

## UPDATE ON THE TUAREG REBELLION

Life is becoming increasingly difficult for the Tuaregs and other people who live in northern Niger because of the armed conflict between Tuaregs who call themselves the Movement of Nigeriens for Justice (MNJ) and the government. (See July newsletter) Journalists have been jailed for writing about the conflict. Landmines have been laid by both sides which make travel in the Air Mountains virtually impossible for natives and tourists alike. The military has reportedly detained and tortured Tuareg men. Travel is forbidden except under military escort. Aid organizations including Doctors without Borders have withdrawn or been kicked out of the area. There is no tourism, which is the lifeblood of Agadez.



Dry riverbed at Timia

Landmines ring Iferouane, a town in the Air Mountains where

many of Elhadji Koumama's relatives live. A convoy carrying food has been detained and food is scarce. It is almost impossible to get news from the area. The Koumamas are very worried about family members but are helpless to do anything because of the travel restrictions. The situation is apparently not much better in Timia, a lovely oasis in the mountains where luscious citrus fruits and vegetables are grown for the local and Agadez markets. The Timia co-op is unable to transport the produce to Agadez. One produce truck recently hit a landmine. In Agadez the number of children being seen in the hospital for malnutrition has increased dramatically. Even when there is food in Agadez many people are too poor to buy it as commerce has halted and people have no way of earning money.

Aside from the conflict between the MNJ and the military armed bandits are apparently taking advantage of the unrest to attack and rob people. Two Doctors without Borders vehicles were stolen at gunpoint recently.

Elhadji and his immediate family are safe in Niamey. Many of the artisans have followed him to the capital and are living and

## IN THIS ISSUE

Inquiring Minds Want to Know. . .

Do the Koumamas accept special orders?

...continued from page 1

working under a large shade he has constructed beside his house. Most have left their families behind. They try to get back to Agadez sometimes but it is risky and takes a minimum of two days each way because the busses are stopped part way and can continue only with a military escort. Sometimes there are as many as 40 people in addition to his family in and around the house.

Malaria and typhoid are much more prevalent in the semi-tropical climate of Niamey than in the dry desert of Agadez. Recently Fatima, Elhadji's 2 ½ year old daughter contracted both diseases simultaneously and nearly died. She is among the fortunate children as Elhadji rushed her to a private clinic and got medications for her. Elhadji also came down with typhoid but has recovered.

Elhadji has enrolled the four oldest children in a school in Niamey supported by a French organization. They are adjusting to being in the big city but miss their friends and cousins back "home" in Agadez. Izara, the

six-year-old daughter, is having a harder time with homesickness than sons Abdul and Smalie, who are now 8 and 11. Amina, the oldest daughter who had been living with her grandparents in Agadez in accordance with Tuareg custom, has been reunited with the family, which is a great joy to both Elhadji and Kola.

### THE ART OF BEING TUAREG EXHIBITION AT THE SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART

The Art of Being Tuareg exhibition opened at the National Museum of African Art on October 10, 2007. It will continue through January 27, 2008. See the slideshow on the exhibition at [www.africa.si.edu](http://www.africa.si.edu). All of the men and women in it are Elhadji's relatives.

The museum is located at 950 Independence Avenue SW in Washington, D.C. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily except Christmas and admission is free.

### CANTOR ARTS CENTER BOOKSHOP HOSTS A TUAREG JEWELRY TRUNK SHOW

Cantor Arts Center, the museum at Stanford University, will host a trunk show of Koumama Tuareg jewelry from October 26-28. The Bookshop's extensive inventory will be supplemented with our stock for those days and I will be there to talk about the jewelry. The store regularly carries the largest selection of our jewelry in the San Francisco Bay Area. The museum is open Wednesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free.



Cantor Arts Center

## INQUIRING MINDS

### DO THE KOUMAMAS ACCEPT SPECIAL ORDERS?

The Inadan artisans are very skilled in crafting special pieces at the request of our customers. To ensure satisfaction there are several things to keep in mind.

- Provide either a photo or a clear and detailed sketch of the piece. Vague verbal descriptions don't translate well and are likely to lead to disappointment.
- Specify size, preferably in centimeters, for each dimension. If ordering a ring, specify size in American scale as that is the measurement the artisans work with.
- Send your special orders to me via email at [annelston@lossing.com](mailto:annelston@lossing.com). I forward them to Elhadji with any additional instructions. He can access email at an internet café.
- Elhadji prices special order items and I get approval from the customer before work is started.
- Be prepared to wait a while or pay the DHL shipping

charges from Niamey if it is a rush. We ship jewelry via DHL every few weeks depending on our inventory needs here. Special orders are included in those shipments. without extra charge. Separate shipments are billed to the customer and cost about \$100.

If you have an "Inquiring Minds" question that you would like for us to answer in a future newsletter, please send us an email at the address below:

[annelston@lossing.com](mailto:annelston@lossing.com)