

10 August 2016

Algeria – Human rights defender Slimane Bouhafs sentenced to five years imprisonment

On 7 August 2016, the Court of First Instance of Ath Warthilane in Setif sentenced human rights defender Mr **Slimane Bouhafs** to the maximum jail term of five years and a fine of 100 000 DA (€820.00) on charges of insulting the religion of the State and the prophet. Since his arrest on 31 July 2016, he has been detained in Setif prison.

[Slimane Bouhafs](#) is an Algerian human rights defender advocating for freedom of expression and democracy in Algeria through social media. He is a member of the Movement for Self-Determination of Kabylia (MAK) which supports the right to self-determination of the Kabyle people. He is the Chairman of the St. Augustine Coordination of Christians in Algeria which defends minority rights and freedom of religion in the country.

On 7 August 2016, Slimane Bouhafs received a five year prison sentence and a fine by the Court of First Instance of Ath Warthilane. He was convicted, under Article 144 bis 2 of the Algerian Penal Code, of insulting the religion of the State and the prophet on social media, which is a charge punishable with up to five years imprisonment and a fine from 50.000 DA to 100.000 DA (€410.00 - €820.00). His sentence represents the maximum penalty for the charge. Slimane Bouhafs is planning to appeal the sentencing.

He was arrested on 31 July 2016 near his house in Bouandes by Algerian authorities and brought before the prosecution without having access to a lawyer. He was placed in custody in Setif prison and begun a hunger strike in protest of his arbitrary detention. His health has acutely deteriorated due to an underlying health condition.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the heavy sentencing of Slimane Bouhafs as it is believed to be solely related to his peaceful and legitimate work for the promotion and protection of freedom of conscience in Algeria.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Algeria to:

1. Ensure the immediate release of **Slimane Bouhafs** and quash the sentence against him;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in **Algeria** are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities, nationally and internationally, without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.