What our organisations demand from Areva:

In view of Areva being a majority state-owned corporation, we put forward the following demands:

- an immediate suspension of all mining projects until an independent environmental and health assessment, responsible to both the host state and the population affected, is made of all of Areva’s operations; we should expect that Areva would conform to French regulations on the impacts of mining.
- payment of taxes or contributions by Areva to host states, entrusted to an independent management structure that will ensure rehabilitation of sites after extraction, and cleanup of operating sites and their surroundings (this should include containment of tailings and radioactive waste, collection of waste and contaminated scrap metal, securing of safe water for local population, etc.)
- respect the United Nation’s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, particularly on the need for the close involvement of local people in decisions related to management of water resources and use of land.
- set up a fund for all ex-miners and people living close to the mines, in addition to provision of a complete medical examination, a retrospective assessment of radioactive doses incurred, a long-term health monitoring system conducted by independent medical organizations, and the compensation for damage suffered.

What Survie demands from the French institutions:

- Put an end to the various military, diplomatic and financial support mechanisms used by France to support dictatorships and other authoritarian or corrupt regimes. For decades they have been complicit in France’s extraction of strategic resources.
- Urgently introduce binding legislation on the environmental and social responsibility of French companies, by extending their legal responsibility to their foreign subsidiaries. And, by leading by example, pressure the EU and other countries to do the same.
- Strengthen the struggle against corruption, for example by the elimination of bank secrecy and tax havens, and through ensuring the automatic transmission of tax information between jurisdictions.
- Urgently introduce binding legislation on fiscal transparency, forcing multinationals to issue country by country accounts for their activities in each jurisdiction where they operate.

Join the campaign to stop Areva making its own rules in Niger

This campaign is an alliance of a number of organisations which challenge Areva, France, the European Union and the international community to face their respective responsibilities. It campaigns against the disastrous consequences of French energy choices in Europe, and supports those in Niger who pay the price. This is a network for solidarity and action. The alliance works with those affected and supports them in their fight for the recognition of their rights, dignity and fundamental liberties.

Join Sortir du nucléaire !

Since 1997, the network Sortir du nucléaire (Get out of nuclear power) represents a majority position in public opinion. France must abandon nuclear energy and start promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.

Our role is to bring together all those wishing to see a nuclear phase-out. Our charter aims at achieving concrete results. More than 90,000 groups and 50,000 people have already signed. In 2012, the network consists of a team of over 30 volunteers and employees, hundreds of resource people, tens of thousands of activists and supporters in France and around the world who demand change. Why not you?

Join Survie !

Survie is an association that conducts information and advocacy campaigns for a drastic reform of French policy in Africa, aimed at citizens and elected representatives.

For Survie, development issues and poverty in developing countries have primarily political causes which require a political response. Each of us needs to challenge his/her elected representatives and demand control of the political choices made in his/her name.

Join our 1700 members and one of our 24 local groups and participate in the spread of its independent, critical, alternative information through its monthly journal Attels d’Afrique. Your contribution provides us with financial independence to perform research and to develop publications.

AREVA in Africa

The hidden face of French nuclear power

“In France, we don’t have oil, but we do have nuclear power.”

For 40 years, France has justified its nuclear power industry by claiming it brings the country “energy independence”. Yet, even before the closure of the last uranium mine on French soil in 2001, the fuel for French nuclear plants was imported. Now all of it is imported. Although uranium now comes from different countries, African uranium has always been indispensable for running French nuclear power plants.

How then can France speak about energy independence? It’s simple. French leaders consider that the former French colonies continue to belong to France. And the price France pays for uranium is so low that it almost fails to show in the official figures.

The nuclear euphoria downgraded

From 2006 uranium prices began to explode as a result of speculation. Areva responded by expanding its mining investments, especially in Africa. With the help of official and informal networks the company purchased new companies and won new contracts – some with secret clauses – in the Central African Republic, Niger, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, South Africa and Namibia.

The price has since tumbled and Areva’s profits have been revised downwards since the end of the boom. Extensive mining plans are now frozen, until they become profitable again.

French organisations exploiting uranium

CEA, created in 1945, (Commissariat à l’Energie Atomique), to manufacture the atomic bomb in secrecy.

COGEMA, created in 1976, 100% owned by CEA, involved in the uranium chain (from mining to reprocessing)

Framatome, created in 1958, built nuclear reactors in France & sold them to other countries

AREVA, created in 2001, merger of COGEMA and Framatome

A ‘BLACK FILE’ BOOK ON THE TOPIC

Raphaël Granraud details the conditions under which France and Areva procure uranium at the lowest price, at the cost of political interference and environmental, health and social disaster for local people. It dispels the myth of French energy independence through nuclear power, since the uranium fueling civil and military nuclear power comes in large part from Africa.

Available in French in bookshops, at Survie or Sortir du Nucleaire
Independence under French yoke

At independence in 1960, the defense agreements between France and its former colonies, including the so-called "pact of supply" for France on raw materials and strategic products, which safeguarded French interests.

