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EuroMed Rights (formerly: Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, EMHRN), FIDH – International Federation for Human Rights, OMCT – World Organisation Against Torture et al. (Author)

## Algeria: Joint call for press freedom and an end to arbitrary detentions

**On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, human rights organisations, including the FIDH and OMCT within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, are warning of the systematic repression targeting journalists, writers and human rights defenders critical of the regime.**

**3 May 2025** - World Press Freedom Day serves as a vital occasion to remind governments of their commitment to a free, independent, and transparent press. The undersigned organisations denounce the persistent authoritarian abuses that threaten free expression worldwide. Repressive and ill-defined legislation and legal procedures, together with systematic censorship, are deployed by many governments to suppress critical voices; Algeria serves as a grim case of the escalating global assault on free expression.

In 2019, millions of Algerians peacefully took to the streets to demand democratic transformation. This movement, known as *Hirak*, carried hopes for far-reaching reform and a 'free and democratic Algeria'.

But five years later, the popular momentum of Hirak has been harshly repressed by the Algerian authorities, who have deployed their full security, judicial, and media arsenal to shrink civic space, intimidate dissenting voices, and maintain the authoritarian status quo. Algerian citizens, activists, journalists, and writers now face a climate of widespread repression. Charges pertaining to terrorism or threatening or undermining national security or unity are frequently used to criminalise those who express dissenting opinions. Activists have been increasingly intimidated including through direct threats, arbitrary arrests, and orchestrated smear campaigns, with the aim of discouraging any form of resistance. According to exiled activist Zakaria Hannache, there are currently 243 prisoners of conscience in Algeria.

The Algerian government has further tightened its control over information through new laws. The Information Law of 29 August 2023 is emblematic of this shift: it severely restricts press freedom by banning foreign investment in media outlets and imposing strict conditions on journalistic practice. At the same time, the Penal Code continues to be used to prosecute dissenting voices, particularly articles 96, 144, 144 bis, 144 bis 2, 146, 296, and 298. Journalists have also been prosecuted for receiving foreign funds with the alleged aim of ‘disrupting public order and Algeria’s stability’ under Article 95 bis of the Penal Code, and for ‘spreading false news’ under Article 196 bis.

Boualem Sansal, an author known for his critical views of the Algerian government, was arrested on 16 November 2024, upon returning from Paris. He was sentenced to five years in prison after a trial on charges of ‘undermining national unity’, ‘insulting a constituted body’, ‘acts harmful to the national economy’, and ‘possessing publications threatening national security’, following comments made about the Algerian-Moroccan border during an interview with the far-right French magazine *Frontières*. His expedited trial, lacking in transparency, was part of a broader campaign to repress free expression against a backdrop of rising tensions between France and Algeria.

On 20 January 2025—just four days after his arrest—*Hirak* activist and poet Mohamed Tadjadit was sentenced by an Algiers court to five years in prison after an expedited procedure lacking fair trial guarantees. He was convicted on the basis of vague charges related to his social media posts and private conversations, in which he criticised the country’s political and socioeconomic situation. His case has been adjourned for deliberation until the hearing on 8 May 2025.

In addition, access to independent media outlets in Algeria is regularly restricted, preventing the public from accessing diverse and objective information. Radio M and Maghreb Émergent, among the last

independent media outlets in the country, were shut down by authorities at the beginning of 2023.

**The signatory organizations call on the Algerian authorities to:**

- Immediately and unconditionally release all arbitrarily detained journalists, writers, activists, and human rights defenders in Algeria, and cease the targeting of them abroad through transnational repression.
- End the misuse of legislation to suppress freedom of expression.
- Enact national legislation guaranteeing that journalists are protected and free to practice their profession.
- Uphold Algeria's international human rights obligations, particularly regarding freedom of expression and opinion.

**Signatory Organisations:**

1. EuroMed Rights
2. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
3. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), as part of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
4. IBTYKAR
5. Committee for the Protection of the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights
6. Collective of the Families of the Disappeared in Algeria (CFDA)
7. Libertés Algérie
8. MENA Rights Group
9. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), as part of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
10. Riposte Internationale
11. International Service for Human Rights

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Joint NGO statement on systematic repression targeting journalists, writers and human rights activists

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