

Advocacy dossier

Sofiane Ouali

سفيان والي

At liberty **Algeria**

Sofiane Ouali is an Algerian lawyer who defends prisoners of conscience and those prosecuted for exercising their fundamental rights. He met with the UN Special Rapporteur in December 2023. He was arrested after a peaceful sit-in in July 2024 and provisionally released on 18 July 2024, the day he was charged. He remains on trial on terrorism charges before the Dar El Beida criminal court in Algiers.

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The case at a glance

Sofiane Ouali is an Algerian lawyer who defends prisoners of conscience and those prosecuted for exercising their fundamental rights. He met with the UN Special Rapporteur in December 2023. He was arrested after a peaceful sit-in in July 2024 and provisionally released on 18 July 2024, the day he was charged. He remains on trial on terrorism charges before the Dar El Beida criminal court in Algiers.

Status	Arrested	Country
At liberty	**11 Jul 2024**	**Algeria**

Charges
Terrorism-related offences under Article 87 bis 4 of the Penal Code
Terrorism-related offences under Article 87 bis 12 of the Penal Code
Money laundering (two counts)

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Drop any charges that remain on record against Sofiane Ouali in connection with peaceful human rights work.

02 Confirm publicly that Sofiane Ouali faces no residual travel, financial, or professional restriction arising from this case.

03 Guarantee that Sofiane Ouali can resume that work without surveillance, summons, or further reprisal.

04 Provide effective remedy for the period of deprivation of liberty already served.

02

Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

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

Criminalisation of solidarity International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 21, 22
UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 5

Denial of family visits UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), Rule 58

Denial of legal counsel International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14(3)

Enforced disappearance International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 2
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 9, 16

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

Prolonged pretrial detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(3)

Threats and intimidation UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12

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

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How the case unfolded

November 2023

Conviction

Fined 100,000 dinars in separate case

The Béjaïa court fined him 100,000 dinars for insulting a constituted body and a judge. His defence appealed.

5 November 2023

Hearing

Tried in Béjaïa for insulting a judge

The Béjaïa misdemeanour court tried him for insulting a constituted body and a judge. The prosecutor sought one year in prison.

December 2023

Defender activity

Met UN Special Rapporteur

Ouali met with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders during her official visit to Algeria.

April 2024

Acquittal

Acquitted on appeal

Ouali was acquitted on appeal in the separate case from 2023.

9 July 2024

Defender activity

Organised peaceful sit-in in Béjaïa

Ouali and other activists organised a peaceful sit-in in front of the Béjaïa court to protest the detention of academic Mira Moknache.

10 July 2024

Arrest

Arrested in early-morning raid

At approximately 3:00 a.m., plainclothes police officers raided the apartment where Ouali was staying and arrested him along with other activists. Authorities did not notify his family or lawyers of his arrest or location.

10 July 2024

Access to counsel denied

Lawyers denied information at police station

Ouali's lawyers went to the central police station in Béjaïa to inquire about his whereabouts but were denied information.

11 July 2024

Deprivation of liberty

Bar Association informed of location

The Béjaïa Bar Association contacted the public prosecutor, who confirmed that Ouali was being held at the central police station. The information was not formally communicated to his family or legal representatives.

13 July 2024

Home raid

Family home searched

Police officers searched Ouali's family home and examined his personal computer.

17 July 2024

Transfer between places of detention

Transferred from Béjaïa to Algiers

He was transferred from Béjaïa to Algiers while still held incommunicado.

18 July 2024

Charge filed

Charged by the investigating judge in Algiers

After more than a week of incommunicado detention, he was brought before the investigating judge of the Sidi M'hamed court in Algiers and charged under Articles 87 bis 4 and 87 bis 12 of the Penal Code and with two money laundering offences.

18 July 2024

Conditional release

Investigating judge orders his provisional release pending trial

29 July 2024

Release order

Provisional release confirmed on appeal

The indictment division confirmed the investigating judge's decision to release Ouali provisionally.

12 September 2024

UN special procedures communication

UN experts write to Algeria about his case

UN special procedures sent a joint communication to Algeria about his arrest, incommunicado detention and prosecution. Algeria did not reply within 60 days.

29 January 2025

Hearing

Questioned on the merits in Algiers

He was heard on the merits of the case by the investigating chamber of the Sidi M'hamed court.

