

# URGENT ACTION

## FACING TRIAL FOR PROTESTING PEACEFULLY

The trial of long-standing trade unionist Frédéric Vuillaume starts on 20 May. His peaceful participation in protests as part of the Yellow Vests movement since its outset has been marked by multiple pre-charge detentions, arrests and prosecutions, similarly to thousands of other peaceful protesters in France. He has been charged with 'attroupement' (participation in an assembly that is likely to disrupt public order) for exercising his right to peaceful assembly and risks up to one year in prison and a fine. These absurd charges must be dropped.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

**Eric Mathais, Prosecutor of Dijon**  
Tribunal Judiciaire de Dijon  
13 boulevard Clemenceau  
BP 13313, Dijon  
France

Email: [eric.mathais@justice.fr](mailto:eric.mathais@justice.fr) / [sec.pr.tj-dijon@justice.fr](mailto:sec.pr.tj-dijon@justice.fr)

Dear Prosecutor of Dijon,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the charges brought against **Frédéric Vuillaume** in relation to his peaceful participation in the protest against the Global Security Bill in December 2020 in Dijon, and to urge you to drop the prosecution against him.

On 20 May, Frédéric Vuillaume will stand trial for 'participation in a public assembly that is likely to disrupt public order' (attroupement) and if convicted, he risks up to one year in prison and 15,000 Euros/fine, solely for his peaceful activism.

Frédéric Vuillaume is a long-standing trade unionist and in the last years he has been targeted with fines, detention and absurd criminal charges in relation to his peaceful participation in protests. He is among the thousands of other peaceful protesters who have been swept up in France's draconian crackdown on demonstrations and on people simply exercising their right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, as Amnesty International has repeatedly denounced including in the latest report published in September 2020 (available here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur21/1791/2020/en/>).

Peacefully participating in a protest should not be a criminal offence and is protected by all major human rights Conventions. Frédéric Vuillaume should not be standing trial and he should be allowed to exercise his right to freedom of expression, peacefully participate in protests and carry out his legitimate activism freely.

**Ahead of the start of his trial on 20 May, I urge you to ensure that Frédéric Vuillaume is not punished for exercising his human rights and the charges against him are dropped. He must be allowed to carry out with his peaceful activism free from further harassment and reprisals by authorities.**

Yours sincerely,

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Frédéric Vuillaume is a long-standing trade unionist and has been part of the Yellow Vests movement since its beginning. His activism and peaceful participation in protests has been marked by multiple pre-charge detentions, arrests, prosecutions and fines.

On 5 December 2020 he took part in a protest in Dijon against the global security bill, a controversial legislation that if passed, would establish mass surveillance, including via drones, and seriously violate rights to privacy, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. He was leaving the protest and asking the police for directions when he was arrested and taken into pre-charge detention, where he was kept for 44 hours. He was subsequently charged with article 431-4 of the Criminal Code, 'attroupement' (participation in a public assembly that threatens public order) and faces a possible jail sentence of up to 1 year and a fine of EUR15,000. His trial is expected to start on 20 May 2021.

Frédéric Vuillaume's case is illustrative of the harassment that thousands of peaceful protesters faced and continue to experience systematically due to provisions in the French law that criminalize conduct protected under international human rights law and standards. These include, amongst others, provisions that impose a punishment solely for the exercise of the right to peaceful assembly and impose criminal liability for noncompliance with notification requirements for organising a protest, contempt of public officials and participation in a public assembly that is likely to disrupt public order.

On 29 September 2020, Amnesty launched the report '[Arrested for protest. Weaponizing the law to crackdown on peaceful protesters in France](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur21/1791/2020/en/)' (available here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur21/1791/2020/en/>) that shed light on the problematic response deployed by the French authorities to rising social movements. The report showed how French authorities have weaponized criminal law and resorted to overly broad laws to arrest and prosecute hundreds of protesters who did not commit violent acts.

The launch of the report was accompanied by the start of the **#EyesOnFrance** international campaign and the [international petition targeting President Emmanuel Macron](https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/france-right-to-protest-freedom-of-expression/) (see here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/france-right-to-protest-freedom-of-expression/>). As part of the #EyesOnFrance campaign activists from around the world are urging President Emmanuel Macron to adhere to his commitment to uphold right to peaceful assembly, end the use of criminal law to crackdown on peaceful protesters in France and allow people to peacefully protest without fear of fines, arrests and prosecutions and harassment.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** French, English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 9 July 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Frédéric Vuillaume (he/his/him)

**And copies to:**

Her Excellency Mrs Catherine Colonna  
**Embassy of France**  
58 Knightsbridge SW1X 7JT  
020 7073 1000  
Fax 020-7073 1004  
[www.ambafrance-uk.org](http://www.ambafrance-uk.org)