Algeria | Authorities must implement judicial decision lifting search notice against journalist Saïd Boudour

Statements · Algeria · 31 July 2026

The Algerian authorities must immediately implement the judicial order requiring the lifting of an outstanding search notice imposed in 2019 against investigative journalist and human rights defender Saïd Boudour in connection to his peaceful exercise of his fundamental rights to expression and assembly, and end the resulting practical restrictions on his freedom of movement which have prevented him in the past years from carrying out his journalistic work and earning a living.

For years, Saïd Boudour has faced relentless judicial harassment because of his peaceful journalism and human rights activism. In November 2021, Oran Fellaoucen Court sentenced him to two suspended months in prison and a fine after authorities accused him of “demoralizing the army” and “undermining a constituent body” in relation to a facebook commentary he made in October 2019 criticizing the interference of the judiciary in political issues. In the context of the same case, authorities also used as basis for prosecution his brandishing, during a weekly protest, of a banner saying “No to a Military Rule”. On 1 March 2021, Oran Judicial Council released a decision lifting the search notice against him. So far, authorities have failed to implement the order.

Boudour has also faced another case related to terrorism charges under Algeria’s article 87 bis of the Penal Code, of which he was acquitted in December 2023 by Dar El Beïda Criminal Court in Algiers. This prosecution pertains to his peaceful exercise of his rights to free speech and assembly and for his peaceful participation in social demonstrations.

Boudour is an investigative journalist, human rights defender and former member of the Algerian League for Human Rights (LADDH) based in Oran. Throughout his career, he has reported extensively on corruption, human rights violations, abuses against sub-Saharan African migrants, restrictions on civic freedoms, and the prosecution of political prisoners. He was among the first journalists to expose the 2018 cocaine trafficking scandal in Oran, and played an active role in documenting the 2019 Hirak protest movement and the authorities’ crackdown on peaceful demonstrators at the time.

His reporting has come at a high personal cost. Since 2019, Boudour has faced repeated arrests, prosecutions, and judicial harassment. On 6 October 2019, security forces in Oran arrested him and he was prosecuted for expressing criticism on his social media pages of the military’s interference in politics during the Algerian Hirak movement, a massive social protest movement that began in February 2019, demanding profound political reforms, upheaval of the deteriorating socioeconomic

conditions, as well as social equality and end to corruption. In this case, Boudour faced a prison sentence of a total of twelve years. An Oran court sentenced him to two suspended months in prison as well as a fine.

In April 2021, Boudour was arrested, in a new case, alongside several activists in Oran and prosecuted on terrorism-related charges under article 87 bis of the Penal Code, of committing "terrorism and sabotage through acts targeting state security, national unity, territorial integrity, or the stability and normal functioning of state institutions", in connection with their peaceful activism and participation in the Hirak movement. An Algiers court acquitted him in December 2023 and in February 2025, an appeal court upheld the acquittal. The case is currently pending before the Supreme Court following an appeal lodged by the prosecution according to Boudour.

Amnesty International has reported that since 2021, authorities in Algeria have extensively resorted to article 87 bis of the Penal Code as well as other overbroad terrorism accusations to prosecute activists, human rights defenders, and journalists, for simply demanding political change or exercising their right to peaceful activism.

Yet despite these judicial developments, Boudour's legal situation remains to be fully regularized. He continues to be subject to an ongoing search notice imposed on him by authorities in 2019 in relation to a first case brought against him. Despite having been acquitted by the Oran Judicial Council and despite an order issued on 1 March 2021 by the same court lifting the search notice against him, he remains under severe restrictions hampering his right to free movement. An effective search notice means that Boudour could be arrested at any time by the authorities.

Boudour told HuMENA:

> "Judicial authorities have repeatedly contacted the relevant security bodies in Algiers to request that my legal situation be resolved. Since 2024, I have also submitted several written requests and formal complaints, including complaints filed in 2024 and 2025, seeking clarification and the implementation of the judicial decisions concerning me. Two weeks ago, I contacted the police in Algiers again. To date, I have received no response, either formally or informally."