Areva's Françafrique networks

Cogema and Areva have always used informal and formal channels of Françafrique.
- Former diplomats are put in charge of mining companies: Maurice Delauney, ambassador to Gabon, became CEO of Cominak from 1970 to 1988; Dominique Pin, formerly working at the African unit at the Elysee, became director of Areva in Niger during the tense period of renegocitation of the price of uranium. In summary, he worked at the Elysee at the same time as Anne Lauvergeon, future boss of Areva, who was working with President Mitterrand.
- Use of intermediaries in Africa, like French MP Patrick Balkany, unofficial emissary particularly for negotiations with the Central African Republic or Belgian national George Forrest in DR Congo, known as "Viceroy of Katanga".
- Former military or secret agents are commissioned, like Gilles Demeuris, former colonial and defence attaché at the French Embassy in Niamey, sent in 2007 to Niger by the private company Epite (SIgod) responsible for security at Areva's mines.

Nigery, 1974: a military coup d'Etat in the service of nuclear power

Since 1967, France has been extracting Niger's uranium "dirt cheap". In 1973, the oil crisis and the French decision to accelerate its nuclear program, led President Hamani Diori of Niger to demand higher uranium prices. "Diori reasoned that if Niger could contribute to the exceptional lucrativity of France, then surely France could make exceptional contributions to the economic development of Niger" explains the historian Gabriel Hecht. Negotiations became strained. On the night of 14 to 15 April 1974, Hamani Diori was ousted by a military coup led by Seyni Kountche. The leaders had received pledges of French support prior to their coup. French soldiers refused to intervene despite the existing defence agreement between the two countries.

How France preserved its interests in Niger in 2009-2010

In 2007, the President of Niger, Mamadou Tandja, opened the race for mining permits. Competition among investors was extremely sharp, especially in vying for the giant mine at Imouraren, coveted by Areva. The latter accepted an increase in uranium prices.

At the beginning of 2009, protests against Mamadou Tandja, who was preparing to seek a third term unconstitutionally. In March, Nicolas Sarkozy came to Niamey to "pre-sign" the contract for Imouraren: in order to get the giant mine contract for Areva, France did not hesitate to support Tandja and to accept the trembling on Nigerien constitutional rights.

The EU suspended its cooperation with Niger. Neighbouring countries protested Tandja's third term. France's position became untenable. On 18 February 2010, when Mamadou Tandja was overthrown by Niger's military, the French Secretary of State for Cooperation, immediately announced that there was "no reason to fear that the long-term partnership built by Areva with the Nigerian state and local communities would be disrupted." France apparently knew what was coming and did not dissuade the military from overthrowing a president who was determined to open up to Iranian and Chinese interests.

Key figures

- 87% of Areva's shares held by the French state, the 58 French: clion in 2008 was worldwide most accounts for 12% of gross investments


Reps mining take place at Blénou until 1970. After 1992, uranium was sold by the French National Assembly. In June 2011 to examine the acquisition of Uranium. It is not out of the question that intermediaries received illegal payments to broker the deal.

Areva's rébus investments

Areva has sometimes made incompetent business deals. Its acquisition of Canadian-quoted company Uranium in 2007 for €1.8 billion in dubious circumstances, is a perfect example. Registered in the British Virgin Islands, a famous tax haven, Uranium had subsidiaries in Namibia, Central African Republic, Senegal and South Africa. At the end of 2011, when Areva did its losses on the Uranium deal amounted to €1.9 billion, more than the cost of purchasing the company. A financial audit was instigated by the French National Assembly. In June 2011 to examine the acquisition of Uranium. It is not out of the question that intermediaries received illegal payments to broker the deal.

Areva, rebellions and insecurity in Niger

Areva has continued its operations in Niger through various political crises including the current insecurity. Its presence is even a factor in increasing tensions in the Sahel-Sahara area. Armed rebels in the 1990s and the 2009-2010 period claimed a share of the profits from uranium mining, reflecting the frustration of local residents of the mining areas. Areva took advantage of the state of emergency in Northern Niger in 2008 to validate its environmental impact assessment study for the opening of the Imouraren mine.

At the end of 2010, AQIM (Al-Qaeda in the IslamicMaghreb) kidnapped several French expatriates working for Areva and French company Vinci Sables in the heart of the mining town of Arlit. Five are still being held hostage, allowing France to justify strengthening its military presence in Niger and its neighbours, extending security provisions of mines by the army of Niger and private companies.

The mobilisation of civil society

We condemn the disastrous consequences of French energy choices and Areva's propaganda. Using huge advertising budgets, the company tells Europe about its "clean energy", and tells Africa about its support to local development of uranium mining, while actually losing in uranium prices.

In Niger and in Gabon, civil society organisations like Agir in Man in Arlit, GREEN and ROTAB in Niamey, Brainforest in Libreville, denounce uranium mining. In Falea, Malian, ARAC is drawing attention to the consequences of uranium exploration being undertaken by Röckgade, a Canadian company. In these countries there is an absence of public debate about mining issues. Governments ignore critics and Areva buys their silence and the silence of the populations while claiming to spend € 6 million per year on sustainable development activities.

To go further...

Books and reports
- D. Lorentz, Affaires atomiques, La Arnaud (2001)
- Noir Silence, Le Tour Eiffel (2009)

Web sites
- www.rotabniger.org
- www.criirad.org
- www-personal.umich.edu/~hechtg/