

tion to an arms deal.

Mr Jacob Zuma has seen growing criticism, especially for spending public funds to rehabilitate his rural home. AFP PHOTO

# Niger goes to polls with opposition leader in prison

BY AFP

**NIAMEY.** Voters in Niger yesterday went to the polls to elect the country's president and parliamentary representatives.

Projections indicate President Mahamadou Issoufou is hoping to secure a second term in the impoverished West African nation.

His main opposition rival,

Hama Amadou, is currently behind bars accused of trafficking babies, a charge he strongly denies.

The run-up to the vote has been marred by accusations of repression and a row over identification documents.

Before the election authorities announced that roughly 1.5 million people without ID cards would be able to cast their ballots by having witnesses vouch

for them, in a move that was condemned by opposition leaders.

Security forces deployed to repel fears of jihadist attacks by groups based from neighbouring Nigeria, Mali and Libya.

President Issoufou also said his government foiled a coup plot in December.

One of the candidates in Sunday's presidential election, Ibrahim Hamidou, was arrested

for casting doubt upon December's alleged coup but was released in January against the wishes of state prosecutors.

Well-known figures among the crowded field of 15 presidential candidates also include former Prime Minister Hama Amadou, who denies trafficking babies from neighbouring Nigeria, and Mahamane Ousmane, Niger's first democratically elected president.

## THE NUMBERS

15

The number of candidates who had stood to be elected.