

URGENT ACTION

MAN ARBITRARILY DETAINED FOR FACEBOOK POSTS

A British-Algerian man is arbitrarily detained pending the outcome of his trial for “offending” Algeria’s president and other officials on Facebook. He has been on hunger strike since his arrest on 27 June. His next trial hearing is on 11 July.

Algerian intelligence officers arrested British-Algerian **Mohamed Tamalt**, a freelance journalist, on 27 June in front of his home in Algiers and took him into custody. The following day, he was presented to the Public Prosecutor at the Court of Sidi Mhamed in Algiers, who accused him of “offending” the President and public institutions under Articles 144 bis and 146 of the Penal Code in connection with recent Facebook posts he had made, including a video posted on 2 April featuring a subversive poem and images of Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika. If convicted, Mohamed Tamalt risks fines of up to 500,000 Algerian dinars (about US\$4,500). He has been on hunger strike since his arrest on 27 June.

Even though the offences carry no prison terms, the court ordered his detention in El Harrach prison in Algiers pending the outcome of his trial. The court refused to release him on bail during a hearing on 4 July, prompting his lawyers to withdraw in protest at what they consider to be arbitrary detention. Amnesty International also considers Mohamed Tamalt’s detention to be arbitrary and calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

Algeria’s Constitution, amended in February 2016, prohibits arbitrary detention and emphasizes the exceptional nature of pre-trial detention. However, it fails to guarantee access to effective means of challenging the lawfulness of detention before a court that would order the detainee’s release if the detention was found to be unlawful.

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

- Urging the authorities to end Mohamed Tamalt’s arbitrary detention and release him immediately and unconditionally;
- Calling on them to ensure that, while detained, he has ongoing access to a qualified health professional who will provide health care in compliance with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy, and informed consent;
- Urging them to ensure detainees can effectively challenge the lawfulness of detention before a court and be released if their detention is found to be unlawful.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 AUGUST 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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

British-Algerian journalist Mohamed Tamalt is a freelance journalist. He also publishes an on-line magazine called *Arab Context* and has a significant following on social media. He frequently comments on alleged corruption, rent-seeking and nepotism of government officials and comments on the lifestyle and sources of income of their relatives.

He had previously obtained asylum in the UK in 2007 after fleeing Algeria due to reported threats, linked to his publications, from members of the military establishment and intelligence apparatus. Such threats had reportedly decreased recently, allowing him to return to Algeria.

His arrest on 27 June takes place in a context of growing restrictions on independent Algerian journalists and media outlets in recent months.

See also the public statement, "Algeria: End media restrictions", published on 1 July 2016:
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde28/4369/2016/en/>

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