parties was led by RDP-Jamma'a (Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et le Progrés) - the party led by President and General Ibrahim Mainassara Bare, the man who led the military coup which ousted Ousmane in 1996.

Two independent parties completed the slate of electoral groups which fielded as many as 18,000 candidates.

MORE SOURCES FOR ELECTION COVERAGE

Much of the factual content of the Niger election coverage, as provided here by The Camel Express, comes from the sources listed below. Those readers with internet access are encouraged to 'hit' the web sites listed below for additional and up-to-date information as well as more in-depth coverage.. Some of these sites also lead to other sources of news on Niger:.

- Kakaki-News of Niger - The pro-democracy news service of Focus on Niger. <http://users.idworld.net/jmayer/kakaki/>
- Les Internauts du Ténéré - A Nigerien site. <http://www.multimania.com/niger/labari.htm>
- PANA - The Panafrikan News Agency. <http://www.africanews.org/west/niger>

Message from the President

Greetings, once again, on behalf of the Board of Directors of **Friends of Niger**. Welcome to the first 1999 edition of The Camel Express.

As promised in the last edition - and as you can see - **FON** is now officially 'on-line.' Please visit the site often and get back to us with your reactions. We think you'll like what you find, but we are wide open to ideas and additional input. You'll find a fuller description of the site's contents below..

Also below, you will find an update on plans for **FON's REUNION ' 99**. The idea for the reunion was the desire, expressed to us by many of you, for an opportunity to renew old acquaintances and friendships and meet other people who have lived and worked in Niger. The focus of the reunion will be social, with some time put aside for a Niger-oriented exchange. Please check out the emerging details on page three and get in touch with Vice-President Gabriella Maertens or myself.

Many thanks to those of you who responded to the kick-off of the 1999 **FON** membership campaign - by filling out the form, becoming a member and making additional financial contributions.

As grateful as we are for the response to-date, that response still falls short of the support that we are going to need if we hope to build a volunteer organization that keeps its members informed about what's happening in Niger; that helps its members stay in contact with each other; and that, eventually, is capable of making meaningful and direct contributions to the people of Niger.

Please take this opportunity to print out the 1999 Annual Membership Form (see below) and join **Friends of Niger**.

And, by all means, enjoy the newsletter and stay in contact.

Thank you.

Jim Schneider, President

Moving? Changing Your E-Mail Address?

After the last issue of **The Camel Express** went out, we received 122 e-mail "undeliverables." That's 122 people who didn't receive the fall edition of the newsletter - because they didn't keep us informed. And we can't keep you informed if you don't keep us informed. Stay in contact!! We'll try to do the same.

The Camel Express is the periodical newsletter of **Friends of Niger (FON)**. FON can be contacted via the post at P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164 or by e-mail at lorenz3@magi.com.

Reunion '99 Planned for August in St. Paul

It's not too early to begin making your plans to attend Reunion '99. Spring is just around the corner and the next thing you know - it'll be summer. **FON's Reunion '99** - an opportunity to reacquaint with old friends and reconnect with Niger - is scheduled for August 13-15 in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The schedule, still tentative, has begun to take shape - with a *first contact*/registration event set for the afternoon of Friday, August 13 and a dinner/social slotted for that evening. **FON** Vice-President Gabriella Maertens, who is coordinating the organization of Reunion '99, is holding off the temptation to firm up plans for Saturday, Saturday evening and Sunday morning. She wants more input and ideas from you!! Does someone have a good selection of music from Niger? A slide show that they could bring to St. Paul? Photo albums crammed with embarrassing shots of themselves and other RPCVs? The desire to pull together people who were in Niger during the same period of time? Other ideas for Reunion '99? She wants to hear from you - ASAP!!

Gabriella reports that there appears to be considerable interest from people whose years of Nigerienne experience ranges from the early 60's right up the present. And she promises more details for the May issue of **The Camel Express**.

Contact info: Gabriella Maertens - gmaerten@pps.k12.or.us; Jim Schneider - lorenz3@magi.com; **Friends of Niger** - P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164.

35th Anniversary Tee-Shirts Discounted to \$10

T-shirts commemorating the 35th anniversary of Peace Corps in Niger have been discounted to \$10 each, plus shipping & handling (\$3 for 1 or 2 shirts; another \$1 for each additional shirt). The shirts, [pictured below](#), are black on white, 100% pre-shrunk cotton with a green crest on the left sleeve.



Designed by a PCV in Niger, proceeds from the sale of the shirts go to fund the projects of the PC Niger Gender and Development (GAD) Committee. Available sizes are L, XL and a limited number of 2X. Send check or money order payable to Hassan Baroudy, 1324 Vermont Street NW, Washington, DC 20005. Include your name, address, size and quantity and a day-time contact number or e-mail address. All sales are final.



Hassan can be contacted at hbaroudy@peacecorps.gov.

CHEWABLE VITAMINS FOR NIGER

Sue Rosenfeld, Niamey Resident Director of Boston University's Study Abroad in Niger program has asked that visitors to Niger bring along a bottle of children's chewable multi-vitamins.

Here's the background. Sue - a 14 year resident of Niger - helps participants in BU's study program find and fill community placement 'mini-internships' during their stay in Niamey. Some of these students intern in the Pediatrics Ward of the National Hospital in Niamey (Pediatrie B). Among the responsibilities taken on by the hospital interns has been the distribution of vitamins to children at the hospital. That is until last year, when the supply of vitamins ran dry.

