

12 December 2019

Algeria: Human rights defender Kaddour Chouicha sentenced

On 10 December 2019, the Criminal Court of Oran sentenced human rights defender Kaddour Chouicha to one year imprisonment, and a fine of 20000 Algerian Dinar (150 Euros), for participating in peaceful demonstrations.

Kaddour Chouicha is a human rights defender and university lecturer. He is the vice president of The Algerian League for The Defence of Human Rights (LADDH), and he is the president of the League in Oran, focusing on promoting political and civil rights in Algeria.

On the morning of 10 December 2019, Kaddour Chouicha entered a local police station in Oran, after he was asked to collect his mobile phone which was confiscated by the police in late October 2019, in connection to his participation in a peaceful demonstration. Instead of receiving his phone, he was detained and interrogated by the police. The human rights defender was not allowed to have his lawyer present during the interrogation and his new mobile phone was also confiscated.

After a few hours, he was transferred to Oran Criminal Court, where an urgent hearing was held for him. His lawyers were not allowed into the room. A second hearing was held on the same day after the lawyers complained against having been banned from the first one. The Court found him guilty of several charges, including “threatening the national security”, “incitement” and “illegal demonstration and disobedience”, and he was sentenced for one year imprisonment and a fine of 20000 Algerian dinar (150 Euros). Kaddour Chouicha suffers from chronic diseases that require specialised medical treatment which the prison does not offer.

Kaddour Chouicha has been repeatedly harassed by the Algerian authorities: he has been under police surveillance regarding his human rights work, and he was detained for almost 24 hours on 24 October 2019 in connection to his participation in a peaceful demonstration in Oran. His family members have also been harassed; his son was detained for three hours on 10 December 2019.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned regarding the sentence against human rights defender Kaddour Chouicha. Front Line Defenders believes that he is being targeted solely because of his peaceful and legitimate human rights activities.

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Front Line Defenders urges the Algerian authorities to:

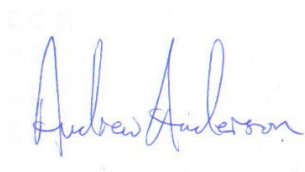
1. Immediately release Kaddour Chouicha and quash his conviction as Front Line Defenders believes that he is being targeted solely as a result of his legitimate human rights work;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Kaddour Chouicha, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the *'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment'*, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;

3. Allow Kaddour Chouicha immediate and unfettered access to his lawyers.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw your attention to Article 5: *“For the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at the national and international levels: (a) To meet or assemble peacefully”*.

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Andrew Anderson
Executive Director