

URGENT ACTION

RELEASE EIGHT PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Eight men including two activists are serving one-year prison terms over a peaceful protest last December in Tamanrasset. They are prisoners of conscience.

Activist **Abdelali Ghellam** has been imprisoned since his arrest on 2 March for a peaceful protest. On 7 March, a court in the southern city of Tamanrasset sentenced him to one year in prison for inciting others to take part in an “unarmed gathering” and to “obstruct traffic” on a public road through Facebook posts about a peaceful protest in late December 2015. The protest, which included a protest tent and a small vigil in front of Tamanrasset’s governorate building, was initiated by a local resident facing an eviction order, and demanded a meeting with Tamanrasset’s governor (*wali*) in relation to the eviction. Abdelali Ghellam’s appeal hearing will take place on 19 April. He is a prisoner of conscience, jailed solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

Seven other men have been jailed for over three months over the same peaceful protest, including activist **Dahmane Kerami**, as well as other activists and relatives and neighbours of the man facing eviction. The seven men were arrested in late December 2015. On 6 January, a court convicted them of taking part in an “unarmed gathering” and “offending public bodies”, and convicted one of them of “rebellion”, sentencing the seven to one-year prison terms, fines of 50,000 Algerian dinars (about 450 US dollars), and ordering them to pay 350,000 Algerian dinars (about 3,200 US dollars) in compensation to local authorities and to pay costs for the court case. The decision was upheld on appeal on 14 March. They are also prisoners of conscience.

Please write immediately in Arabic, French or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to release Abdelali Ghellam, Dahmane Kerami and their six co-defendants immediately and unconditionally, as they are prisoners of conscience, jailed solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Calling on them to amend legislation that criminalizes the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, including Article 97 of the Penal Code prohibiting “unarmed gatherings”, Article 114 bis on “offending the President”, and Article 146 on “offending public bodies”;
- Urging them to stop arresting, prosecuting and imprisoning those exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 MAY 2016 TO:

President

Abdelaziz Bouteflika
 Presidency of the Republic
 El Mouradia, Algiers
 Algeria
 Fax: +213 21 6915 95 / +213 21 6096 18
 Email: president@el-mouradia.dz

Salutation: Your Excellency

Justice Minister

Tayeb Louh
 Ministry of Justice
 8 Place Bir Hakem
 16030 El Biar, Algiers
 Algeria
 Fax: +213 21 9217 01
 Email: contact@mjustice.dz

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

President, National human rights institution
 M. Mustapha Farouk Ksentini
 Commission nationale consultative de promotion et de protection des droits de l’Homme
 Palais du Peuple, Avenue Franklin Roosevelt,
 Algiers, Algeria
 Fax: +213 21 2399 58
 Email: contact@cncppdh-algerie.org

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY Mr Amar Abba, People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria, 1-3 Riding House Street W1W 7DR, 020 7229 7077, Fax 020 7229 7076, info@algerianembassy.org.uk

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 54/16. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde28/3596/2016/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All eight prisoners are held in Tamanrasset prison. Several of them are members of the National Committee for the Defence of the Rights of the Unemployed, and a local activist group called Ma Frat (colloquial Algerian Arabic meaning “It has not been solved”). The group has been increasingly targeted for prosecution by the Algerian authorities, who are clamping down on peaceful dissent. In December 2015, seven members of Ma Frat were prosecuted for peaceful protests against shale gas fracking, and in solidarity with workers employed by local mining companies, and were sentenced to prison terms.

See also the public statement, *Algeria: end relentless targeting of government critics*, published on 4 December 2015: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde28/2951/2015/en/>.

Names: Abdelali Ghellam, Dahmane Kerami, and his six co-defendants
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 54/16 Index: MDE 28/3846/2016 Issue Date: 15 April 2016