



UN Human Rights Council 46th Session
Joint¹ Oral Intervention
Item 2 - General Debate
25 February 2021
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Madam President,

In 2021, arbitrary arrests continue in Algeria. During his trial on 1 February 2021, Algerian student Walid Nekkiche declared that he had been subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse during his 14 months in pre-trial detention. Nekkiche was arrested in November 2019 following his participation in a peaceful student march.

In 2020, Algerian rights lawyers have reported that about one thousand prosecutions against individuals exercising their rights to free expression and peaceful assembly, including 63 on charges of offense to the President, a charge not used more than four times in the twenty-year presidency of Bouteflika.

Legislation adopted in 2020 further infringed on fundamental rights and freedoms. Amendments to the Penal Code adopted in April 2020 allow for the criminalisation of free expression and assembly, and at least thirteen media outlets have been made unavailable on Algerian networks in 2020.

The deteriorating human rights situation in Algeria, including the weaponizing of the pandemic against civil society and the unrelenting criminalisation of fundamental freedoms, warrants an urgent response from the Human Rights Council.

On the two-year anniversary of Algeria's largest peaceful pro-democracy movement since its independence - the "Hirak" movement - our organisations reiterate our call for the Council to ensure Algerian authorities abide by their obligations under international law. . We urge the Office of the High Commissioner and UN member states to call on authorities to unconditionally release all arbitrarily-held detainees and cease all judicial harassment and intimidation against activists and members of civil society, trade unions and the judiciary.

¹ ARTICLE 19, CIVICUS, FIDH, ISHR

The council has remained largely silent on Algeria, despite UN Special Procedures on 16 September expressing alarm “at the extent of crackdown on dissent [...]” and highlighting that [...] “Civil society organisations, human rights defenders and journalists are being increasingly scrutinized and harassed for carrying out their legitimate work.”

On the two-year anniversary of the Hirak, and as peaceful demonstrations resumed throughout the country, we call on the council to increase scrutiny on Algeria and closely monitor the human rights situation in order to protect Algerian citizens striving to safeguard their fundamental freedoms.

Thank you.