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AI – Amnesty International

Algeria: Authorities pursue crackdown on Hirak, sentencing journalist Khaled Drareni to three years in prison

The Sidi M'hamed tribunal in Algiers has today sentenced journalist [Khaled Drareni](#) to a three-year prison sentence and a fine of 50,000 Algerian dinars (around 387 USD) over his reporting on the Hirak protest movement. The court also handed two-year prison sentences to political activist Samir Ben Larbi and national coordinator of the families of disappeared Slimane Hamitouche over their online publications and their participation in the protests. Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Acting Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, said:

“Today's court sentence is a travesty of justice, and a blatant affront to human rights, including the right to freedom of expression and media freedom in Algeria. Khaled Drareni is being punished solely for having bravely exposed the crackdown by the authorities on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, including their harsh response to the Hirak protest movement.

Today's court sentence is a travesty of justice, and a blatant affront to human rights, including the right to freedom of expression and media freedom in Algeria

“The sentences handed down to Samir Ben Larbi, Slimane Hamitouche and Khaled Drareni today couldn't be a clearer example of how the authorities have been ruthlessly approaching peaceful activism in general.

“In such a context, it is all the more crucial to safeguard independent journalists and allow them to carry on with their work unhindered – not punished for it. We call on the Algerian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Khaled Drareni and quash these convictions and sentences.”

“Authorities must end their crackdown on human rights and allow every person to freely exercise their human rights.”

Background

Khaled Drareni is the founder of the [CasbahTribune](#) news site, a correspondent for the French TV channel TV5Monde, and a representative of Reporters without Borders (RSF) in Algeria.

Security forces arrested Drareni, Hamitouche and Ben Larbi on 7 March during a protest organized by the Hirak movement, which has been calling for radical political change in Algeria since February 2019. Drareni was released on 10 March and placed under judicial supervision, but the police arrested him again on 27 March. He is currently detained in El Kolea prison in Algiers. Hamitouche and Ben Larbi were released on 2 July.

Amnesty International has repeatedly [called](#) on the authorities to halt the prosecutions of Hirak activists, protesters and journalists, and release those detained solely for peacefully expressing their views. The organization [warned that by arresting and imprisoning the activists](#), the authorities were also endangering their health given the risks of a COVID-19 outbreak in prisons and places of detention.

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sentenced to 3 years in prison



and a fine for his reporting on
the Hirak protest movement

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