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Algeria: Judicial harassment of human rights defender Anouar Rahmani

On 17 February 2020, human rights defender **Anouar Rahmani** is due to attend a court hearing, concerning the charge of ‘insulting state officials’ in his social media posts.

[Anouar Rahmani](#) is an Algerian human rights defender and independent writer who advocates through his writings for more individual freedoms, environmental rights, as well as the rights of minorities and the LGBT+ community in Algeria. He is also the first Algerian activist who has publicly called for same-sex marriage to be legally recognised in the country.

In early January 2020, the human rights defender was summoned by the police in Cherchell city. He was questioned for several hours about his widely shared social media posts in which he had criticised high-level government officials. He was also interrogated about his political and religious views, and his family. On 6 February 2020, Anouar Rahmani received a summons to a hearing session scheduled for 17 February 2020 at the Court of Cherchell. The human rights defender is charged with ‘insulting state officials’, an offence punishable with up to 2 years’ imprisonment. He believes that he is being targeted solely as a result of his human rights activities, in particular defending freedom of expression and LGBT+ rights in Algeria.

Anouar Rahmani has been harassed by the authorities in the past. In 2017, his novel was banned and he was accused of insulting God and mocking religion. The human rights defender was further prohibited from writing in national newspapers and many of his workshops and other events were cancelled following pressure by the authorities. In recent years, he has also faced a defamation campaign on social media and in national newspapers, accusing him of heresy and insulting Islam. His family has been frequently harassed by the authorities as a result of his human rights activities.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the ongoing harassment of Anouar Rahmani and the charges recently brought against him, as it believes that he is being targeted solely as a result of his peaceful and legitimate human rights activities.

Front Line Defenders urges the Algerian authorities to:

1. Immediately drop all charges against Anouar Rahmani as it is believed that they are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights, and his exercise of freedom of expression;
2. Immediately cease all further harassment of Anouar Rahmani and his family;
3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Algeria and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.