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Solidarity (Slovenia): Protecting the environment is not a crime - International support for Algerian activists

Wednesday 6 September 2023, by [ZSSS](#) (Date first published: 4 September 2023).

While the effects of climate change are being felt by virtually everyone on the planet, in some countries things are getting worse and more unbearable, not least because of corrupt authorities who pander to capital and persecute those who expose and fight against harmful practices.

Recently, our retired Belgian trade unionist colleague and activist Lucien Perpette has again drawn attention to what is happening in Algeria, where, with the presidential elections in 2024 looming, repression against activists is intensifying and their actions are being criminalised by the authorities. An online petition against this has been launched [[1](#)] and can be signed by any of us at this link and sent to contact@europe-solidaire.org.

What is it about?

Algeria is of course no exception, and climate change is visible there too. Fires and pollution have become visible and even more acute, especially as this Mediterranean country is also witnessing intensive exploitation of natural and mineral resources, environmental degradation and biodiversity disruption. All of this is also resulting in the displacement of the local population, their poverty and ill health.

Kamel Aissat, an Algerian university lecturer and activist, has become a 'whistle-blower' as an informed citizen in the situation created by an Australian company in Bejaia, where it is planning to operate a zinc and lead mine. This is because the exploitation of minerals, while generating huge profits for the company and profits for the Algerian directors, also poses a clear danger to the health of the population. There is a risk of displacement of entire villages, damage to the flora and fauna of the region, and contamination of groundwater and a protected wetland with the international Ramsar label. (The 1971 Ramsar Convention is a convention on wetlands, which are among the most threatened ecosystems on earth and are of international importance, particularly as habitats for water birds. It is signed by 153 countries, which are supposed to protect 1,616 wetlands. In Slovenia, these are Cerknica Lake, Sečovlje Saline and Škocjanska Caves, op. a.)

The representatives of capital and their mercenaries, of course, are not happy with what the academic is doing, so they have started to put him under judicial surveillance, threatening him with arrest and banning him from leaving the country. They are particularly annoyed that he has mobilised scientists and the Joint Expert Group to draw attention to serious environmental risks. Kamel Aissat is not the only one being persecuted by the authorities. Other whistleblowers have come under attack before him, such as Moad Gasmi, an activist against shale gas in southern Algeria, and Nouredine Tounsi, who exposed corruption in the oil industry. Protecting the

environment is not a crime. International support and solidarity against the repression that criminalises environmental whistleblowing and demands for justice for these prisoners of conscience are justified, because only in this way can we achieve the best for our planet. The stories of Algeria are happening elsewhere, and we need to stand together.

Zveza svobodnih sindikatov Slovenije (ZSSS) - Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia

P.S.

- ZSSS. 4. 9. 2023 :
<https://www.zsss.si/zascita-okolja-ni-zlocin-49/>
 - Translation DeepL and Pierre Rousset.
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Footnotes

[1] <https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article67551>