

Advocacy dossier

Saad Bouakba

سعد بوعقبة

At liberty **Algeria**

Saad Bouakba is a journalist and author. He was jailed in November 2025 after discussing historical allegations about Algeria's first president in a YouTube interview, then sentenced under defamation and false-news laws. He was released in December 2025 after a suspended sentence, and in July 2026 an appeal court upheld the conviction and reduced the term to 18 months, suspended.

01
The case at a glance

Saad Bouakba is a journalist and author. He was jailed in November 2025 after discussing historical allegations about Algeria's first president in a YouTube interview, then sentenced under defamation and false-news laws. He was released in December 2025 after a suspended sentence, and in July 2026 an appeal court upheld the conviction and reduced the term to 18 months, suspended.

Status **At liberty**	Arrested **27 Nov 2025**	Country **Algeria**
Sentence Three years in prison, suspended, and a fine of DZD 1,000,000 (Bir Mourad Raïs Court, 4 December 2025); reduced on appeal on 7 July 2026 to 18 months suspended, fine confirmed.		
Charges Insulting and defaming symbols of the National Liberation Revolution Intentionally publishing false information online		

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Saad Bouakba and on any family members affected by the same order.

02 Restore valid travel documents and remove any border-watch flags placed in connection with peaceful human rights work.

03 Comply with the ICCPR Article 12 guarantee of freedom of movement.

02

Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

Arbitrary detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9

Judicial harassment UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12

Press freedom violation International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19

Travel ban International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12

Unfair trial International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

03

How the case unfolded

February 2023

Arrest

Detained over a satirical column

Bouakba was briefly detained over a satirical column published by the Al Madar website and charged with inciting hatred and distributing publications harmful to the national interest.

February 2023

Conditional release

Released under judicial supervision

Bouakba was released under judicial supervision and his passport was confiscated.

18 October 2023

Conviction

Convicted of inciting hatred over a satirical column

The Dar El Beida court convicted Bouakba of inciting hatred and publications harmful to the national interest over the satirical column and sentenced him to one year in prison, six months of it suspended, and a fine of DZD 200,000.

2024

Appeal: sentence reduced

Appeal court replaces prison term with a fine

The Algiers Court of Appeal overturned the prison term in the satirical column case and fined Bouakba DZD 20,000, citing Article 54 of the constitution.

27 November 2025

Arrest

Arrested and placed in pre-trial detention

Bouakba was arrested in Algiers and placed in pre-trial detention on charges of insulting symbols of the National Liberation Revolution and publishing false information online.

4 December 2025

Conviction

Sentenced by Bir Mourad Raïs Court

The Bir Mourad Raïs Court sentenced Bouakba to three years in prison, suspended, and a fine of DZD 1,000,000. The court also gave the director of Vision TV a one-year suspended sentence and ordered the channel closed.

4 December 2025

Release

Released the same day after a three-year suspended sentence and a fine

He was released on the day of the verdict after receiving a three-year suspended sentence and a fine.

13 May 2026

Other act

Amnesty International cites his conviction in a call on Algeria to respect press freedom

In a statement on journalists prosecuted in Algeria, Amnesty International cited his December 2025 conviction over an interview about allegations of unlawful distribution of funds and said his appeal was scheduled for 2 June 2026.

7 July 2026

Appeal: sentence reduced

Algiers appeal court upholds the conviction and reduces the sentence to 18 months suspended

The Tenth Criminal Chamber of the Algiers Court of Appeal upheld the conviction and reduced the sentence to 18 months in prison, suspended. The fine of DZD 1,000,000 was confirmed.

04

The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: this record was checked again. Saad Bouakba is at liberty; on 7 July 2026 the Algiers Court of Appeal upheld his conviction, reduced the sentence to 18 months suspended and confirmed the DZD 1,000,000 fine, and no further proceedings have been reported.

Background and Work

Saad Bouakba is a journalist and author whose reporting centres on Algeria's political history and contemporary governance. He has written extensively on the National Liberation Front (FLN), the movement that led Algeria's independence struggle between 1954 and 1962 and remained the dominant political force for decades after. His work examines contested narratives around the revolution, post-independence leadership, and the distribution of state resources.

Bouakba publishes across online platforms and traditional print outlets. He has given interviews to independent media channels, including YouTube-based programmes that operate outside Algeria's tightly controlled state broadcasting system. His commentary often draws on archival research and testimony from veterans and family members of historical figures.

The Arrest

On 27 November 2025, Bouakba was arrested in Algiers and placed in pre-trial detention. A prosecutor at the Bir Mourad Raïs Court charged him with insulting and defaming symbols of the National Liberation Revolution and with intentionally publishing false information online. The charges followed a complaint filed by Mahdia Ben Bella, daughter of Algeria's first president, Ahmed Ben Bella.

The complaint related to an interview Bouakba had given to Vision TV News, a YouTube channel. In the interview he discussed allegations that the late president had distributed funds belonging to the FLN in ways that contravened party rules. Such historical claims touch on deeply sensitive questions of legitimacy and patrimony in Algerian political culture.

Legal Proceedings

A hearing was scheduled for 4 December 2025. On that date, the Bir Mourad Raïs Court issued a sentence. The court imposed a three-year suspended prison sentence and a fine of DZD 1,000,000, and he was released the same day. On 7 July 2026 the Algiers appeal court upheld the conviction and reduced the sentence to 18 months, suspended, confirming the fine.

The statutes invoked against Bouakba are framed in broad terms. The offence of insulting symbols of the revolution has been applied in numerous cases against journalists, historians, and political commentators who question official narratives about the independence struggle or its leaders. The false-news provision, introduced in amendments to Algeria's penal code, has been widely criticised by press-freedom organisations for its vague wording and its use to criminalise investigative reporting.

Previous Legal Harassment

Bouakba has faced repeated legal proceedings linked to his journalism. In February 2023, he was

briefly detained over a satirical column published by the Al Madar website and charged with inciting hatred and distributing publications deemed harmful to the national interest. He was placed under judicial supervision and his passport was confiscated.

On 18 October 2023, the Dar El Beida court convicted him in that case and sentenced him to one year in prison, six months of it suspended, and a fine of DZD 200,000. The column criticised government officials and used irony to highlight perceived hypocrisy in public discourse. In 2024 the Algiers Court of Appeal overturned the prison term and replaced it with a fine of DZD 20,000.

Implications for Press Freedom

Bouakba's case illustrates the extent to which Algerian authorities deploy criminal-defamation and insult laws to suppress critical journalism. The use of pre-trial detention in a case involving purely expressive conduct contravenes international standards, which reserve such measures for situations where there is a demonstrable risk of flight or evidence tampering.

The swift progression from arrest to sentencing, within one week, raises serious concerns about the fairness of the proceedings. Legal observers note that such timelines leave little opportunity for the defence to prepare, gather evidence, or challenge the factual basis of the charges. The chilling effect on other journalists and historians is immediate: discussing Algeria's revolutionary past and its leaders has become legally perilous.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/saad-bouakba/

HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement is a non-governmental organisation documenting the situation of human rights defenders in the Middle East and North Africa. This file is based on the public record of the case in the defenders archive.Status as recorded on 2025-12-04. To report an error: archive@humena.org