

URGENT ACTION

YEAR IN PRISON FOR PEACEFUL PROTEST

An Algerian activist has been sentenced to one year in prison for taking part in a peaceful protest. Seven others who took part have already been imprisoned. All eight are prisoners of conscience.

Activist **Abdelali Ghellam** was sentenced on 7 March to one year in prison for taking part in an “unarmed gathering” and “obstructing traffic” on a public road, over a peaceful protest outside the Tamanrasset governorate headquarters (*wilaya*) in December 2015 about a real estate dispute. Abdelali Ghellam is a member 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”). He was also convicted of “offending the President” on Ma Frat’s Facebook page. He has been detained since 2 March, when he was arrested, and is now in Tamanrasset prison. He is a prisoner of conscience, jailed solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

Seven other peaceful protesters have been jailed for taking part in the same peaceful protest, including activist **Dahmane Kerami**. The seven men were sentenced on 6 January to a year in prison, for taking part in an “unarmed gathering” and “offending public bodies”, by the Tamanrasset Court of First Instance. They are prisoners of conscience. They were arrested on 31 December 2015 and are now held in Tamanrasset prison. Their appeal will be heard on 14 March.

Please write immediately in Arabic 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 20 APRIL 2016 TO:

President

Abdelaziz Bouteflika
 Presidency of the Republic
 El Mouradia, Algiers,
 Algeria
 Fax: +213 21 69 15 95 / 60 96 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 92 17 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 23 99 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, info@algerianembassy.org.uk

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

YEAR IN PRISON FOR PEACEFUL PROTEST

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Abdelali Ghellam and Dahmane Kerami were already under suspended one-year prison sentences and fines, for holding a peaceful protest in the city of Tamanrasset with the Ma Frat protest group in solidarity with the rights of workers in local mining companies, and to denounce the environmental consequences of shale gas fracking (hydraulic fracturing of shale rock to extract gas) in the area. The National Committee for the Defence of the Rights of the Unemployed has also seen its members prosecuted and jailed for peaceful protests against unemployment.

The Algerian authorities have been increasingly clamping down on peaceful protesters and those critical of the government in recent months. To do so, they have relied on laws that criminalize the right to peaceful assembly, including Article 97 of the Penal Code that prohibits “unarmed gatherings” which may “trouble public tranquillity”. This right, enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Algeria is a state party, implies the right to conduct peaceful protests without prior authorization.

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

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

UA: 54/16 Index: MDE 28/3596/2016 Issue Date: 9 March 2016