Sue put out her initial request late last year and received a productive response to her initiative.

This is how it works. When someone lands in Niamey, they give Sue a call at 73-54-26. She will pick up the bottles. Periodically Sue then passes the bottles along to Dr. Gamatie at the Pediatrics Ward. Dr. Gamatie oversees the distribution of the vitamins.

Ousmane and Banguiéré Among Monitors in Nigeria

Nigeria, Niger's neighbor to the south, held presidential elections on Saturday, February 26. Amongst the international observers who monitored the elections were former Nigerien President Mahamane Ousmane, former US President Jimmy Carter and retired US General Colin Powell. The current government of Niger sent 15 additional observers led by Ali Banguiéré, president of the Supreme Court of Niger.

Sources: Kakaki-News of Niger, Channel Africa

State Department Commends Niger

But Expresses Concern Over Election Turmoil

On February 17, the US Department of State commended Niger on its efforts in relation to the recent local, departmental and regional elections and commented that the elections "marked a significant step in an ambitious program of decentralization" At the same time, the State Department expressed its concern over disruptions to the electoral process and urged the Nigerienne government to "ensure the integrity of the vote count."

Disruptions were reported in Niamey as well as in the regions of Maradi, Tahaoua and Zinder. CENI chairman, Lawali Maman Danda, has indicated that some election re-runs will likely take place in certain of the areas where the disruptions were the most severe.

Sources: BBC, Kakaki-News of Niger, US State Department

RPCVs Needed for 1999 Special Olympics

The North Carolina Peace Corps Association (NCPCA) has issued an appeal for assistance to the RPCV community, as part of its work with the organizing committee of the 1999 Special Olympics World Summer Games. The games are being held June 26 through July 24 in North Carolina and will involve some 7000 athletes as well as coaches and family members from 150 countries and regions worldwide.

The Special Olympics is looking for 2500 volunteer interpreters to do work in 40 languages, as well as delegation assistants and delegation assistant leaders to work with athletes and their delegations during the Olympic period. The NCPCA is acting as liaison between interested RPCVs and the Olympic organizers and coordinating logistical support for participating RPCVs.

Individuals or groups that are interested in volunteering assistance or who want additional information should contact NCPCA President SaraTerry at 919-361-9770 or by e-mail at ncpca_pres@worldnet.att.net; or Reed Altman at 919-828-4617 or ncpca@rtpnet.org.

FON Web Site Up, Running & Interactive

After a slight delay, **FON** is very much on-line! Bookmark the site while you're here.

The **FON** web page, a masterpiece of the web-authoring skills and dedication of Niger RPCV guru Jai Evans, made its official debut in January. The site contains information about **Friends of Niger**; links to sources of news and other information on Niger; links to RPCV web pages; an interactive Bulletin Board where you can leave messages to each other ; a Guest Book where you can leave messages for **FON**; an e-mail link to **FON**; and, the archives of **The Camel Express**.

The site will always be a work in progress as it adds new features and additional links. Please pass along any ideas or suggestions. And give us a 'hit' from time to time.

Peace Corps Also Launches Newly Designed Web Site

While you're checking out the new **FON** site, take a few extra minutes and visit the new PC page at <http://www.peacecorps.gov>. It includes info on Returned Volunteer Services, the Fellows Program, World

Wise Schools and other programs and services of the Peace Corps.

While you're at it, visit the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) as well. You can find NPCA at <http://www.rpcv.org>.

MESSAGES, Etc.....

Janine & Barry Rands, recently moved from NW Oregon to southern California, looking to make contact with other Niger folks in the area. Now live in Camarillo. Contact via e-mail at BarryRands@aol.com.

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NPCA reports that the 1998 edition of *Returned Peace Corps Volunteers Directory, 1961-1997* are now on sale at the reduced price of \$40 (down from \$65). Contact Rached Rebert at 202-293-7728 ext 2 or via e-mail at Rpcvadmin@aol.com.

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Friends of Niger - Washington State will meet in Seattle on Saturday, April 17 from 1 to 4 PM. For details contact Sue Dernbach at 206-937-6320 or Sue Bracken at Sbrckn@aol.com

FRIENDS OF NIGER 1999 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City/ State _____ Phone (h) _____

Zip _____ Phone (w) _____

E- Mail Address _____

Connection to Niger (RPCV, etc.) _____

Dates in Niger _____ Location in Niger _____

Program or Involvement in Niger _____

Membership Dues & Contributions Help Fund FON Activities, including The Camel Express

Please Check Appropriate Boxes

Enclosed is \$20 for an Individual Membership in FON

\$45 to cover Individual Membership in both FON & NPCA

Enclosed is \$35 for a Family Membership (*2 Members at One Address*)

\$67.50 to cover Family Membership in both FON & NPCA

I am a New RPCV, entitled to a 1-Year Free Membership

Please send me a Copy of FON's Bylaws (*Members Only*)

In Addition to my Membership, I have enclosed a Contribution of _____

Instead of Joining FON at this time, I have enclosed a Contribution of _____

Make Check or Money Order Payable to **Friends of Niger** and mail to:

P. O. Box 33164, Washington, D. C. 20033-0164

(Please Print & Enclose Membership Form)