

Algeria: Solidarity: A Guide to Action

Thursday 25 June 2020, by [SMITH Shelagh](#) (Date first published: 3 June 2020).

Since the Hirak movement began, the regime has tried various repressive strategies to combat the protests.

It has used the police and the courts to keep activists, opposition politicians and journalists in prison for months pending trial, and to hand out increasingly draconian fines and prison sentences.

Since the coronavirus pandemic, increasing numbers of activists and particularly journalists have been arrested and held in detention.

Karim Tabbou, leader of the UDS (Democratic and Social Union) and a key figure in the Hirak, suffered six months in solitary confinement awaiting trial for trumped up charges of “incitement to violence” and “harming national security” in relation to his speech on his political party’s Facebook page where he peacefully criticised the role of the army in politics.

The verdict in March 2020 was six months in prison, six months suspended, with a ban on taking part in public activities. However, the day before his scheduled release, he was sentenced to a full year in prison, without his lawyers being informed.

Karim Tabbou collapsed in court with a stroke, and continues to suffer paralysis. He remains in prison without specialist medical care.

Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa Director, Heba Morayef, said: “The Algerian authorities must immediately release all those imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights. They should also urgently consider the release of other prisoners – especially pre-trial detainees and those who may be more at risk from the virus – and take necessary measures to protect the health of all prisoners.”

Leading militant Samir Benlarbi was acquitted after months in detention, but has been rearrested twice since his release. The journalist Fodil Boumala served six months in prison before being acquitted. Slimane Hamitouche, national coordinator of the Missing Persons’ Families National Coordination (CNFD) and SOS Disappeared, was arrested in March and charged with “infringement of the territorial integrity” and “inciting crowds”.

President of the RAJ (Youth Action Rally), Abdelouahab Fersaoui, remains in detention since October when he was arrested at a rally to support detainees. He is charged with “incitement to violence” and “infringement of territorial integrity.”

Hadj Ghermoul is active within the Algerian Human Rights Defense League (LADDH) and member of the national committee to defend rights of the unemployed (CNDDC). In March he was sentenced to one year in prison and fined 50,000 dinars (3730€) even though he is still unemployed.

Ibrahim Daoudji was detained in March. According to some media sources, he has been on hunger strike since March 16 and is at risk of dying.

Khaled Drareni is an independent journalist, founder of the internet site Casbah Tribune and correspondent for the international French-speaking channel TV5 World and Reporters Without Borders (RSF). He was arrested and detained in March while covering a Hirak demonstration in Algiers.

Sofiene Merakchi is a producer for France 24 and RT and correspondent for the Lebanese TV channel Al Mayadeen. He has been held in pre-trial detention since September for “possession of stolen goods” and “supply of images of demonstrations held on Friday, September 20 to the Al Jazeera channel and other foreign media.” He was the first Algerian journalist to be arrested since the Hirak started.

Louisa Hanoune, general secretary of the PT (Workers’ Party), had been imprisoned for 15 years by a military court for “conspiring against the state and the army”. Her sentence was reduced on appeal to three years, so she has been released with a remaining suspended sentence of 27 months.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Write to the Algerian Ambassador calling for the immediate release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience: Algerian Embassy, 1 - 3 Riding House Street, London W1W 7DR. E-mail: info@algerianembassy.org.uk
- Put a resolution to your trade union branch calling for action in solidarity with Algerian political prisoners
- Read more online at <https://www.menasolidaritynetwork.com>
- Sign Amnesty International’s petition “Defend the right to protest in Algeria.”

Shelagh Smith is a member of the National Education Union in Britain.

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P.S.

Transnational Institute (TNI)

https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/tradeunions_algerianuprising_0520_hires-1.pdf

Introduction: Trade unions and the Algerian uprising

A Year in the Streets

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<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article53734>

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