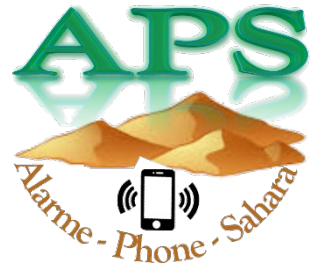


Alarme Phone Sahara

SENSITIZE, DOCUMENT, RESCUE



<https://alarmephonesahara.info/fr/>

17.03.2023: Urgent appeal - Humanitarian crisis in Assamaka on the Niger-Algeria border: Thousands of people deported from Algeria in vulnerable conditions and left on their own in the middle of the Sahara without shelter and care.

Assamaka is a village in the middle of the Sahara, in northern Niger, 15 kilometres from the Niger-Algeria border. Normally, 1500 people live in Assamaka, but currently there are at least four times that number. The backdrop are the mass deportations of undocumented migrants from Algeria. Already in 2022, at least 24250 people have been deported to Assamaka. In the first 10 weeks of this year, the total number of deported people was 8.149, according to observations by Alarme Phone Sahara. The deportees are women, including pregnant women, children and minors, as well as men, who have made an often torturous journey through the desert in buses and trucks. Many have been systematically beaten, abused and robbed by Algerian security forces.

The deportation transports to the Algerian-Nigerian no man's land can be divided into two groups: In the so-called "official" transports, one finds mainly Nigerien citizens. On the basis of an agreement between Niger and Algeria, they are taken directly to Assamaka, where they are then transported by the Nigerien authorities to Arlit or Agadez. On the other hand, the so-called "unofficial" transports mainly concern people from West and Central Africa, but also from Arab or Asian countries. They are left at "point zero", at the Algeria-Niger border, and have to walk 15 kilometres to Assamaka.

In the face of these mass deportations, a humanitarian crisis is occurring in the border village of Assamaka, aggravated day by day by the fact that, since December 2022, the reception center of the IOM (International Organization for Migration) in Assamaka no longer registers any new deportees. More concretely : The local team of Alarme Phone Sahara reports that IOM is currently evacuating the 629 people who were already in its camp before taking any new measures. Due to that situation, for the thousands of people deported by unofficial convoys since then, no means of travel is being made available to leave Assamaka, either by IOM or the Nigerien state. Only a few manage to organise a vehicle with money from relatives. All the others remain in Assamaka, without shelters, blankets and mats, without provision of food and water.

This situation not only endangers the safety of the deportees, but also of the local population: because the deportees find themselves forced to beg from the local population, some also steal and slaughter animals to feed themselves. This leads to additional tensions and conflicts and increasingly endangers general security. The local police have therefore imposed a curfew, that prohibits the deported people from moving around the village after 9pm, making their situation even more precarious.

The current humanitarian crisis in Assamaka is a direct result of the ongoing mass deportations of migrants from Algeria - facilitated by the EU - and the precarious conditions of services previously provided by IOM in Assamaka. Alarme Phone Sahara therefore calls for an immediate halt to the deportations. This also implies that the Nigerien state renounces its deportation agreements with Algeria. Furthermore, Alarme Phone Sahara calls on the UN rapporteur on migration to assume his responsibility and put pressure on Algeria to respect its international commitment to human rights agreements.

An immediate response to the humanitarian crisis in Assamaka is equally important. As Alarme Phone Sahara we demand that the Nigerien state, in collaboration with the international community and national and international organisations, take protective measures for migrants and refugees in Assamaka as quickly as possible, including the following:

- The immediate evacuation of the thousands of migrants blocked in Assamaka in unbearable conditions and their reintegration in dignified and humane living conditions!
- The immediate reopening of sufficient reception, accommodation, care and transport capacities for all migrants who need them!
- The immediate and urgent release of sufficient funds for local structures or other humanitarian aid providers that are ready and able to take concrete initiatives to assist migrants deported and stranded in Niger!

17th of March 2023, Assamaka, Agadez, Niamey, Vienna, Hamburg, Bremen

P.S. Apart from the aid organisation Doctors without Borders (MSF), which continues to provide health support, Alarme Phone Sahara is currently the only human rights organisation that is continuously on the ground in Assamaka and offers practical support to deportees. In this context, we would like to emphasise that the statement made by various IOM staff in Niger, that IOM would continue to support deportees in Assamaka, does not correspond to our own observation and must be verified. Instead, we would like to emphasise that the scale of the humanitarian disaster in Assamaka is such that it can only be solved by a joint effort of the international community.