25 December 2025

Hearing postponed

Trial opens and is postponed to January 2026

His trial before the Dar El Beida criminal court in Algiers opened and was postponed to January 2026.

February 2026

Hearing postponed

Trial postponed again to the March to June 2026 session

The trial was postponed again, to the criminal session of March to June 2026.

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The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: this record was checked again. Sofiane Ouali remains at liberty under provisional release but is still prosecuted on terrorism-related charges, alongside 12 co-defendants including Mira Moknache, before the Dar El Beida criminal court in Algiers; the trial was postponed to the March to June 2026 session and no verdict has been reported.

Background and Work

Sofiane Ouali is an Algerian lawyer known for defending prisoners of conscience and individuals prosecuted for exercising their fundamental freedoms. He has been actively engaged in human rights advocacy and has worked closely with civil society actors throughout Algeria. In December 2023, he met with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders during her official visit to Algeria, part of a broader effort to document the treatment of defenders in the country.

In 2023, Ouali was prosecuted in a separate case for insulting a constituted body and a judge, and in November the Béjaïa court fined him 100,000 dinars. He was acquitted on appeal in April 2024.

The Arrest and Incommunicado Detention

On 9 July 2024, Ouali and other activists organised a peaceful sit-in in front of the Béjaïa court to protest the detention of academic Mira Moknache. Following the gathering, several participants, including Ouali, stayed overnight at the apartment of a fellow activist.

At approximately 3:00 a.m. on 10 July 2024, plainclothes police officers from Béjaïa raided the apartment and arrested all individuals present, including Ouali. The authorities failed to notify his family or legal counsel of his arrest or place of detention. This omission contravenes Articles 51 and 51 bis of the Algerian Code of Criminal Procedure, which require judicial police officers to enable detainees to contact their family or lawyer and to inform them of the place of detention and the date of appearance before an investigating judge.

On 10 July 2024, Ouali's lawyers went to the central police station in Béjaïa to inquire about his whereabouts but were denied information. His family also sought information and were similarly refused. On 11 July 2024, the Béjaïa Bar Association contacted the public prosecutor, who confirmed that Ouali was being held at the central police station. Nevertheless, this information was not formally communicated to his family or legal representatives.

On 13 July 2024, police officers searched Ouali's family home and examined his personal computer.

From 10 July until he was brought before a judge on 18 July 2024, Ouali was held incommunicado. During this period, he was denied access to his family and lawyers, and no official information regarding his detention conditions was made available. These circumstances raised serious concerns of enforced disappearance-like conditions and violations of his right to defense.

Charges and Provisional Release

On 17 July 2024 he was transferred to Algiers. On

18 July 2024, the investigating judge of the Sidi M'hamed court charged him under Articles 87 bis 4 and 87 bis 12 of the Penal Code, which concern terrorism, and with two money laundering offences. The investigating judge ordered his provisional release. On 29 July 2024, the indictment division confirmed the decision to release him provisionally.

Ouali remains prosecuted on terrorism-related charges that have been widely criticised for their broad and vague formulation. Although he was released on bail, he remains under criminal prosecution.

Legal Proceedings and Ongoing Delays

Ouali's trial before the Criminal Court of Dar El Beida has been marked by repeated postponements. It opened on 25 December 2025 and was adjourned to January 2026, then postponed again to the criminal session of March to June 2026. No verdict has been made public. These delays prolong legal uncertainty and have a direct chilling effect on his professional activities as a lawyer and human rights defender.

Legal and Human Rights Concerns

Ouali's case presents multiple violations of international human rights standards. His arrest and incommunicado detention violated Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The failure to promptly disclose his place of detention created enforced disappearance-like conditions. He was denied access to legal counsel and family, undermining fair trial guarantees and due process rights. The use of broadly defined terrorism-related charges to target him follows a pattern of intimidation against human rights defenders. The prolonged pre-trial proceedings and repeated trial delays are inconsistent with the right to be tried within a reasonable time.

The arrest, incommunicado detention, search of Ouali's home, confiscation of his professional equipment, and ongoing prosecution under broadly defined terrorism and national security provisions amount to judicial harassment. His case reflects a broader pattern of intimidation and reprisals against lawyers and human rights defenders for the peaceful exercise of their professional and civic duties.

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

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