# Algeria | Human rights organisations and international trade union federations call for the immediate release of unionist and human rights defender Ali Mammeri

Joint Statements · Algeria · 25 November 2025

The undersigned human rights organisations and trade unions call on the Algerian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Algerian trade unionist Ali Mammeri, rescind his arbitrary 15-year prison sentence handed down on 29 October 2025, and open an independent, impartial and effective investigation into his allegations of torture and enforced disappearance, with a view to holding those responsible accountable. We also urge the Algerian authorities to revise anti-terrorism legislation and Ordinance 21-09 (PDF) relating to the protection of administrative documents and information to bring it fully into line with Algeria's international human rights obligations in order to prevent any abusive interpretation used to unduly restrict civic space.

On 29 October 2025, the Criminal Court of First Instance of Oum El Bouaghi sentenced Ali Mammeri to 15 years in prison, a decision against which he has appealed. He is now awaiting the setting of a date for his appeal trial, which is expected to take place in the coming weeks.

The organisations find that the proceedings against Ali Mammeri, as well as his heavy sentence, are clearly the result of his active commitment to human and trade union rights including his union's communications with the International Labour Organization (ILO). The misuse of anti-terrorism and state security legislation is an assault on the peaceful exercise of his fundamental freedoms.

Ali Mammeri, a civil servant, human rights defender and Hirak activist, is the president and founder of the independent National Union of Civil Servants in the Field of Culture and Arts (SNFC), affiliated with the Trade Union Confederation of Productive Forces (COSYFOP). The Algerian authorities have subjected him to reprisals and threats of legal action following his campaign to unionise the cultural sector in 2024 and his appointment as head of the SNFC.

On 19 March 2025, plainclothes police officers arrested Mammeri at his workplace in Oum El Bouaghi, about 500 km south-east of Algiers, without a warrant. Until 23 March, police denied his family and lawyer information about his whereabouts, effectively subjecting him to enforced disappearance.

Mammeri's arrest occurred shortly before the expected publication of an opinion by the ILO's Committee of Experts about violations of the rights of trade unionists in Algeria, including those involving the COSYFOP. The arrest also took place after the COSYFOP submitted a communication to the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association on 11 February 2025, shared with the Algerian

authorities, which included claims of reprisals faced by Mammeri for his union activity.

Ali Mammeri told his family and lawyers that police beat him repeatedly in custody, stripped him naked while interrogating him and forced him to confess to the accusations lodged against him. On 27 March, his mother attempted to submit a complaint for torture with the public prosecutor at the Oum El Bouaghi tribunal. However, the clerk refused to acknowledge receipt in writing, forcing her to send it by mail. The family has not been informed of the opening of any investigation. His statements made under police custody were used to support his conviction despite the allegations of torture.

At the end of his police custody on 27 March 2025, Ali Mammeri was brought before the prosecutor at the Oum El Bouaghi tribunal, who decided to refer the case to an investigative judge and requested the opening of an investigation under articles 87 bis 1, 87 bis 4 and 87 bis 5 of the Penal Code relating to terrorist offences, as well as articles 34 and 39 of Ordinance No. 21-09 on the protection of administrative information and documents. An investigative judge at the Oum El Bouaghi tribunal placed him in pretrial detention, without informing his lawyer who found him in court by chance.

On 29 October, following seven months of arbitrary pretrial detention, Ali Mammeri was convicted of several charges, including “glorifying terrorist acts” and “disseminating classified information.” During his trial, he faced accusations of exchanging communications with Algerian unionists and other activists residing abroad. The authorities considered these exchanges, which are mainly of a professional or family nature or related to his trade union activity, as proof of links with terrorist individuals and organisations without providing evidence of criminal activity recognized under international law and based on a process of terrorism designation controlled by the executive and security authorities and characterised by several due process issues. The authorities also used his Facebook posts, online statements and his interactions with the social media pages of political opponents to prosecute him – all protected under the right to freedom of expression.

Ali Mammeri also faced accusations of “disclosure of sensitive information” for sharing, in private digital conversations with other union members, a document showing an administrative decision by the Oum El Bouaghi cultural department under the Ministry of Culture confirming his transfer to a post with no real duties or adequate working conditions, a measure that followed his appointment as a trade union representative on 17 June 2024 and for which no motive was provided. This administrative decision was included in the aforementioned communication to the ILO’s Committee on Freedom of Association submitted by the COSYFOP on 11 February 2025 and was subsequently mentioned in a June 2025 report (PDF) by the Committee.

The court finally examined his attempt to establish a “national human rights organisation” by forming a trade union committee on human rights defenders, which was presented as a “subversive” initiative that could be considered criminal or terrorist.

Article 87 *bis* of the Penal Code, which deals with “terrorist” or “subversive” acts, has been the subject of much concern, particularly because of the vague and overly broad definition of terrorism

it includes. The Algerian government further widened this definition in June 2021 to include "attempting to seize power or change the system of governance by unconstitutional means" and "undermining national unity" within the definition of "terrorism".

Both the UN Human Rights Committee and UN Special Procedures emphasised that this definition of "terrorism" does not comply with international human rights standards and opens the way to abusive prosecutions targeting activities falling within the scope of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly or association. For its part, the ILO has recommended that Algeria ensure that this article is not applied to criminalise normal trade union activities that are protected under international law, such as strikes or peaceful workers' demands.

Ordinance 21-09 adopted on 8 June 2021 provides for up to 15 years imprisonment for individuals who share information deemed to be "classified" or "sensitive", defined in an overly broad manner, allowing for abusive interpretation. This ordinance has created a basis to prosecute individuals sharing information that authorities deem to be an "offensive" or "undermining" their interests, thus risking to obstruct the activity of human rights defenders.

Algeria is a party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantee the right to freedom of association, including the right to form and join trade unions to defend one's interests. It has also ratified ILO Conventions No. 87 and No. 98 on freedom of association and the right to organise and bargain collectively.

**Signatories:**

- AfricanDefenders (Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network)
- Amnesty International
- Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
- Collectif des Familles de Disparu·e·s en Algérie
- Committee for Justice (CFJ)
- DAWN
- Euromed Rights
- Fondation pour la Promotion des Droits (FPRA)
- HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
- International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)
- LADDH Safeguarding Committee (CS-LADDH)
- Justitia Center for the Legal Protection of Human Rights in Algeria
- Libertés Algérie
- MENA Rights Group

- Public Services International (PSI)
- Riposte internationale
- SHOAA for Human Rights
- Trade Union Confederation of Productive Forces (COSYFOP)

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