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**Statement - Portugal: Anti-racism human rights defender Mamadou Ba faces charges of defamation and insult, the latest in series of attacks against him and his human rights work**

On 27 October 2022, Portuguese judge issued a decision to pursue a complaint for defamation and insult against the anti-racism human rights defender **Mamadou Ba**, filed by far-right activist and Neo-nazi leader Mário Machado.

A Portuguese national born in Senegal, [Mamadou Ba](#) has lived in Portugal for 25 years, during which time he has dedicated himself to anti-racism activism. Mamadou Ba is a founding member of several organisations defending the human rights of migrants and ethnic minorities. He was a member of the Permanent Council of the National Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination (2015-2019), the Working Group for the 2021, the Permanent Forum of the International Decade for Afro descendants. He has worked with the SOS Racismo Movement since 1999. In 2021, he was awarded the Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk.

Mamadou Ba is one of the most prominent voices of the anti-racist movement in Portugal who has denounced the proliferation of hate speech on social networks, in the public and political spheres and therefore has been routinely targeted by the extreme right (including from the right-wing populist Chega Party, the National Renewal Party and neo-nazi groups), has been openly attacked and threatened in public, on social media networks and through hundreds of private messages containing racist insults and threats to physical integrity. In 2020, he received several death threats against himself and members of his family, the same year he was physically attacked on the street in Lisbon while waking with his son. The level of threat to his physical integrity became so high that he was put under police protection for a few months in 2020, but the threats continued to grow in number and seriousness. He was not able to frequent the streets and public spaces in freedom - easily recognizable, he was a target for attack, and was finally obliged to urgently relocate from Portugal. The office of SOS Racismo has been vandalized twice, in August and September 2020. Mamadou Ba has also faced more than ten legal proceedings arising from accusations made by police unions and the Chega Party, taking time and resources from him but also giving the discouraging signal to other defenders of racialised people in Portugal. A [petition](#) which gathered more than 30,000 signatures was launched in February 2021 calling for him to be expelled from Portugal.

The current defamation complaint is the latest in this series of attacks and refers to a tweet by Mamadou Ba, in which he called Mário Machado a “murderer”, referring to his conviction for his involvement in the murder of Alcindo Monteiro in 1995. On 4 June 1997, Mário Machado was sentenced to four years and three months in prison on charges of “serious offenses against physical integrity” under Point 2 of Article 144 of the Criminal Code Mario Machado was one of a

group of neo-nazis who, in a racially motivated attack, beat Alcindo Moneiro, a black Portuguese citizen, into a coma from which he never recovered.

Mário Machado is the founder and former leader of the Frente Nacional (National Front), the founder of the neo-nazi group Hammerskins Portugal and of the far-right movement Nova Ordem Social (New Social Order). In 2012, Mário Machado was condemned to cumulative sentence of 10 years' imprisonment for crimes including racial discrimination, defamation, sequestration and possession of illegal weapons. In June 2016, the condemnation for "aggravated extortion from jail" of two years and nine months' imprisonment was included in a maximum term of 10 years' imprisonment. Mário Machado's complaint against Mamadou Ba is brought under Article 180 (Defamation) and Article 181 (Insult) of the Criminal code of Portugal, and he is claiming compensation for moral damage.

The decision of the judge to pursue the instruction of the complaint is motivated by the fact that Mário Machado has already served his sentence and therefore cannot be blamed for this crime all his life. Nevertheless, despite declarations of regretting his past crimes, Mário Machado also published a [video](#) saying that he likes to stab people, and expressed no remorse for his racism.

Mário Machado has explicitly targeted Mamadou Ba for example through his blog, and the publication of a [cartoon video](#) in which Mário Machado, dressed as a cowboy, kills Mamadou Ba.

Front Line Defenders is concerned about the safety of Mamadou Ba based on the persistent threats he faces, including judicial harassment, violent attacks and death threats. The pattern of these continued attacks, including this recent complaint by Machado, against Mamadou, his family and colleagues, are clearly aimed at silencing him and undermining his long history of anti-racism work in Portugal.