

URGENT ACTION

FREE JOURNALIST SENTENCED TO FIVE YEARS

On 2 April, the tribunal of Sidi M'hamed in Algiers convicted prominent Algerian journalist Ihsane El Kadi to five years in prison, of which two suspended, a fine of 700,000 Algerian dinars (around USD 5,150), and ordered the dissolution of his media company, one of the last media outlets in the country, and a fine of 10 million Algerian dinars (around USD 73,862). He was convicted on charges of "receiving funds for political propaganda" and "harming the national security of the state", solely for investing money sent to him by his daughter into his media company and exercising his work of journalist. His conviction is a clear violation of his right to freedom of expression and the latest example of the Algerian authorities tightening their grip on critical voices and the independent media. He must be released immediately and unconditionally, and his conviction must be quashed.

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

President of the Republic of Algeria

Abdelmadjid Tebboune

Presidence de la republique

Place Mohammed Seddik Benyahya, El Mouradia,

Alger 16000 Algerie

Fax: +213021691595

Email: President@el-mouradia.dz

Your Excellency,

*I am writing to express my deep concern about the sentencing of journalist **Ihsane El Kadi** to five years in prison and a fine of 700,000 Algerian dinars (around USD 5,150) on trumped up and vague charges which are being used to criminalize journalism.*

On 2 April, the Sidi M'hamed first instance tribunal in Algiers convicted Ihsane El Kadi on charges of "receiving funds for political propaganda" and "harming the national security of the state", under Articles 95 and 95 bis respectively of the Penal Code. According to his lawyer, these charges relate to money which his daughter sent to him and which he invested into his media company – something which is not a criminal offense under Algerian law. The court presented no evidence that Ihsane El Kadi's media company creates political propaganda nor that it is harmful to state security, meaning the charges against him are unfounded.

On 2 April, the Tribunal of Sidi M'hamed also ordered the dissolution of Ihsane El Kadi's media company "Interface Media", which encompasses Radio M and Maghreb Emergent, and that it pays for damages to the Algerian audio-visual regulatory body a fine of 10 million dinars (around 73 862 USD), following the authorities' launching a civil lawsuit against Interface Media for "exploiting an audiovisual communication service without authorization". This is the latest in a long line of examples of Algerian authorities limiting media freedom and punishing dissenting voices.

Plainclothes security officials arrested Ihsane El Kadi in his home, without a warrant, on 24 December 2022. His arrest came just after he published an article on his predictions for the next presidential elections in 2024 and outlining the role of the Algerian army in repressing freedom of expression in Algeria. The Algerian authorities have previously targeted Ihsane El Kadi several times through judicial harassment and interrogations about his journalism. Ihsane El Kadi remains detained in El Harrach prison in Algiers.

I urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Ihsane El Kadi and quash his conviction. I further demand that you end the targeted crackdown and censorship of independent media and journalists in

Algeria through vaguely worded articles of the Penal Code which are used to violate the right to freedom of expression.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ihsane El Kadi is a journalist and the director and founder of "Interface Media", which comprises media outlets Radio M and Maghreb Emergent. Ihsane El Kadi has written several articles openly criticising the Algerian authorities who have responded by harassing him and targeting his media outlets. The websites of both Radio M and Maghreb Emergent were blocked inside Algeria in 2020. On several occasions since 2021, security services summoned Ihsane El Kadi to the Antar security centre in Algiers, where he was interrogated.

After the security officials arrested Ihsane El Kadi at his home on 24 December 2022, they led him in handcuffs to the offices of his media outlet, where they ordered staff to leave, seized computers and other materials and sealed the doors, without providing any explanation nor informing him of the allegations on which he was arrested. Security officers held Ihsane El Kadi for five days and interrogated him about his publications.

On 29 December 2022, an investigative judge at the first instance Tribunal of Sidi M'hamed in Algiers ordered his detention at El Harrach prison after a prosecutor charged him with several offences under the Penal Code, including receiving funds "that could harm the security of the State", receiving foreign funds "for political propaganda", and distributing or selling propaganda "with the aim of harming the national interest" – a charge which was later dropped. The judge also accused him based on Ordinance 77-3 dating back to 1977, which requires prior authorization from the governor or the Minister of Interior for fundraising. On 15 January 2023, a judge in the Sidi M'hamed court renewed Ihsane El Kadi's pretrial detention without the presence of his lawyer, so breaching his fair trial rights.

Two courts in Algeria previously prosecuted Ihsane El Kadi in February and March 2022 for "terrorism" and other charges because he was in contact with Zaki Hannache and Tahar Khouas, two human rights defenders who were detained in Algeria for several weeks. The charges against him were dropped but, in June 2022, he was convicted to six months in prison in a third case for an article he wrote in 2021 about the role of the non-recognized political party Rachad in the protest movement Hirak, following a complaint filed against him by the Minister of Communication.

The most recent prosecution of Ihsane El Kadi adds to the swell of repression in Algeria, which has been building over the past two years, as Algerian authorities relentlessly target journalists and independent critics. The Algerian authorities' crackdown on critical voices shows no signs of abating. In the past two years, at least 280 journalists, bloggers, activists and human rights defenders have been harassed and unlawfully imprisoned on charges related to the exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, French, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 6 JUNE 2023

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Ihsane El Kadi (He/Him)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

Algerian National Human Rights Council (CNDH)
Address: Avenue Franklin Roosevelt - Palais du Peuple, Alger, Algérie
Email: contact@cndh.org.dz

Algerian Ministry of Justice:
Address: 8 Bir Hakim Al-Abyar
16003 Algeria

Mr Lounes Magramane

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

1-3 Riding House Street, London, W1W 7DR

Fax: 020 7299 7076

Email: info@algerianembassy.org.uk

Salutation: Your Excellency