

May 2021 28

**Subject: 82 civil society organisations call on states to take action to address the Algerian authorities' alarming crackdown on pro-democracy forces during HRC 47**

*The unrelenting criminalisation of fundamental freedoms warrants an urgent response*

Dear representatives,

We, the undersigned Algerian, regional and international non-governmental organisations, urge your government, individually and jointly with other states, to address the alarming crackdown on peaceful Algerian protesters, journalists, civil society members and organisations, human rights defenders and trade unionists during the 47th United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) session.

Repression has increased drastically and a more assertive public position from states is crucial to protecting Algerians peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

We urge you, in relevant agenda items such as in the interactive dialogue with the High Commissioner under Item 2 or in the Interactive Debates with the Special Rapporteurs on freedom of expression and freedom of association and peaceful assembly under Item 3, to:

- Condemn the escalating crackdown on peaceful protesters, journalists and human rights defenders, including the excessive use of force, the forced dispersal and intimidation of protesters and the continued arbitrary prosecutions, including on bogus terrorism-related charges;

- Urge authorities to cease all arbitrary arrests and prosecutions and release all individuals arbitrarily detained;
- Demand prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, including allegations of physical, sexual and psychological abuse in detention and physical assault during protests - to ensure that suspected perpetrators are held accountable in fair, civilian trials;
- Urge authorities to amend or repeal overly broad provisions of the Penal Code<sup>1</sup> and other legislation used to repress fundamental rights and freedoms, notably law 12-06 on civil society organisations and law 91-19 on public meetings and demonstrations, in line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR).

Following the resumption of peaceful grassroots protests calling for democratic reform (the “Hirak”) in February 2021<sup>2</sup>, the government launched a renewed campaign of arrests and harassment through the criminal justice system. According to local activists monitoring the situation on the ground, as of 26 May, at least 183 individuals are detained for expressing their views online or for protesting peacefully. 86 of them were sentenced to prison terms between 16 and 24 May. Videos also showed police beating protesters.

Despite the announcement of a presidential pardon for thirty Hirak detainees on 18 February 2021, no presidential pardon decree has been issued to date.

In the past two months, Algerian and international organisations have condemned the unlawful use of force and intimidation against protesters, the harassment and ill-

1 Specifically Articles. 75; 79; 95bis; 95bis 1; 96; 98; 100; 144; 144bis; 144bis 2; 146; 196bis; 296 and 298.

2 After their voluntary suspension in March 2020 due to the pandemic.

treatment of human rights defenders, the continued arbitrary detention and targeting of journalists, the criminalisation of debate on religious matters and the lack of investigation into allegations of physical and sexual abuse in detention, including against a minor separated from his parents.

Terrorism charges brought against fifteen human rights defenders, journalists and peaceful protesters on 29 April constitute a dangerous escalation. If pursued by the court, it could establish a worrying precedent of targeting Algerians calling for reform.

Over the past year, there has been increasing recognition of the worsening human rights situation in Algeria, including by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in March and in May 2021, the European Parliament and the Canadian House of Commons. During HRC 45, Belgium condemned judicial harassment against journalists and called on the authorities to guarantee freedom of expression. During the HRC 46, Iceland expressed concern about forced closures of Protestant churches and arbitrary application of COVID-19 restrictions.

The time is now for UN member states to address the increasing criminalisation of freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression in Algeria. We believe this intensifying crackdown meets the criteria for the UN HRC to take urgent action, as set forth by Ireland in 2016.

We therefore call on you to raise these developments in your national capacity and jointly with other states at the upcoming 47th HRC session, to protect peaceful protesters, human rights defenders and journalists struggling for democracy.

We thank you for considering our request and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

**Algerian signatories:**

1. Action for Change and Democracy (ACDA)
2. Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LADDH)
3. Autonomous Union of Public Administration Personnel (SNAPAP)
4. Assirem N'Yellis N'Djerdjer
5. Collective of the Families of the Disappeared in Algeria (CFDA)
6. Canadian Committee for Human Rights in Algeria
7. Coordination FreeAlgeria
8. General Autonomous Confederation of Workers in Algeria (CGATA)
9. Feminicides-DZ
10. National Committee for the Liberation of Detainees (CNLD)
11. Riposte Internationale
12. SHOAA for Human Rights
13. Tharwa N'Fadhma N'Soumer

**International signatories:**

14. Abductees' Mothers Association - Yemen
15. Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT) - France
16. Adil Soz
17. Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC)
18. AfricanDefenders (Pan African Human Rights Defenders Network)
19. Al Haq human rights foundation - Iraq
20. Aman organisation against Racial Discrimination - Libya
21. Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)
22. Amnesty International
23. Article 19
24. Association Arts et Culture des Deux Rives
25. Association Citoyenneté, Développement, Cultures et Migration des Deux Rives

26. Association Le Pont Genève
27. Association of Civil Solidarity - Tunisia
28. Beity organisation - Tunisia
29. Belaady Organization for Human Rights - Libya
30. Bytes for All, Pakistan
31. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
32. Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME)
33. Cartoonist Rights Network (CRNI)
34. Center for Media Freedom & Responsibility (CMFR)
35. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
36. Dhameer for Rights and freedom - Yemen
37. Egyptian Front for Human Rights (EFHR)
38. Euromed Rights
39. Front Line Defenders
40. Global voices
41. Globe International Center
42. Growth foundation for development & improvement - Iraq
43. Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
44. Hadramout Foundation For Legal Support and Training- Yemen
45. Hassan Saadaoui Foundation for Democracy and Equality - Tunisia
46. Human Rights Watch
47. Index on Censorship
48. Initiative for Freedom of Expression- Turkey
49. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the  
Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
50. International Service For Human Rights (ISHR)
51. IPYS Venezuela
52. Justice without Chains – Libya

53. Maghreb Coordination of Human Rights Organizations (CMODH)
54. Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA)
55. Media Institute of Southern Africa, Zimbabwe (MISA)
56. MENA Rights Group
57. Moroccan Organisation for Human Rights (AMDH)
58. Moroccan Organisation for the Defense of Human Rights (ASDHOM)
59. National Center for Development Cooperation (CNCD 11.11.11)
60. National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT)
61. Nas Development and Human Rights Center - Yemen
62. PEN International
63. Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED)
64. Reporters without Borders (RSF)
65. Sam for freedom and rights - Yemen
66. Social Peace Promoting and Legal Protection - Yemen
67. South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO)
68. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR)
69. Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)
70. The Pacific Islands News Association (PINA)
71. Together We Raise (social association) – Yemen
72. Tunisian Association for the Defense of Individual Liberties (ADLI)
73. Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD)
74. Tunisia Center for Freedom of the Press
75. Tunisian Forum for Youth Empowerment
76. Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LTDH)
77. Tunisian Organisation against Torture (OCTT)
78. Vigilance for Democracy and the Civic State - Tunisia
79. Watch for Human Rights - Yemen
80. World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)

81. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the  
Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
82. Yemeni Observatory for Human Rights - Yemen