These restrictions have effectively prevented him from practicing journalism and from securing financial stability.

Investigative reporting requires that journalists travel, meet sources, conduct field visits, attend hearings and public events, and investigate allegations firsthand. Because of the restrictions that continue to be imposed on him, Boudour says he is unable to travel domestically or internationally to report on issues of public interest, conduct interviews, or document human rights violations. This has deprived him of several professional opportunities and has significantly undermined his ability to earn a steady living thus affecting his personal life.

In a comment to HuMENA, Boudour stated that he believes these measures constitute a form of retaliation for his journalistic work and defence for human rights through his engagement with

international human rights mechanisms, most recently his interaction in 2023, with former UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Mary Lawlor, during her official visit to Algeria in December. This occurred, in the context of the special rapporteur's team's meetings with activists from the Oran civil society. The circumstances around the judicial harassment imposed on Boudour indicate a possible retaliation against him. Algeria has an obligation as per international standards it has ratified, including the ICCPR, to ensure that human rights defenders can cooperate safely with the United Nations. In its repeated interpretation of the provisions of the ICCPR, the Human Rights Committee stressed that states must not intimidate or retaliate against individuals for engaging with international human rights mechanisms.

Boudour further stated:

> "despite the fact that the Algerian authorities have presented guarantees to the Special Rapporteur that it will abstain from conducting any acts of intimidation or vengeful actions against human rights defenders, they continue to harass me and restrict my access to basic rights including my rights to move freely and to work. I feel restrained, like I am in a prison and this has really affected my morale and everyday life".

The persistence over the past years of these restrictions despite judicial decisions ordered by Oran Judicial Council formally lifting the search notice against Boudour, raises serious concerns regarding proper implementation of the law and compliance of the concerned security forces to decisions made by the judiciary. Where courts have ordered that restrictive measures be lifted, executive and security authorities cannot lawfully disregard those decisions. Such conduct not only undermines judicial authority but also perpetuates arbitrary restrictions on fundamental rights.

Boudour shared with HuMENA official documentation indicating the immediate lifting of the search notice imposed against him. Documents shared include official requests made by Oran Judicial Council to the Algiers central security forces to revoke the search notice.

Freedom of movement is indispensable to the exercise of journalism. Preventing journalists from travelling to gather information, interview sources, investigate allegations, and document events directly interferes with press freedom and the public's right to receive information. Likewise, human rights defenders, such as Boudour, must be able to carry out their legitimate work free from intimidation, reprisals, judicial harassment, or arbitrary administrative measures.

Algeria is bound by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights to respect and protect the rights to freedom of movement and freedom of expression. Under Articles 12 and 19 of the ICCPR and Articles 9 and 12 of the African Charter, restrictions on these rights must be provided by law, pursue a legitimate aim, and be necessary and proportionate to that aim. The continued restrictions on Saïd Boudour despite judicial decisions in his favour raise serious concerns regarding Algeria's compliance with these obligations. The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders also affirms the right to promote and protect human rights and to communicate and cooperate with international human rights mechanisms without intimidation or reprisals.

Accordingly, HuMENA calls on the Algerian authorities to:

- Immediately implement the judicial decision ordering the lifting of the search notice, remove any outstanding notice, security alert, or related measure affecting Saïd Boudour, and restore his ability to travel freely within Algeria and abroad.
- Provide Boudour with formal written confirmation that the search notice and any related security alerts or restrictions have been removed from the relevant systems.
- Conduct a prompt, independent, and effective investigation into the prolonged failure to implement the judicial decision, ensure accountability where appropriate, and provide Boudour with an effective remedy for the professional, financial, and personal harm caused.
- End all judicial harassment, intimidation, and reprisals against Boudour arising from his legitimate journalistic and human rights work, including his cooperation with international human rights mechanisms.
- Ensure that journalists and human rights defenders can carry out their legitimate work and cooperate with international human rights mechanisms freely and independently, without prosecution, intimidation, or retaliation solely because of their work or peaceful exercise of protected rights.

Published at https://humena.org/algeria-said-boudour-freedom-of-movement/
HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement · info@humena.org