

19 June 2020

Algeria: Human rights defender Mohad Gasmi in preventive detention

On 14 June 2020, **Mohad Gasmi** was placed in preventive detention on charges of ‘praising terrorism’ by the Public Prosecution of Adrar.

[Mohad Gasmi](#) is a human rights defender from the southern Algerian Province of Adrar, and is part of the ‘Unemployed Movement’ which demands social and economic justice for the unemployed, and advocates for the youth economic and social rights in Southern Algeria. In 2015, he joined the anti-shale gas drilling movement, a popular movement that peacefully protests against the environmental consequences of fracking in South Algeria. Mohad Gasmi is also part of the Hirak movement which calls for political and social reforms.

On 7 June 2020, the human rights defender was summoned by phone call to attend Adrar police station for interrogation regarding two social media posts. The interrogation occurred without the presence of his lawyer. In one of the posts, Mohad Gasmi called on the Algerian Army to ‘serve the people’ during COVID-19. The second post was from 2018, in which Mohad Gasmi stated that the state holds responsibility for the armed movement in Southern Algeria, ‘*Mouvement des Enfants du Sud pour la justice*’ (MSJ), as the activities of this movement were the result of continual marginalisation by the government. On 9 June 2020, the Public Prosecution ordered the inspection of the human rights defender’s house, during which his laptop, mobile phone, and the USB flash were confiscated by the police.

On 8 June 2020, Mohad Gasmi was placed in police custody and was detained at the Adrar Centre Police Station. On 14 June, the Public Prosecution of Adrar ordered the preventive detention of Mohad Gasmi and charged him with ‘praising terrorism’. He remains in detention at the time of writing. During COVID-19 crisis, several human rights defenders have been subjected to arbitrary detention by the Algerian authorities.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned regarding the detention of human rights defender Mohad Gasmi, and the continual detention and harassment of human rights defenders in Algeria. Front Line Defenders believes that the detention of Mohad Gasmi is solely motivated by his peaceful and legitimate human rights activities.

Front Line Defenders urges the Algerian authorities to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Mohad Gasmi and drop the charges against him, as Front Line Defenders believes he is being held solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Mohad Gasmi, 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. Return Mohad Gasmi’s items that were confiscated during the inspection of his home, as they are manifestly not linked to any criminal activity;
4. 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.