Algeria | Authorities must repeal the extension of the death penalty and abandon any plans to resume executions

Joint Statements · Algeria · 22 October 2026

We, the undersigned organisations, strongly condemn the extension of the death penalty provided for in the law, as well as the official statements threatening the resumption of executions in Algeria, which would compromise the de facto moratorium on executions that has been in place since 1993.

This statement builds on the international appeal launched by the Maghreb Network Against the Death Penalty prior to the adoption of the reform. To date, the petition has gathered more than 770 signatures, including 35 non-governmental organisations.

In August 2026, forest fires of exceptional magnitude ravaged north-eastern Algeria, particularly the wilayas of Jijel, Béjaïa and Tizi Ouzou. In the aftermath, on August 30, 2026, the Algerian President ordered a review of the Penal Code and announced that convicted arsonists would be executed once all legal remedies had been exhausted. The bill was adopted on October 1 by the People's National Assembly, on October 7 by the Council of the Nation, and was published in the Official Gazette (PDF) on October 13. This amendment to the Penal Code expands the application of the death penalty to include arson of forests and fields, even if there are no victims; the burning of public or private property in certain circumstances; incitement or encouragement of such acts, including online; and the abduction of children involving abuse. Furthermore, it eliminates any possibility of extenuating circumstances, thereby reinstating the mandatory death penalty.

This reform was ratified in record time, without any public debate or consultation with civil society. The vagueness of certain concepts, such as 'incitement' or 'encouragement' to commit arson, including on social media, is a particular cause for concern. In the absence of clear definitions, they could lead to the widespread application of the death penalty, particularly when it comes to content published online. The provisions of the law contradict Algeria's international obligations, notably Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which the country has been a party since 1989.

The Covenant limits the death penalty to 'the most serious crimes', which the Human Rights Committee confines to crimes involving intentional homicide. The new provisions therefore exceed this threshold, as pointed out by the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the Special Rapporteur on torture in their communication of September 30, 2026.

The undersigned organisations reiterate the Special Procedures' recommendations calling on the

authorities to “reconsider the policy aimed at resuming executions and to thoroughly assess the compatibility of the proposed amendments with Algeria’s international obligations”. We would also like to highlight that the Human Rights Committee, following its review of Algeria in 2018, had recommended that the authorities “initiate a political and legislative process aimed at abolishing the death penalty” and “refrain from introducing new offences punishable by death”.

By adopting these measures, Algeria is moving away from these recommendations as well as from Resolution 79/179 of the United Nations General Assembly of December 17, 2024, which it itself endorsed and which encourages States that have introduced a moratorium to maintain it.

This major setback, after more than thirty years without executions, is fraught with consequences for the population. On the one hand, the resumption of executions would expose those sentenced to the risk of irreparable miscarriages of justice. On the other hand, in a context where many people are already being prosecuted for their online posts, the vagueness of the new offences could deter citizens from speaking out, including on the authorities’ handling of wildfires.

The signatory organisations therefore call on the Algerian authorities to:

1. **Maintain the de facto moratorium on executions and make it official**, with a view to abolishing the death penalty;
2. **Repeal the provisions broadening the scope of the death penalty;**
3. **Stop issuing new death sentences** and commute those already handed down;
4. **Adhere to the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR** and, together with civil society, **initiate a legislative process towards abolition;**
5. **Respond to the communication from the United Nations Special Procedures** dated September 30, 2026 (OL DZA 5/2026) and cooperate fully with international human rights protection mechanisms.
6. **Conduct**, in addition to legal proceedings, thorough, independent, impartial, and **transparent investigations into all factors that caused or contributed to the fires and deaths**, including any failings on the part of public officials and shortcomings in prevention, preparedness, and emergency response.

Signatory organisations:

- **Amnesty International**
- **Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)**
- **Coalition of Families of the Disappeared in Algeria (CFDA)**
- **EuroMed Rights**
- **Euro-Mediterranean Federation Against Enforced Disappearances (FEMED)**
- **Foundation for the Promotion of Rights in Algeria**
- **HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement**

- **International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)**
- **MENA Rights Group**
- **Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)**
- **Riposte Internationale**
- **Shoaa For Human Rights**
- **SOHRAM-CASRA – Social Action, Rehabilitation and Readaptation Center for Victims of Torture and War**
- **Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM)**
- **World Coalition Against the Death Penalty**

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